



Unlocked Dynamic Bible

New Testament

Unlocked Dynamic Bible

an unrestricted Bible intended for translation into any language

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MATTHEW

Chapter 1

¹ This is the record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, the descendant of King David and of Abraham. ² Abraham was the father of Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Judah and of his brothers. ³ Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, and their mother was Tamar. Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron was the father of Ram. ⁴ Ram was the father of Amminadab. Amminadab was the father of Nahshon. Nahshon was the father of Salmon. ⁵ Salmon and his wife Rahab, a non-Jewish woman, were the parents of Boaz. Boaz was the father of Obed. Obed's mother was Ruth, another non-Jewish woman. Obed was the father of Jesse. ⁶ Jesse was the father of King David. David became the father of Solomon; Solomon's mother was the wife of Uriah. ⁷ Solomon was the father of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the father of Abijah. Abijah was the father of Asa. ⁸ Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat was the father of Joram. Joram was an ancestor of Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah was the father of Jotham. Jotham was the father of Ahaz. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh. Manasseh was the father of Amon. Amon was the father of Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah was the grandfather of Jechoniah and Jechoniah's brothers. They lived at the time when the Babylonian army took the Israelites as captives to the country of Babylon.

¹² After the Babylonians exiled the Israelites to Babylon, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was an ancestor of Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud. Abiud was the fa-

ther of Eliakim. Eliakim was the father of Azor. ¹⁴ Azor was the father of Zadok. Zadok was the father of Akim. Akim was the father of Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud was the father of Eleazar. Eleazar was the father of Matthan. Matthan was the father of Jacob. ¹⁶ Jacob was the father of Joseph. Joseph was Mary's husband, and Mary was Jesus' mother. Jesus is the one who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ The list of Jesus' ancestors is as follows: Fourteen of them from the time when Abraham lived to the time when King David lived. There were another fourteen from the time when David lived until the time when the Israelites went away to Babylon, and then yet another fourteen from then until the time when the Messiah was born.

¹⁸ This is the account of what happened just before Jesus the Messiah was born. Mary, his mother, had promised to marry Joseph, but before they lived together as husband and wife, they found out that she was expecting a child by the Holy Spirit's power. ¹⁹ Now Joseph, who was to be her husband, was a man who obeyed God's commands, so he decided not to marry her. But he did not want to shame her in front of other people. So he decided to quietly drop his plans to marry her. ²⁰ While he was seriously considering this, an angel whom the Lord sent surprised him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, descendant of King David, do not be afraid to marry Mary. For what has been conceived in her is there by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son. Since it is he who will save his people from their sins, name him 'Jesus.'" ²² All this happened to make come true what the Lord told the prophet Isaiah to write long ago. Isaiah wrote, ²³ "Listen, a virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son.

They will call him Immanuel"—

which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴ When Joseph got up from sleep, he did what the angel had commanded him to do. He began to live with Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not sleep with her until she had given birth to a son. And Joseph named him Jesus.

Chapter 2

¹ Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in the province of Judea during the time that King Herod the Great ruled there. Some time after Jesus was born, some men from very far away to the east who studied the stars came to the city of Jerusalem. ² They asked people, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have seen a star in the east that shows us he has been born, so we have come to worship him.”

³ When King Herod heard about what those men were asking, he became very worried. Many of the people in Jerusalem also became worried. ⁴ Then Herod called together all the ruling priests and teachers of the Jewish laws. He asked them where the prophets had predicted that the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They said to him, “He will be born in the town of Bethlehem, here in the province of Judea, because the prophet Micah wrote long ago, ⁶ ‘You who live in Bethlehem in the land of Judah, your town is certainly very important, because a man from your town will become a ruler. He will guide my people who live in Israel.’”

⁷ Then King Herod secretly called those men who studied the stars. He asked them exactly when the star first appeared. ⁸ Then he said to them, “Go to Bethlehem and inquire thoroughly where the infant is. When you have found him, come back and report to me so that I, myself, can go

there and worship him, too.”

⁹ Then the men went toward the town of Bethlehem. To their surprise, the star that they had seen while they were in the eastern country went ahead of them again until it stood above the house where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced greatly and followed it. ¹¹ They found the house, entered it, and saw the child and his mother, Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure boxes and they gave him gold, expensive frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² Then God warned them in a dream not to return to King Herod. So they left for their country, but instead of traveling back on the same road, they went on a different road.

¹³ After the men who studied the stars left Bethlehem, an angel from the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee into the country of Egypt. Stay there until I tell you that you should leave, because King Herod is about to send soldiers to look for the child so that they can kill him.” ¹⁴ So Joseph got up that same night; he took the child and his mother, and they fled into Egypt. ¹⁵ They stayed there until King Herod died, and then they left Egypt again. In this way, what God had told the prophet Hosea to write came true,

“I have called my son to come out of Egypt.”

¹⁶ Before King Herod died, he realized that those men had tricked him, and he became furious. Because he thought that Jesus was still near Bethlehem, Herod sent soldiers there to kill all the boy babies two years old and younger. Herod calculated how old the baby was, according to what the men who studied the stars told him about when the star first appeared. ¹⁷ When Herod did this, what the prophet Jeremiah had written long ago came true,

when he wrote about Bethlehem near the town of Ramah:

18 Women in Ramah were weeping and wailing loudly.

Rachel, the ancestor of those women, was weeping for their dead children.

People tried to comfort her, but they could not, because all the children were dead.

19 After Herod died and while Joseph and his family were still in Egypt, an angel that the Lord had sent appeared to Joseph in a dream. He said to Joseph, **20** “Get up and take the child and his mother and go back to the country of Israel to live, because the people who were trying to kill the child have died.” **21** So Joseph took the child and his mother, and they went back to Israel.

22 When Joseph heard that Archelaus now ruled in the province of Judea instead of his father, King Herod the Great, he was afraid to go there. Then God instructed Joseph in a dream what to do, so Joseph, Mary, and the baby went to the district of Galilee. **23** They went to the town of Nazareth to live there. The result was that what the prophets had said long ago came true: “People will say that he is from Nazareth.”

Chapter 3

1 While Jesus was still in the town of Nazareth, John, whom the people called the Baptizer, went to a desolate place in the province of Judea. He was preaching to the people who came there. He kept saying, **2** “You must stop sinning, because God’s rule from heaven is near, and he will reject you if you do not stop sinning.”

3 When John began preaching, then came true what Isaiah the prophet had said long ago. He said,

”In the wilderness people hear someone shouting to anyone who comes,

’Get ready to receive the Lord when he comes!

Get everything ready for him!”

4 John wore rough clothing made from camel’s hair. As the prophet Elijah had done so long ago, he wore a leather belt around his waist. His food was only grasshoppers and honey that he found in the wilderness. **5** People who lived in the city of Jerusalem, many people who lived in other places in the district of Judea, and many others who lived near the Jordan River came to John to hear him preach. **6** After they heard him, they openly confessed their sins, and then he baptized them in the Jordan River.

7 But John saw that many Pharisees and Sadducees were coming for him to baptize them. He said to them, ”You people are the children of poisonous snakes! No one warned you that one day God will punish everyone who sins, did they? Do not think that you can escape from him!

8 If you truly stop sinning, then do right things to show it. **9** I know that God promised to be with Abraham’s descendants. But do not say to yourselves, ‘Since we are descendants of our ancestor Abraham, God will not punish us even though we have sinned.’ No! I tell you that he can change these stones here into descendants of Abraham! **10** God is ready right now to punish you, just like a man who starts to chop away the roots of a fruit tree that does not give good fruit. He will chop down every tree like that and throw it into the fire.”

11 ”As for me, I am not very important, because I baptize you only with water. I do it when people are sorry for having sinned. But someone else will come soon who will do very powerful things. He is so much

greater than I, that I do not even deserve to carry his sandals.

He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire. ¹² He is holding his winnowing fork, ready to separate the good grain from the bad chaff. He is ready to clear out all the bad chaff from where he has threshed the grain. He will take the righteous people home, as a farmer puts his wheat into his storehouse; but he will burn the wicked people, like one burns the chaff, in a fire that never goes out.”

¹³ During that time, Jesus went from the district of Galilee to the Jordan River, where John was. He did this so John could baptize him. ¹⁴ When Jesus asked John to baptize him, John refused; he said, “I need you to baptize me! But you are not a sinner, so why do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus said to him, “Baptize me now, because in this way we two will do everything that God requires.” Then John agreed to baptize him.

¹⁶ After that, Jesus immediately came up out of the water. Just then, it was as though the sky was opened, and Jesus saw God’s Spirit coming down and sitting on him, in the form of a dove. ¹⁷ Then God spoke from heaven and said, “This is my Son. I love him, and I am very pleased with him.”

Chapter 4

¹ Then God’s Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for the devil to tempt him. ² After he had not eaten food day and night for forty days, he was hungry. ³ Satan, the tempter, came to him and said, “If you are really the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread for yourself!” ⁴ But Jesus said to him, “No! I will not do this, because God has said in the scriptures, ‘For people to truly live, they must have more than

food; they must listen to every word that God has spoken.’” ⁵ Then the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, the city that was especially for God. He set him on the highest part of the temple ⁶ and said to him, “If you are truly the Son of God, jump down to the ground. You will, of course, not be hurt, because God has said in the scriptures,

‘God will command his angels to protect you.

They will lift you up in their hands when you are falling,

and they will keep you from even hitting your foot on a stone.’” ⁷ But Jesus said, “No! I will not jump down, because God has also said in the scriptures, ‘Do not try to make your God prove who he is.’” ⁸ Then the devil took him on top of a very high mountain. There he showed him all the nations in the world and the magnificent things in those nations. ⁹ Then he said to him, “I will let you rule all these nations and give you the magnificent things in them if you bow down and worship me.” ¹⁰ But Jesus said to him, “No, I will not worship you, Satan, so go away! God has said in the scriptures, ‘It is to the Lord your God whom you must bow down, and you must worship only him!’” ¹¹ Then the devil went away, and at that moment, angels came to Jesus and took care of him.

¹² While Jesus was in the province of Judea, John the Baptizer’s disciples came and told him that King Herod had put John in prison. So Jesus returned to the district of Galilee, to the town of Nazareth. ¹³ Then he left Nazareth and went to the city of Capernaum in order to live there. Capernaum is located beside the Sea of Galilee in the region that formerly belonged to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ He went there so that these words that the prophet Isaiah had written long ago might come true:

¹⁵ "The regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, regions by the road going to the Sea, on the eastern side of the Jordan River,

regions in Galilee, home of many non-Israelites!

¹⁶ Those people do not know God, as if they were in darkness,

but they will learn the truth, as if a bright light had shone on them.

Yes, they have been very afraid of dying,

But a brilliant light has shone upon them!"

¹⁷ At that time, while Jesus was in the city of Capernaum, he began to preach to the people, "The rule of God from heaven is near, and he will judge you when he rules. So stop sinning!"

¹⁸ One day while Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two men, Simon, who was later called Peter, and Andrew, his younger brother. They were casting their fishing net into the water because they caught and sold fish. ¹⁹ Jesus said to them, "Come with me and I will teach you how to gather people to become my disciples. I will make your work fishing for people." ²⁰ They immediately left the work that they were doing and went with him.

²¹ As the three of them walked on from there, Jesus saw two other men, James and John, the younger brother of James. They were in their boat with Zebedee, their father, mending their fishing nets. Jesus told them that they should leave their work and go with him. ²² Immediately they also left their boat and their father and went with Jesus.

²³ Jesus led those four men throughout all of the district of Galilee. He was teaching the people in the synagogues. He was preaching the good news about how God

is ruling. He was also healing all the people who were sick. ²⁴ When people who lived in other parts of the district of Syria heard what he was doing, they brought to him people who suffered from illnesses, people who suffered from many kinds of diseases, people who suffered from severe pains, people who were controlled by demons, people who were epileptics, and people who were paralyzed. And Jesus healed them. ²⁵ Then large crowds started to go with him. They were people from Galilee, from the Ten Towns, from the city of Jerusalem, from other parts of the province of Judea, and from areas east of the Jordan River.

Chapter 5

¹ When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mount. He sat down there and taught his followers. They came near to him to listen to him. ² Then he began to teach them by saying,

³ "God is pleased with people who admit that they need him;

he will agree to rule over them from heaven.

⁴ God is pleased with people who mourn because of this sinful world;

he will encourage them.

⁵ God is pleased with people who are humble;

they will inherit the earth that God will make new.

⁶ God is pleased with people who desire to live righteously just as someone might wish to eat and drink;

he will make them able to live righteously.

⁷ God is pleased with people who act mercifully toward others;

he will act mercifully toward them.

⁸ God is pleased with people who try to do only that which pleases him;

some day they will be where God is and will see him.

⁹ God is pleased with people who help other people to live peacefully;

he will regard them as his own children.

¹⁰ God is pleased with people who live righteously; he is honored when their righteous lives are the reason why evil people insult and treat them badly.

God rules over these righteous people from heaven.

¹¹ God is pleased with you when other people insult you, and he is honored when they do evil things to you and when they tell lies about you, saying that you are evil.

¹² When that happens, rejoice and be glad, because God will give you a great reward in heaven. Remember, that is how they persecuted the prophets who lived long ago.

¹³ What salt does for food, this is what you will do for the world. But if salt loses its power, no one can make it good again. People just throw it out and walk over it.

¹⁴ What light does for people in the dark, this is what you will do for the world. All people will see you, just as they see a city built on a hillside. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so it can give light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ Similarly, you need to do what is right in such a way that other people can see what you do. When they see it, they will praise your Father who is in heaven."

¹⁷ "You should not suppose that I have come to you in order to do away with the laws that God gave Moses or what the prophets wrote. Instead, I came to cause to happen what those things said would

happen. ¹⁸ This is a true saying: God may remove the heaven and the earth, but God will not remove anything from those laws, not even the smallest details or a tiny dot used to end a sentence, until God makes everything he put in the law happen, just as he said it would. ¹⁹ Because that

is true, if you break the commands that are the least important, you will be the least important person under God's rule from heaven. But if you keep all those commands and teach others to obey God as you are obeying him, you will become very important in God's rule from heaven.

²⁰ I tell you that you must obey those laws better than the teachers of the law, and you must do what is right from your heart. And you must do better than the Pharisees or you will never come under the rule of God from heaven.

²¹ "Others have told you what God said to our ancestors, 'You must not kill anyone,' and, 'If you kill anyone, the members of a governing council might sentence you.'

²² But I tell you that if you are angry with anyone, God himself will judge you. If you say to someone, 'You are worthless,' a governing council will judge you. If you say to someone, 'You are a fool,' God will throw you into the fire in hell. ²³ So when you take your gift for God to the altar, if you remember that you have offended someone,²⁴ leave your gift by the altar, and first go to the person you have offended. Tell that person that you are sorry for what you have done, and ask that person to forgive you. Then go back and offer your gift to God. ²⁵ If a fellow citizen takes you to court in order to accuse you of doing something wrong, come to an agreement quickly with that person, while you are still walking with that person to court.

Do that while there still is time so that he will not take you to the judge, because the judge might say you are guilty and hand you over to the prison guard, and

the prison guard will put you in prison.²⁶ Keep this in mind: If you go to prison, you will never get out because you will never be able to pay all that the judge says that you owe. So remember also to be at peace with your brothers.”

²⁷ “You have heard that God said to our ancestors, ‘Do not commit adultery.’²⁸ But what I say to you is this: If a man even just looks at a woman desiring to sleep with her, God considers that he has already committed adultery with her in his mind.²⁹ If you want to sin because you have looked at certain things, then stop looking at them. Even if you have to destroy both of your eyes, do it if that would make you able to avoid sinning. It would be better to be blind and stop sinning, than for God to throw you into hell while you can still see.³⁰ And if one of your hands causes you to sin, stop using your hand. Even if you have to cut your hand off and throw it away, do it if that would make you able to avoid sinning. It would be better to lose a part of your body than for God to throw your whole body into hell.”

³¹ “God has said in the scriptures, ‘If a man is divorcing his wife, he should write a document on which he states that he is divorcing her.’³² But now listen to what I say to you: A man may divorce his wife only if she has committed adultery. If a man divorces his wife for any other reason, she commits adultery if she marries someone else. And the man who marries her also commits adultery.”

³³ “You have also heard that long ago people were told, ‘You should never swear an oath by making up a lie! Instead, you should make your promises as you would if the Lord himself were standing before you.’³⁴ But now I will say to you something more: Do not swear an oath for any reason! Do not ask the place where God lives in heaven to guarantee what you

promised. That is where his great seat of power is and from where he rules over all things.³⁵ And do not swear any oath on the promise that the earth would witness it. Do not do this, because the earth is where God rests his feet. Never swear an oath by the city of Jerusalem, because Jerusalem is the city that belongs to God, our great King.

³⁶ Also, do not promise that you will do something and then say that they should cut off your head if you do not do it. How could you promise something so important, when you are not even able to change the color of one hair on your head.³⁷ If you talk about doing something, just say ‘Yes, I will do it,’ or ‘No, I will not do it.’ If you say anything more than that, it is Satan, the Evil One, who has suggested that you talk this way.”

³⁸ “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘If someone harms one of your eyes, then they should harm one of that person’s eyes. And if someone harms one of your teeth, then they should harm one of that person’s teeth.’³⁹ But now listen to what I say to you: Far from taking revenge on someone who harms you, do not even try to stop him. Instead, if someone insults you by striking you on one cheek, turn your other cheek toward that person so he can strike it also.⁴⁰ If someone wants to sue you in a court to get your tunic, let that person have both it and your outer garment, too, which is even of more worth to you.⁴¹ And if a Roman soldier forces you to go with him one mile and carry his gear, carry it for two miles.⁴² Also, if someone asks you for something, give it to him. If someone asks you to lend him something, go ahead and lend it to him.”

⁴³ “You have heard that God said to our ancestors, ‘Love your fellow Israelites and hate foreigners, for they are your ene-

mies.' ⁴⁴ But now listen to what I say to you: Love your enemies as well as your friends, and pray for those who cause you to suffer. ⁴⁵ Do this in order to be like God, your Father who is in heaven. He acts kindly to all people. For example, he causes the sun to shine equally on wicked people and on good people, and he sends rain both on people who obey his law and on people who do not. ⁴⁶ If you love only the people who love you, do not expect God to reward you at all! Even people who do terrible things, such as tax collectors, love those who love them. You must act better than they do! ⁴⁷ Yes, and if you greet only your friends and ask God to bless them, you are not acting any better than other people. Even non-Jews, who do not obey God's law, do the same thing! ⁴⁸ So you must be completely faithful to God your Father in heaven, just as he is completely faithful to you."

Chapter 6

¹ "Make certain that when you do good deeds you are not doing them so people will see what you do. If that is your reason for doing what is good, God, your Father who is in heaven, will not give you any reward. ² So whenever you give something to the poor, do not make other people notice it as if playing a trumpet. That is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the main roads in order that people might praise them. That is the only reward the hypocrites will receive! ³ Instead of doing as they do, when you give something to the poor, do not let other people know what you are doing. ⁴ In that way, you will be giving to the poor secretly. As a result God, your Father who observes you while no one else sees you, will reward you.

⁵ "Also when you pray, do not do what the hypocrites do. They like to stand in

the synagogues and on the corners of the main streets to pray, in order that other people will see them and think highly of them. That is the only reward they will get. ⁶ But as for you, when you pray, go into your private room and close the door in order to pray to God, your Father, whom no one can see. He observes you and will reward you. ⁷ When you pray, do not repeat words many times as the people who do not know God do when they pray. They think that if they use many words, their gods will listen to them and give them what they ask for. ⁸ Do not repeat words as they do, because God your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ So pray things like this:

'Father, you who are in heaven,

May everyone honor you.

¹⁰ May you rule over everyone and everything completely.

May everything happen on earth just as you desire,

just as it happens in heaven.

¹¹ Give us each day the food that we need for that day.

¹² Forgive our sins in the same way that we forgive the people who have sinned against us.

¹³ Do not let us do wrong things when we are tempted,

and rescue us when Satan tries to harm us.'

¹⁴ Forgive the people who sin against you, because, if you do, God, your Father who is in heaven, will forgive your sins. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive other people, neither will God forgive your sins.

¹⁶ When you keep from eating food in order to please God, do not look sad as the hypocrites look. They make their faces appear sad in order that people will see

that they are not eating food. Keep in mind that is the only reward those people will get! ¹⁷ Instead, each of you, when you keep from eating food, should comb your hair and wash your face as usual, ¹⁸ in order that other people will not notice that you are fasting. But God, your Father, whom no one can see, will observe that you are not eating food. He sees you even though no one else sees you, and he will reward you.

¹⁹ Do not selfishly accumulate large quantities of money and material goods for yourselves on this earth, because the earth is where everything perishes—where moths ruin clothing, rust destroys metals, and thieves steal what belongs to other people. ²⁰ Instead, do deeds that will please God so that you store up treasures in heaven. Nothing perishes in heaven. In heaven no moths can ruin clothing, there is no rust, and there are no thieves who could steal. ²¹ Remember that whatever is most important to you, that is what you will be thinking about.

²² "Your eyes are like a lamp for your body, because they enable you to see things. So if you see things as God sees them, it will be as if your whole body were full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are bad, you are not able to see things well. You will be in complete darkness. How greedy you will be!

²⁴ "No one is able to serve two different masters at the same time. If he tried to do that, he would hate one of them and love the other one, or he would be loyal to one of them and despise the other one. Similarly, you cannot worship God and money at the same time."

²⁵ That is why I tell you that you should not worry about things that you need in order to live. Do not worry about whether you will have enough food to eat and things to drink, or enough clothes to wear. The way you conduct your lives is much more im-

portant than those things. ²⁶ Think about the birds. They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops or gather produce into barns. They always have food to eat because God, your Father who is in heaven, provides food for them. ²⁷ None of you can, just by worrying, add years to your life. You cannot add even one minute to your life! So you should not worry about things you need.

²⁸ You should also not worry about whether you will have enough clothes to wear. Think about the way flowers grow in the fields. They do not work to earn money, and they do not make their own clothes. ²⁹ But I tell you that even though King Solomon, who lived long ago, wore very beautiful clothes, his clothes were not as beautiful as one of those flowers.

³⁰ God makes the wild plants very beautiful, but they grow in the field for only a short time. One day they grow, and the next day people will throw them into an oven to burn them. But you are more important to God than wild plants are, and you live much longer. So trust in God, you who have so little faith! ³¹ So do not worry and say, 'Will we have anything to eat?' or 'Will we have anything to drink?' or 'Will we have clothes to wear?' ³² Those who do not know God are always worrying about things like that. But God, your Father who is in heaven, knows that you need all those things. ³³ Instead, make it the most important thing that God should rule over the entire world and that everyone should do what he requires. If you do that, he will give you all the things that you need. ³⁴ So do not be worried about what will happen to you the next day, because when that day comes, you will have enough to be concerned about. So do not worry ahead of time."

Chapter 7

¹ Do not talk about how sinfully others have acted, in order that God will not say how sinfully you have acted. ² If you condemn other people, God will condemn you. To the same extent that you condemn others, you will be condemned. ³ None of you should be concerned about someone else's small faults! That would be like noticing a speck of straw in that person's eye. But you should be concerned about your own big faults because you do not notice a huge wooden plank in your own eye. ⁴ You should not say to other people about their minor faults, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye!' while you still have a wooden plank in your own eye. ⁵ If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first remove the plank out of your own eye before trying to get the speck out of someone else's eye."

⁶ "You do not give things that belong to God to dogs that would attack you. And you do not throw valuable pearls in front of hogs, because they would just walk on them. In the same way, do not tell wonderful things about God to people who you know will do evil things to you in return.

⁷ "Keep asking God for what you need, and keep expecting him to give it to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks God for something, and who expects him to give it to him, will receive it.

⁹ If your son asked you for bread, no one among you would give him a stone, would he? ¹⁰ If your son asked you for a fish, no one among you would give him a snake, would he? ¹¹ You know how to give good things to your children, even though you are evil. So God, your Father who is in heaven, will even more certainly give good things to those who ask him.

¹² So in whatever way you want others to

act toward you, that is the way you should act toward them, because that is the meaning of God's law and of everything that the prophets wrote long ago.

¹³⁻¹⁴ "Going to live forever with God in heaven is difficult; it is like a difficult road that you should take. There is another road, one that most people take. That road is wide; they walk on until they reach a wide gate, but when they go through it, they will die. So I am telling you to take the difficult road and enter the narrow gate to live forever with God in heaven."

¹⁵ Watch out for people who come to you and say falsely that they are telling you what God has said. They are like wolves that have covered themselves with sheepskins to appear harmless but will attack you. ¹⁶ By seeing the fruit that plants produce you know what kind of plants they are. Thornbushes cannot produce grapes and thistles cannot produce figs, so no one thinks of picking grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. ¹⁷ Here is another example: All good fruit trees produce good fruit, but all rotten trees produce worthless fruit. ¹⁸ No good fruit tree produces worthless fruit, and no rotten tree produces good fruit. ¹⁹ Workers chop down and burn up all the trees that do not produce good fruit. ²⁰ By seeing what plants produce, you know what kind of plants they are. Similarly, when you see what the people who come to you do, you will know if they truly produce good or not.

²¹ Even though many people habitually call me Lord, pretending that they have my authority, God will not agree to rule from heaven over some of them, because they do not do what he desires. My Father will agree to rule over only those who do what he wants. ²² On the day that God judges everyone, many people will say to me, 'Lord, we spoke God's message as your representatives! As your representatives

we drove out demons from people! And as your representatives, many times we performed mighty deeds!' ²³ Then I will publicly say to them, 'I have never admitted that you belonged to me. Go away from me, you who do what is evil!"

²⁴ So then, anyone who hears what I say and does what I command will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵ Even though the rain came down and the river flooded, and the winds blew and beat against that house, it did not fall down because it had been built on solid rock. ²⁶ On the other hand, anyone who hears what I say but does not obey me will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ When the rain fell, and the river flooded, and the winds blew and beat against that house, it crashed down and broke completely apart because it was built on sand. So you should obey what I have told you."

²⁸ When Jesus finished teaching all those things, the crowds who had heard him were amazed by how he taught. ²⁹ He taught like a teacher who relies on what he himself knows. He did not teach like those who taught the Jewish laws, who repeated the different things that other men had taught.

Chapter 8

¹ When Jesus went down from the hillside, large crowds followed him. ² After Jesus left the crowds, a man who had a skin disease came and knelt before him. He said to Jesus, "Lord, please heal me, because I know you are able to heal me if you are willing to." ³ Then Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the man. He said to him, "I am willing to heal you, and I heal you now!" Immediately the man was healed from his sickness. ⁴ Then

Jesus said to him, "Make sure that now you do not report about my healing you to anyone other than the priest. Then go to the temple in Jerusalem and give the offering that Moses commanded so people will know about it."

⁵ When Jesus went to the city of Capernaum, a Roman officer who commanded one hundred soldiers came to him. He begged Jesus to help him. ⁶ He said to him, "Lord, my servant is lying in bed at home and is paralyzed, and he has severe pain." ⁷ Jesus said to him, "I will go to your house and heal him." ⁸ But the officer said to him, "I am not worthy for you to come into my house. Instead, just say that my servant is healed, and he will be healed. ⁹ It is the same way with me. I am a soldier; I have to obey my commanders, and I also have soldiers that I command. When I say to one of them 'Go!' he goes. When I say to another 'Come!' he comes. When I say to my slave, 'Do this!' he does it." ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he marveled. He said to the crowd that was walking with him, "Listen to this: I have never before found anyone who trusts in me as much this non-Jewish man. Not even in Israel, where I would expect people to believe in me, have I found anyone who trusts so much in me!" ¹¹ I tell you truly that many other non-Jewish people will believe in me also, and they will come from distant countries, including those far to the east and far to the west, and they will sit down to feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when God will rule from heaven over everything completely. ¹² But as for the Jews whom God intended to rule—he will throw them into hell, where there is total darkness. There they will weep because of their suffering, and they will grind their teeth because they will have severe pain." ¹³ Then Jesus said to the officer, "Go home. What you believed will happen." Then the officer went home and found out that his servant had

become well at the exact time that Jesus told him that he would heal him.

¹⁴ When Jesus and some of his disciples went to the home of Peter, Jesus saw Peter's mother-in-law. She was lying on a bed because she had a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand, and immediately she no longer had a fever. Then she got up and served them some food.

¹⁶ That evening when the Sabbath ended, the crowd brought to Jesus many people whom demons controlled, and other people who were sick. He made the demons leave just by speaking to them, and he healed all the people who were sick. ¹⁷ When he did this, he made come true what the prophet Isaiah had written, 'He freed people from being sick, and he made them well.'

¹⁸ Jesus saw the crowd around him he told his disciples to take him by boat to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹ As they were walking toward the boat, a man who taught the Jewish laws came to him and said, "Teacher, I will go with you wherever you go." ²⁰ Jesus answered him, "Foxes have holes in the ground in which to live, and birds have nests, but even though I am the Son of Man, I do not have a home where I can sleep." ²¹ Another man who was one of Jesus' disciples said to him, "Lord, permit me first to go home. After my father dies I will bury him, and then I will come with you." ²² But Jesus said to him, "Come with me now. The people who are as good as dead, let them wait for their own people to die."

²³ Then Jesus got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴ Suddenly strong winds blew on the water, and very high waves were splashing into the boat and filling it. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ They went and woke him up, and said to him, "Lord, rescue us! We are about to drown!"

²⁶ He said to them, "You should not be ter-

rified! You do not believe very much that I can rescue you." Then he got up and rebuked the wind and told the waves to calm down. Immediately the wind stopped blowing and the water became calm. ²⁷ The men were amazed, and they said to each other, "This man is certainly an extraordinary person! All things are under his control! Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

²⁸ When they came to the east side of the lake, they arrived in the region where the Gadarenes lived. Then two men whom demons controlled came out of the burial caves where they were living. Because they were extremely violent and attacked people, no one dared to travel on the road there. ²⁹ Suddenly they shouted to Jesus, "You are the Son of God! Because you have nothing in common with us, leave us alone! Have you come here to torture us before the time God has appointed to punish us?" ³⁰ There was a large herd of pigs grazing not far away. ³¹ So the demons begged Jesus and said, "You are going to drive us out of these men, so send us into those pigs!" ³² Jesus said to them, "If that is what you want, go!" So the demons left the men and entered the pigs. Suddenly the whole herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the water and drowned. ³³ The men who were tending the pigs became afraid and ran into the town and reported everything that had happened, including what had happened to the two men whom demons had controlled. ³⁴ Then it seemed as if all the people who lived in that town went to meet Jesus. When they saw him and the two men whom demons had controlled, they pleaded with Jesus to leave their region.

Chapter 9

¹ Jesus and his disciples got into the boat.

They sailed over the lake and went to Capernaum, the city where he was staying.² Some people brought to him a man who was paralyzed and who was lying on a sleeping pad. When Jesus perceived that they believed that he could heal the paralyzed man, he said to him, "Young man, be encouraged! I forgive your sins."³ Some of the men who taught the Jewish laws said among themselves, "This man thinks he is God; he cannot forgive sins!"⁴ Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he said, "You should not think evil thoughts!⁵ What is easier, to tell him that his sins are forgiven or to tell him to get up and walk?⁶ So I am going to do something in order that you may know that God has authorized me, the Son of Man, to forgive sins." Then he said to the paralyzed man, "Get up, pick up your sleeping pad, and go home!"⁷ Immediately the man got up, picked up his sleeping pad, and went home!⁸ When the crowds saw this, they were awestruck. They praised God for giving such authority to people.

⁹ As Jesus was going away from there, he saw a man named Matthew. He was sitting at a table where he collected taxes for the Roman government. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and be my disciple!" So Matthew got up and went with him.¹⁰ Jesus and his disciples sat down in a house for a meal. While they were eating, many tax collectors and other persons came and ate with them.¹¹ When the Pharisees saw that, they went up to the disciples and said, "It is disgusting that your teacher eats and associates with tax collectors and other people like them."¹² Jesus heard what they said, so he told them this parable: "It is people who are sick who need a doctor, not people who are well.¹³ You need to learn what these words that God said mean: 'I want you to act mercifully to people and not just to offer sacrifices.' Keep in mind that I came to you, not

to invite people who think that they are righteous to turn away from their sinful lives and come to me, but to invite people who know they are sinners."

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John the Baptizer came to Jesus and asked him, "We and the Pharisees often abstain from food because we want to please God, but your disciples do not do that. Why do they not?"

¹⁵ Jesus answered, "When the bridegroom is with his friends when he gets married, those people do not mourn, do they? No, because they are not sad at that time. But when the bridegroom has to leave them, they will abstain from food, because they will be sad.

¹⁶ People do not sew a patch of unshrunken cloth on an old garment to mend a hole. If they did that, when they washed the garment, the patch would shrink and tear the garment, and the hole would become bigger.¹⁷ Neither does anyone pour fresh grape juice into old skin bags to store it. If anyone did that, those skin bags would tear when the juice became wine. The bags would be ruined, and the wine would be spilled on the ground. Instead, people put new wine into new skin bags, and the bags will stretch when the wine ferments. In this way, both the wine and the bags will be safe."

¹⁸ While Jesus was saying that, a leader in the city came and bowed down before him. Then he said, "My daughter has just now died! But if you come and lay your hand on her, she will live again!"¹⁹ So Jesus got up, and he and the disciples went with the man.²⁰ Then a woman who had been suffering constant bleeding for twelve years came near Jesus. She came behind him and touched the edge of his garment.²¹ She was saying to herself, "If I just touch his garment, I will be healed."

²² Then Jesus turned around to see who

had touched him. And when he saw the woman, he said to her, "Be encouraged, dear woman. Because you believed that I could heal you, I have healed you." The woman was healed at that very moment.

²³ Jesus came to the man's house and saw the flute players playing funeral music; there were also many mourners who were wailing loudly because the girl had died. ²⁴ He said to them, "Go away and stop this funeral music and wailing, because the girl is not dead! She is just sleeping!" The people laughed at him, because they knew that she was dead. ²⁵ But Jesus told them to get out of the house. Then he went into the room where the girl was lying. He took hold of her hand and she became alive again and got up. ²⁶ And the people of that whole region heard about it.

²⁷ As Jesus went away from there, two blind men followed him and shouted, "Have mercy on us and heal us, you Descendant of King David!" ²⁸ Jesus went into the house, and then the blind men went in, too. Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to heal you?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord!" ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and he said to them, "Because you believe that I can heal your eyes, I am healing them right now!" ³⁰ And they were able to see! Then Jesus told them sternly, "Be sure that you do not tell anybody what I have done for you!" ³¹ But they went out and spread the news in that whole region.

³² Just when those two men were leaving, some people brought to Jesus a man who was unable to speak because a demon controlled him. ³³ After Jesus had driven out the demon, the man began to speak! The crowds saw this and they were astonished and said, "Never before have we seen anything as marvelous as this happen in Israel!" ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, "It is Satan,

who rules the demons, who enables this man to drive out demons from people."

³⁵ Then Jesus and his disciples went through many of the cities and towns in the district of Galilee. He was teaching in the synagogues and preaching the good news about how God will rule from heaven. He also was healing the people who had various diseases and illnesses. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds of people, he pitied them because they were upset and worried. They were like sheep that do not have a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples: "The people who are ready to receive my message are like a field where the crops are ready to harvest. But there are not many people who go to gather the crops. ³⁸ So pray and ask the Lord God to send many more people to gather in his crops."

Chapter 10

¹ Jesus told his twelve disciples to come to him. Then he gave them the power to drive out evil spirits that controlled people. He also enabled them to heal people who had all kinds of diseases or who were sick in all kinds of ways. ² Here is a list of the twelve disciples, whom he called apostles. They were Simon, to whom he gave the new name Peter; Andrew, Peter's younger brother; James the son of Zebedee; John, the younger brother of James; ³ Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew, the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; ⁴ Simon the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot, who was disloyal to Jesus and pointed him out to the authorities so they could arrest him.

⁵ When Jesus was about to send his twelve apostles to tell the good news to people in various places, he gave them these instructions: "Do not go where the non-Jews

live or into the towns where the Samaritans live.⁶ Instead, go to the people of Israel; they are like sheep who have strayed away from their shepherd.⁷ When you go to them, proclaim to them that God will soon rule from heaven.⁸ Heal sick people, cause dead people to become alive, heal people with leprosy and bring them back into society, and cause demons to leave those whom they control. Do not charge any money for helping people, because God did not charge you anything for helping you.⁹ Do not take any money with you,¹⁰ nor a bag for what belongs to you. Do not take an extra tunic, nor sandals in addition to what you are wearing, nor a walking stick. Every worker deserves to get pay from the people for whom he works, so you deserve to receive food from the people to whom you go.¹¹ In any town or village that you enter, find a person who wants you to stay in his home.¹² As you go into that house, call upon God to do good to the people who live there. Stay in that home until you leave that town or village.¹³ If the people who live in that house receive you well, God will indeed do good to them. But if they do not receive you well, then your prayer will not help them, and God will not do them good.¹⁴ If the people who live in any house or town do not welcome you, nor listen to your message, leave that place. As you leave, shake off the dust from your feet. By doing that, you will warn them that God will reject them as they rejected what you said.¹⁵ Note this carefully: At the time when God judges all people, he will punish the wicked people who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah. But if the people of any city reject you, God will punish them even more severely.

¹⁶ "Take note: When I send you out, you will be as defenseless as sheep, among people who are as dangerous as wolves. So be careful like snakes are careful and

be harmless to them like pigeons are harmless.¹⁷ Also, be on guard against such people, because they will arrest you and take you to the members of the governing councils to put you on trial. They will whip you in their synagogues.¹⁸ And because you belong to me, they will take you before governors and kings in order that they may put you on trial and punish you. But you will testify to those rulers and to other non-Jews about me.¹⁹ When those people arrest you, do not be worried about what you will say to them, because the words that you should say will come to you.²⁰ It is not that you will decide what to say. Instead, you will say what the Spirit of your heavenly Father tells you to say.²¹ They will take you to the authorities to die because you believe in me. For example, people will do that to their brothers, and fathers will do that to their children. Children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed.²² Many people will hate you because you trust in me. But anyone who faithfully trusts in me until they die, those people God will save.²³ When people in one city cause you to suffer, escape to another city. Note this: I, the Son of Man, will certainly return to earth before you have finished going from one town to another town throughout Israel and telling people about me.

²⁴ A disciple should not expect to be greater than his teacher, and servants are not superior to their master.²⁵ You do not expect that people will treat a student better than they treat his teacher, or that they will treat a servant better than they treat his master. Similarly, because I am your teacher and master, you can expect that people will mistreat you, because they have mistreated me. I am like the ruler of a household, whom they call Satan. If they act that badly toward me, how do you think they will act toward you?"

²⁶ "Do not be afraid of those people. Everything that is covered up will be uncovered, and every secret will be made known. ²⁷ So, instead of being afraid, what I say to you secretly as people do at night, tell it publicly as people do during the day-time. What I say to you privately as people do when they whisper to you, proclaim it publicly. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of people who are able to kill your body but are not able to destroy your soul. Instead, fear God, because he is able to destroy both your body and your soul in hell. ²⁹ Think about the sparrows. They have so little value that you can buy two of them for only one small coin. But when any sparrow falls to the ground and dies, God, your heavenly Father, knows it, because he knows everything. ³⁰ He knows everything about you, too. He even knows how many hairs you have on your head! ³¹ God values you much more than he values sparrows. So, do not be afraid of people who threaten to kill you! ³² If people are willing to tell others that they belong to me, I will also acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven that they belong to me. ³³ But if they are afraid to say in front of others that they belong to me, I will tell my Father, who is in heaven, that they are not mine."

³⁴ "Do not think that I came to earth to cause people to live together in peace. Because I have come, some of those who follow me will die. ³⁵ Because I came to earth, people who do not believe in me will be against those who do believe in me. For example, some sons will oppose their fathers, some daughters will oppose their mothers, and some daughters-in-law will oppose their mothers-in-law. ³⁶ This shows that sometimes a person's enemies will be members of his own household. ³⁷ People who love their fathers or mothers more than they love me are not worthy to belong to me. And people who love their

sons or daughters more than they love me are not worthy to belong to me. ³⁸ If you are not ready to die because you belong to me, then you are not worthy to belong to me. ³⁹ People who deny that they believe in me in order to escape dying will not live with God eternally, but people who are willing to lose their lives because they trust in me will live with God eternally."

⁴⁰ "God considers that everyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and he considers that everyone who welcomes me welcomes him, the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Those who welcome someone because they know that person is a prophet—they will receive the same reward that prophets receive from God. Likewise, those who welcome a person because they know that person is righteous—they will receive the reward that righteous people receive from God. ⁴² Note this: Suppose people see that you are thirsty and give you a drink of cold water because they know that you are one of my disciples, even if you are not an important person at all. God will certainly reward people who do that."

Chapter 11

¹ When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples about what they should do, he sent them to various Israelite towns. Then he went to teach and preach in other Israelite towns in that area.

² While John the Baptizer was in prison, he heard what the Messiah was doing. So he sent some of his disciples to him ³ to ask him, "Are you the Messiah whom the prophets said would come, or is it someone else that we should expect to come?" ⁴ Jesus answered John's disciples, "Go back and report to John what you hear me telling people and what you see me

doing. ⁵ I am making blind people to see again and lame people to walk. I am healing people who have leprosy. I am making deaf people to hear again and dead people to become alive again. I am telling the poor people God's good news. ⁶ Also tell John that God is pleased with people who do not stop believing in me because they do not like what I am doing."

⁷ When John's disciples had gone away, Jesus began to talk to the crowd of people about John. He said to them, "When you went out into the wilderness to see John, what was it you expected to see? You did not go there just to look at the tall grass blowing in the wind, did you? ⁸ So what kind of person did you expect to see? Surely not a man who was wearing expensive clothes. No! You know very well that people who wear clothes like that reside in kings' palaces and not in the wilderness. ⁹ So really, what kind of person did you expect to see? A prophet? Oh, yes! But let me tell you this: John is not just any ordinary prophet. ¹⁰ He is the one to whom God was referring when someone wrote in the scriptures and said,

‘Notice this! I am sending my messenger to go ahead of you to prepare the people for your coming.’

¹¹ Note this: Of all the people who have ever lived, God does not consider any of them to be greater than John the Baptizer. At the same time, God considers those that are not important in the kingdom he rules from heaven to be greater than John.

¹² From the time that John the Baptizer preached until now, some people have been trying to make God rule from heaven in their own way, and they have been using force for this purpose. ¹³ Everything that I am saying about John is just what you can read in what the prophets have written and what the law has been saying until the time of John the Baptizer. ¹⁴ Not

only that, but if you are willing to try to understand this, I will tell you that John is in fact the second Elijah, the prophet who was to come in the future. ¹⁵ If you want to understand this, you must think carefully about what I have just said.

¹⁶ But you and the other people who are alive now, you are like children who are playing games in the marketplace. Some of them call to their friends, ¹⁷ ‘We played happy music on the flute for you, but you refused to dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you refused to cry!’ ¹⁸ I say this because you are dissatisfied with both John and me! When John came and preached to you, he did not eat good food and did not drink wine, like most people do. But you rejected him and said, ‘A demon is controlling him!’ ¹⁹ I, the Son of Man, was not like John. I eat the same food and drink wine as other people do. But you also reject me and say, ‘Look! This man eats too much food and drinks too much wine, and he is friends with tax collectors and other sinners!’ But anyone who is truly wise will show it by doing good deeds.”

²⁰ In the towns where Jesus had performed most of his miracles, the people there still refused to turn to God. So he began to rebuke them by saying to them,

²¹ “You people who live in the city of Chorazin and you in the city of Bethsaida, how terribly you will suffer! I did great miracles in your cities, but you did not stop sinning. If I had done these things in the cities of Tyre and Sidon of long ago, those wicked people would certainly have stopped sinning; they would have put on rough clothing and sat in the cold ashes of their fires, so sorry they would have been.

²² Let me tell you this: God will punish the wicked people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon, but he will punish you even more severely on the final day when

he judges all people. ²³ I also have something to say to you people who live in the city of Capernaum. Do you think that others will praise you so much that you will go right up to heaven? That will not happen! On the contrary, you will go down to where God punishes people after they die! If I had done these same miracles in Sodom of long ago, those wicked people would certainly have stopped sinning, and their city would have been here even today. But you have not stopped sinning. ²⁴ Let me tell you this: God will punish the wicked people who lived in Sodom, but he will punish you even more severely on the final day when he judges all people."

²⁵ At that time Jesus prayed, "Father, you rule over everything in heaven and on the earth. I thank you that you have prevented people who think that they are wise and well educated from knowing these things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept your truth just as little children believe what an adult tells them. ²⁶ Yes, Father, you have done that because it seemed good to you to do so."

²⁷ Then Jesus said to the people, "God, my Father, has revealed to me all the things that I need to know in order to do my work. Only my Father knows who I really am. Furthermore, only I and those people to whom I wish to reveal him really know him. ²⁸ Come to me, all you people who are very weary of trying to obey all the laws your leaders say you should. I will let you rest from all that. ²⁹ Submit to me, like an ox to its yoke, and learn what I have to teach you. I am gentle and humble, and you will truly rest. ³⁰ For the load I will give you is light, and you will carry it easily."

Chapter 12

¹ On a Sabbath at that time, Jesus and the disciples were walking past some grain fields. Because the disciples were hungry, they began to pick some of the heads of grain and eat them, something that the law of Moses allowed. ² Some Pharisees saw them doing that, so they said to Jesus, "Look! Your disciples are doing work on our day of rest. The law does not allow that!" ³ But Jesus answered, "It is written in the scriptures what our ancestor King David did when he and the men with him were hungry. ⁴ King David entered the sacred tent where they worshiped God and ate the bread that had been on display before God. But according to the law of Moses, only priests were permitted to eat that bread, but David and the men who were with him ate it. ⁵ Also, surely you have read what Moses wrote, when he said that even though the priests, by working in the temple on our Sabbath day, are not obeying the Jewish day of rest laws, they are not guilty. ⁶ Let me tell you what this means: I have come to you, and I am more important than the temple. ⁷ You should think about these words of God in the scriptures: 'I want you to act mercifully toward people, and not just offer sacrifices.' If you understood what that means, you would not condemn my disciples, who have done no wrong. ⁸ I am the Son of Man, and I have the authority to tell people what they can do on the Sabbath day."

⁹ After Jesus left there that day, he went into a synagogue. ¹⁰ There he saw a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees kept wanting to debate with Jesus about the Sabbath, so one of them asked him, "Does God permit us to heal people on our day of rest?" They were hoping that Jesus would commit a sin by saying something wrong.

¹¹ He replied to them, "Suppose that one of you had just one sheep, and that it fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath day. Would you just leave it there? Certainly not! You would take hold of it and lift it out right away! ¹² But a person is much more valuable than a sheep. So it is certainly right for us to do good by healing another person any day, even on our day of rest!" ¹³ Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" The man stretched out his withered hand, and it became healthy like the other hand! ¹⁴ Then the Pharisees left the synagogue. They began to plan together how they could kill Jesus.

¹⁵ Because Jesus knew that the Pharisees were plotting to kill him, he took the disciples and went away from there. Large crowds, including many sick people, followed him, and he healed them all. ¹⁶ But he told them firmly that they should not tell other people about him. ¹⁷ By doing this he fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet had written long ago. He wrote,

¹⁸ "Here is my servant whom I have chosen,

the one whom I love and who pleases me.

I will put my Spirit in him,
and he will bring justice and salvation to the non-Jews."

¹⁹ He will not quarrel with people, neither will he shout.

And he will not shout in the streets.

²⁰ He will be gentle with the weak people;

If a person is barely alive, he will not kill him.

And he will judge the people with justice and declare that they are not guilty.

²¹ So the non-Jews will confidently trust in him."

²² One day some men brought to Jesus a man who was blind and unable to speak because he had a demon. Jesus drove out the demon and healed him. Then the man began to talk and was able to see. ²³ All the crowds who saw it marveled. They began asking each other, "Could this man be the Messiah, the descendant of King David, whom we have been expecting?" ²⁴ Because the Pharisees heard about this miracle, they said, "It is not God, but Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, who enables this man to drive demons from people!" ²⁵ But Jesus knew what the Pharisees were thinking. So he said to them, "If the people in one nation fight against each other, they will destroy their nation. If people who live in the same city or house fight each other, they will certainly not remain as one group or family. ²⁶ In the same way, if Satan were driving out his own demons, he would be fighting against himself. He will not be able to continue to rule over his servants! ²⁷ Furthermore, if it is true that Satan enables me to drive out demons, is it also true that your disciples who drive them out do so by Satan's power? No! So they will judge you for saying that Satan's power was behind their work. ²⁸ But because it is God's Spirit who enables me to drive out demons, that proves that the rule of God from heaven is already here.

²⁹ I will show you why I am able to drive out demons. A person cannot go into the house of a strong man like Satan and carry off his possessions if he does not first tie up that strong man. But if he ties him up, then he will be able to take his possessions.

³⁰ No one can be neutral. Those who do not acknowledge that the Holy Spirit enables me to expel demons are opposing me, and those who do not gather people to become my disciples are causing those people to go away from me.

³¹ You are saying that it is not the Holy Spirit who is enabling me to expel demons. So I will say this to you: If those who offend and insult other people in any way are then sorry and ask God to forgive them, God will forgive them. But he will not forgive people who insult the Holy Spirit. ³² God is willing to forgive people who criticize me, the Son of Man. But I warn you that he will not forgive those who say evil things about what the Holy Spirit does. God will not forgive them now, nor in the coming world."

³³ "When you see some fruit from a tree, you decide whether the fruit is good or bad. If it is good, then you know that its tree is also good. If I am doing good things, then you should know whether or not I am good. ³⁴ You are like the children of poisonous snakes! You cannot say anything good, because you are evil. What a person says shows what is inside him. ³⁵ Good people speak good things. That is because it is like they have stored up all these good things in a safe place and can bring them out at any time. But evil people speak evil things. That is because it is like they have stored up all these evil things and bring them out at any time from the place where they store them. ³⁶ I tell you that on the day when God judges, he will make people recall every useless word they have spoken, and he will judge the people by what they have said. ³⁷ God will either declare that you are righteous based on the words that you have spoken, or else he will condemn you based on what you have said."

³⁸ Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish laws responded to Jesus, "Teacher, we want to see you perform a miracle that will convince us that God sent you." ³⁹ Then Jesus said to them, "You people have already seen me perform miracles, but you are evil, and you do not faith-

fully worship God! You want me to prove that God sent me, but God will show you only one miracle. It will be like what happened to Jonah the prophet. ⁴⁰ Jonah was in the stomach of a huge fish for three days and nights before God caused him to come out. Similarly, for three days and nights I, the Son of Man, will be deep in the earth, and then God will cause me to live again. ⁴¹ When God judges everyone, the people who lived in the city of Nineveh will stand in front of him beside you people. But they stopped sinning when Jonah warned them. Now I have come to you, and I am far more important than Jonah was, but you have not stopped sinning. So God will judge you. ⁴² The queen from Sheba, south of Israel, who lived long ago, came from a distant region in order to listen to King Solomon teach many wise things. Now I have come to you, and I am far more important than Solomon was, but you have not stopped sinning. So when God judges everyone, the queen of Sheba will stand in front of him beside you people, and she will condemn you."

⁴³ "Sometimes when an evil spirit leaves a person, it wanders around in desolate areas, seeking someone in whom he can rest. If he does not find anyone, ⁴⁴ he says to itself, 'I will return to the person in whom I used to live.' So he goes back and finds that the Spirit of God is not in control of that person's life. The person's life is like a house that has been swept clean and everything put in order, but it is empty. ⁴⁵ Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil, and they all enter that person and begin living there. So although that person's condition was bad before, it becomes much worse. That is what you wicked people who have heard me teach will experience."

⁴⁶ While Jesus was still speaking to the

crowd, his mother and his younger brothers arrived. They stood outside the house, and they wanted to speak with him.⁴⁷ Someone said to him, "Your mother and your younger brothers are standing outside the house, and they want to talk to you."⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to the person who told him that, "I will tell you who are really my mother and brothers."⁴⁹ He then pointed toward his disciples and said, "These are ones who take the place of my mother and my brothers.⁵⁰ Those who do what God my Father who is in heaven wants take the place of my brother, my sister, or my mother."

Chapter 13

¹ That same day Jesus, along with the disciples, left the house where he was teaching and went to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He sat down there,² and a very large crowd gathered around him to listen to him teach. In order to have a little room, he got into a boat and sat down to teach them. The crowd stood on the shore and listened to him.³ He taught them using many parables. He said, "Listen! A man went out to his field to sow seeds.⁴ As he was scattering the seeds over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. But some birds came and ate those seeds.⁵ Other seeds fell on ground where there was not much soil on top of the rock. Those seeds sprouted very soon, because the sun quickly warmed the shallow soil.⁶ But when the young plants came up, they became too hot in the sunlight, and they dried up because they did not have deep roots.⁷ Other seeds fell on ground that had thorny weeds. The thorny weeds grew together with the young plants, and they crowded out the plants.⁸ But other seeds fell on good soil, and the plants grew and produced a lot of grain. Some plants

produced one hundred times as many seeds as were planted. Some plants produced sixty times as much. Some plants produced thirty times as much.⁹ If you are able to understand this, you should consider carefully what I have just said."

¹⁰ The disciples approached Jesus later and asked him, "Why do you use parables when you speak to the crowd?"¹¹ He answered, "God is revealing to you what he did not reveal before, about how he is ruling from heaven. But he has not revealed it to these other people.¹² Those who are able to think about what I say and understand it, God will enable them to understand more. But those who are not able to think carefully about what I say will forget even what they already know.¹³ That is why I use parables when I speak to people, because although they see what I do, they do not understand what it means, and although they hear what I say, they do not really learn what it means.¹⁴ What these people do completely fulfills what God told the prophet Isaiah to say long ago, You will hear what I say, but you will not understand it. You will see what I do, but you will not learn what it means.

¹⁵ God also said to Isaiah,

"These people are able to hear what I say, but they will never understand the message.

They have eyes that can see, but they will never see clearly what it is they are looking at; they have closed their eyes so they cannot see.

They cannot see with their eyes and they cannot hear with their ears and they cannot understand.

If they could see and hear and understand then they would turn to me," God says, "and I would heal them."

¹⁶ But as for you, God has made you able because you realize what I have done and

because you understand what I say.¹⁷ Note this: Many prophets and righteous people who lived long ago longed to see what you are seeing me do, but they did not see it. They longed to hear the things that you have been hearing me say, but they did not hear what you hear me say.”

¹⁸ Now listen to me explain the parable I told you. ¹⁹ Some people hear about how God is ruling but do not understand it. They are like the path where some of the seeds fell. Satan, the evil one, comes and causes these people to forget what they have heard. ²⁰ Some people hear God’s message and immediately accept it joyfully. They are like the rocky places where some seeds fell. ²¹ But because it does not penetrate deeply into their hearts, they believe it for only a short time. They are like the plants that did not have deep roots. When others treat them badly and make them suffer because they believe in what I have told them, they sin by refusing to believe in it any longer. ²² Some people hear God’s message, but they desire to be rich, so they worry only about money and what they can buy with money. As a result, they forget God’s message and they do not do the things that God wants them to do. These people are like the soil that had the roots of thorny weeds in it. ²³ But some people hear my message and understand it. Some of them do many things that please God, some do even more things that please God, and some do very many things that please God. They are like the good soil where some of the seeds fell.”

²⁴ Jesus also told the crowd another parable. He said, “When God rules from heaven, it will be like a landowner who sent his servants to sow good seed in his field. ²⁵ While those servants were sleeping and not guarding the field, an enemy of the landowner came and scattered weed seeds in the midst of the wheat.

Then he left. ²⁶ After the seeds sprouted and the green plants grew, the heads of grain began to form. But the weeds also grew. ²⁷ So the servants of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, you gave us good seeds and those are the ones we sowed in your field. So where did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸ The landowner said to them, ‘My enemy did this.’ His servants said to him, ‘Do you want us to pull up the weeds?’ ²⁹ He said to them, ‘No, do not do that, because you might pull up some of the wheat at the same time. ³⁰ Let the wheat and the weeds grow together until harvest time. At that time I will say to those who will reap, ‘First gather the weeds, tie them into bundles to be burned. Then gather the wheat and put it into my barns.’”

³¹ Jesus also told this parable: “When God rules from heaven, it is like mustard seeds that grow after a man plants them in his field. ³² Although mustard seeds are among the smallest of all the seeds that people plant, here in Israel they become large plants. When the plants have fully grown, they are larger than the other garden plants. They become shrubs as big as trees, and they are large enough for the birds to build nests in their branches.”

³³ Jesus also told this parable: “When God rules from heaven, it is like a woman who was making bread. She took about forty liters of flour and mixed into it a little bit of yeast, and the bread rose.”

³⁴ Jesus told the crowd parables to teach them all these things. When he spoke to them he habitually told stories like these. ³⁵ By doing that, he made come true what God told one of the prophets to write long ago.

I will speak in parables; I will tell parables to teach what I have kept secret since I created the world.

³⁶ After Jesus sent the crowd away, he went into the house. Then the disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable about the weeds that grew in the wheat field." ³⁷ He answered, "The one who sows the good seed represents me, the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field represents this world, where people live. The seeds that grew well represent the people over whom God rules. The weeds represent the people who do what the devil, the Evil One, tells them to do. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed the weed seeds represents the devil. The time when the reapers will harvest the grain represents the time when the world will end. The reapers represent the angels. ⁴⁰ The weeds are gathered and burned. That represents what will happen when God judges all people, when the world will end. It will be like this: ⁴¹ I, the Son of Man, will send my angels, and they will gather from among all that I am ruling the things that cause others to sin and all those who violate God's will. ⁴² The angels will throw those people into the fires of hell. There those people will weep and grind their teeth because of the great pain that they are suffering. ⁴³ However, the people who have lived as he wants them to will shine out as brightly as the sun shines. They will shine out because God, their Father, will rule over them. If you are able to understand this, you should think carefully about what I have just said."

⁴⁴ "God's ruling from heaven is so precious it is like a man who found a great treasure that another person had buried in a field. When this man dug it up, he buried it again so no one else would find it. Then he went and sold all his possessions to obtain money to buy that field. He then went and bought the field, and so he was able to acquire that treasure.

⁴⁵ Also, God ruling from heaven is so pre-

cious it is like what a merchant did who was looking for good quality pearls to buy.

⁴⁶ When he found one very costly pearl that was for sale, he sold all his possessions to acquire enough money to buy that pearl. Then he went and bought it.

⁴⁷ When God rules from heaven, it is like what certain fishermen did with the fish they caught in a lake with a large net. They caught all kinds of fish, both useful and worthless fish. ⁴⁸ When the net was full, the fishermen pulled it up onto the shore. Then they sat there and put the good fish into buckets, but they threw the worthless ones away. ⁴⁹ This is like what will happen to people when the world ends. The angels will come to where God is judging people and will separate the wicked people from the righteous ones. ⁵⁰ They will throw the wicked people into the fire in hell. And those wicked people will weep and gnash their teeth because of the intense pain they are suffering."

⁵¹ Then Jesus asked the disciples, "Do you understand all these parables I have told you?" They said to him, "Yes, we understand them." ⁵² Then he said, "Those teachers and interpreters who understand these parables and act accordingly under the rule of God from heaven are like a house owner who shares both new things and old things out of his storage room."

⁵³ When Jesus had finished telling these parables, he took the disciples and left that area. ⁵⁴ Then they went to the town of Nazareth, the hometown of Jesus. On the Sabbath he began to teach the people in the synagogue. The result was that the people there were astonished. But some said, "This man is just an ordinary person like us! So how is it that he knows so much and understands so much? And how is it that he is able to do such miracles?" ⁵⁵ He is just the son of the carpenter, is he not? His mother is Mary, and his younger

brothers are James, Joseph, Simon and Judas! ⁵⁶ And his sisters also live here in our town. So how is he able to teach and do all these things?" ⁵⁷ The people there refused to accept that Jesus had such authority. So Jesus said to them, "People honor me and other prophets everywhere else we go, but in our hometowns we are not honored, and even our own families do not honor us!" ⁵⁸ Jesus did not perform many miracles there because the people did not believe that he had such authority.

Chapter 14

¹ During that time the ruler Herod Antipas heard reports about Jesus performing miracles. ² He said to his servants, "That must be John the Baptizer. He must have risen from the dead, and that is why he has power to do these miracles." ³⁻⁴ This is what happened to make Herod think this. Herod had married Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, while Philip was still living. So John kept saying to him, "What you have done is against God's law!" Then, to please Herodias, Herod told his soldiers to arrest John. They bound him with chains and put him in prison. ⁵ Herod wanted to order his men to execute John, but he was afraid of the general public, because they believed that John was a prophet speaking for God.

⁶ One day, Herod gave a party to celebrate his birthday, and Herodias' daughter danced for his guests. Her dancing pleased Herod very much, ⁷ so he promised to give her whatever she asked, and he asked God to be a witness that he had made this promise. ⁸ So Herodias' daughter went and asked her mother what to ask for. Her mother told her what to say. So her daughter went back and

said to Herod, "I want you to cut off the head of John the Baptizer and bring it here on a platter to show that he is really dead!" ⁹ The king was now very sorry that he had promised to give Herodias' daughter whatever she wanted. But because he had called on God to hear him make that promise, and because all his guests had heard him do so, he felt that he had to do what he had said. So he ordered his servants to do what she wanted. ¹⁰ He sent soldiers to go to the prison and cut off John's head. ¹¹ They did that, and they put John's head on a platter and brought it to the girl. Then the girl took it to her mother. ¹² Later John's disciples went to the prison, took John's body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened. ¹³ After Jesus heard that news, he took just the disciples with him and went by boat on the Sea of Galilee to a place where no one lived.

After the crowds heard about where they had gone, they left their towns and followed them, walking along the shore. ¹⁴ When Jesus came to the shore, he saw a very large crowd waiting for him. He felt sorry for them, and he healed the sick people who were among them.

¹⁵ When it was nearly evening, the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This is a place where nobody lives, and it is very late. Tell the crowds to go away so they can buy food in the towns nearby." ¹⁶ But Jesus said to his disciples, "They do not need to leave to get food. Instead, you yourselves give them something to eat!" ¹⁷ The disciples said, "But we have only five loaves of bread and two cooked fish here!" ¹⁸ He said, "Bring them to me!" ¹⁹ Jesus told the crowd of people who had gathered there to sit on the grass. Then he took the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven, thanked God for them, and broke them

into pieces. Then he gave the pieces to his disciples, and they distributed them to the crowd.²⁰ All the people ate until they were no longer hungry. Then some people gathered the pieces that were left over and filled twelve baskets with them.²¹ About five thousand men ate at that time, not counting the women and children!

²² Right after that happened, Jesus told the disciples to get in the boat and to go ahead of him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In the meantime, he was going to send the crowd home.²³ After he sent the crowd away, he went up into the hills to pray by himself. When it was evening, he was still there alone.²⁴ By this time the disciples were a long distance from the shore. The wind was blowing very hard opposite to how the disciples were trying to sail; the wind made very large waves that were tossing the boat back and forth in the water.²⁵ Then Jesus came down from the hills to the water. Some time between three and six o'clock in the morning he walked on the water toward the boat.²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they thought that he must be a ghost. They were terrified, and they screamed in fear.²⁷ Immediately Jesus said to them, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid!"²⁸ Peter said to him, "Lord, if it is you, tell me to walk on the water to you!"²⁹ Jesus said, "Come!" So Peter got out of the boat. He walked on the water toward Jesus.³⁰ But when Peter paid attention to the strong wind, he became afraid. He began to sink in the water and cried out, "Lord, rescue me!"³¹ Right away Jesus reached out with his hand and grabbed Peter. He said to him, "You only trust a little bit in my power! Why did you doubt that I could keep you from sinking?"³² Then Jesus and Peter got in the boat, and the wind immediately stopped blowing.³³ All of the disciples who were in the boat bowed down to Jesus and said, "You are

really the Son of God!"

³⁴ When they had gone further around the lake in the boat, they reached the shore at the town of Gennesaret.³⁵ The men of that area recognized Jesus, so they sent people to inform those who lived in the whole region that Jesus had come. So the people brought to Jesus everyone who was sick.³⁶ The sick people kept begging him to allow them to touch him or even only the edge of his robe so that they would be healed. Everyone who touched him or his robe were healed.

Chapter 15

¹ Then some Pharisees and men who taught the Jewish laws came from Jerusalem to talk to Jesus. They said,² "We see that your disciples disobey the traditions of our ancestors! They do not perform the proper ritual of washing their hands before they eat!"³ Jesus answered them, "And I see that you refuse to obey God's commands just so that you can follow what your ancestors taught you!⁴ God gave these two commands: 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'People who speak evil about their father or mother must be executed.'⁵ But you tell the people, 'You can say to your father or mother, "What I was going to give to you to help provide for you, I have now promised to give to God."'⁶ When you do that, you think that you do not need to give anything to your parents. In that way you ignore what God commanded, just so that you can follow what your ancestors taught you!⁷ You only pretend to be good! Isaiah also told the truth about you when he spoke God's thoughts about your ancestors.⁸ 'These people talk as if they honor me, but they do not care about me,'⁹ It is useless for them to worship me, be-

cause they teach what people thought up as their authoritative teachings.”

¹⁰ Then Jesus again called the crowd to come nearer to him. He said to them, “Listen to what I am about to tell you and try to understand it. ¹¹ Nothing that a person puts into his mouth to eat makes him contaminated. Instead, it is what people say—the words that come from their mouths—that makes a person degraded.”

¹² Later the disciples went to Jesus and said, “Do you know that the Pharisees heard what you said and became angry at you?” ¹³ Then Jesus told them this parable. “My Father in heaven will get rid of all those who teach things that are against what he says, just like a farmer gets rid of plants that he did not plant by pulling them up by their roots. ¹⁴ Do not pay any attention to the Pharisees. They do not help people to understand what God commands, just like blind guides do not help blind people to see where they should walk. Instead, they all fall into the same hole.”

¹⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Explain to us the parable about what a person eats.” ¹⁶ Jesus replied to them, “You should certainly understand what I teach, but I am disappointed that you do not. ¹⁷ You ought to understand that whatever food people eat enters their stomachs, and later what remains passes out of their bodies. ¹⁸

Instead, the evil words that the mouth speaks are what makes God reject a person, because they come from the evil things that the person thinks in his innermost being. ¹⁹ This is because it is people’s innermost beings that cause them to think things that are evil, to murder people, to commit adultery, to commit other sexual sins, to steal things, to testify falsely, and to speak evil about others. ²⁰ It is these actions that cause God to consider people to be unacceptable to him. But to eat with un-

washed hands does not cause God to reject people.”

²¹ After Jesus took the disciples and left the district of Galilee, they all went toward the region where the cities of Tyre and Sidon are located. ²² A woman from the group of people called Canaanites, who live in that region, came to Jesus. She kept shouting to him, “Lord, you are the descendant of King David, you are the Messiah! Have pity on me and my daughter! She is suffering very much because a demon controls her.” ²³ But Jesus did not answer her at all. The disciples said to him, “Tell her to leave because she keeps bothering us by shouting behind us as we go along.” ²⁴ Jesus said to her, “God has sent me only to the people of Israel, because they are like sheep who have lost their way.” ²⁵ But the woman came closer to Jesus and knelt down in front of him. She pled, “Lord, help me!” ²⁶ Then he told her, “It is not good for someone to take food that has been prepared for his children and throw it to the little dogs in the house.” ²⁷ But the woman replied, “Lord, what you say is correct, but even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall to the floor when their masters sit at their own tables and eat!” ²⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “O woman, because you believe firmly in me, I will heal your daughter as you desire!” At that moment the demon left her daughter, and she became well.

²⁹ Then Jesus and his disciples went away from that area, back to the Sea of Galilee. Then Jesus climbed the hill near there and sat down to teach the people. ³⁰ Large crowds kept coming to him for the next two days and brought lame, crippled, and blind people, those who were unable to talk, and many others who had various sicknesses. They laid them in front of Jesus so that he would heal them. And he healed them. ³¹ The crowd saw him heal

people who could not talk, crippled people, lame people, and blind people, and they were amazed. They said, "Praise God who rules over us in Israel!"

³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "This crowd of people has been with me for three days and have nothing left to eat. I feel sorry for them. I do not want to send them away while they are still hungry, because if I did that, they might faint on the way home." ³³ The disciples said to him, "In this place where nobody lives, we cannot possibly obtain enough food to feed such a large crowd!"

³⁴ Jesus asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They answered him, "Seven small loaves and a few small cooked fish."

³⁵ Then Jesus told the people to sit on the ground. ³⁶ He took the seven loaves and the cooked fish. After he had thanked God for them, he broke them into pieces and he kept giving them to the disciples. Then the disciples kept distributing them to the crowd. ³⁷ Because Jesus made the food multiply miraculously, all those people ate and had plenty to satisfy them. Then the disciples collected the pieces of food that were left over, and they filled seven large baskets with them. ³⁸ There were four thousand men who ate, but no one counted the women and the children who also ate.

³⁹ After Jesus sent the crowd away, he and the disciples got in a boat and sailed around the lake to the region of Magadan.

Chapter 16

¹ Some Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and said to him, "Show us that God has really sent you to us! Do a miracle in the sky and use his power to convince us!"

² He answered them, "In our country, if the sky is red in the evening, we say, 'It

will be good weather tomorrow.' ³ But if the sky is red in the morning we say, 'It will be stormy weather today.' By looking at the sky, you can tell what the weather will be, but when you see the things that are now happening all around you, you do not understand what God is doing. ⁴ You evil people have seen me perform miracles, but you do not faithfully worship God. So I will do no miracle for you, except the miracle that happened to Jonah the prophet, who spent three days inside a huge fish but came out again." Then Jesus left them and sailed away, along with his disciples.

⁵ They all sailed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Then the disciples realized that they had forgotten to take anything to eat with them. ⁶ At that point, Jesus said to them, "Be careful not to accept the yeast that the Pharisees and Sadducees want to give you."

⁷ They tried to make sense out of what Jesus had told them, and they said to each other, "He must have said that because we forgot to bring anything to eat!"

⁸ But Jesus knew what they were saying and answered them, "I am disappointed that you think it was because you forgot bring bread that I talked about the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. You believe only a little what I am able to do for you.

⁹ Do not think I am worried about having food. Have you really forgotten how I fed the five thousand with five loaves, or how many baskets of leftover food you gathered up? ¹⁰ Or what about the four thousand people who ate when I multiplied the seven small loaves? And how many baskets of scraps did you gather up then?

¹¹ You should have understood that I was not really speaking about bread. Do not accept yeast from the Pharisees and the Sadducees." ¹² Then the disciples understood that Jesus was not talking about the yeast that is in bread. Instead, he was talking about the wrong teaching of the Pharisees

and Sadducees.

¹³ When Jesus and his disciples entered into the region near the city of Caesarea Philippi, he asked them, “Who do people say that I, the Son of Man, really am?”

¹⁴ They answered, “Some people say that you are John the Baptizer, who has come back to life again. Others say that you are the prophet Elijah, who has returned from heaven as God promised. Still others say that you are the prophet Jeremiah or one of the other prophets who lived long ago, who has come back to life again.” ¹⁵ Jesus said to them, “What about you? Who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter said to him, “You are the Messiah! You are the Son of the all-powerful God.” ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to him, “Simon, son of Jonah, God is pleased with you. What you just said—no human has revealed this to you. Instead, it was my Father who lives in heaven who has revealed this to you. ¹⁸ I will also tell you this: You are Peter, which means ‘rock.’ You will be the support for the group of those who believe in me, like a large rock supports a great building. And even the powers of death will not be strong enough to stand up against it.” ¹⁹ Then he said, “I will enable you to open or close the way for people to come under the rule of God from heaven. Whatever you permit on earth, God will permit in heaven. Whatever you prohibit on earth, God will prohibit in heaven.” ²⁰ Then Jesus warned the disciples strongly not to tell anyone at that time that he was the Messiah.

²¹ From that time Jesus began to teach the disciples that it was necessary for him to go to the city of Jerusalem. There the ruling elders, the chief priests, and the men who taught the Jewish laws would cause him to suffer and die. Then on the third day after that, he would come alive again. ²² But Peter took Jesus aside and began to

scold him for saying these things. He said, “Lord, may God never permit that to happen to you! That must certainly not happen!” ²³ Then Jesus turned to look at Peter, and he said to him, “Get out of my sight, because Satan is speaking through you. You are trying to get me to sin. You are not thinking what God thinks, but only what people think!”

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wants to trust me and go where I am going, he must put away his own desires and purposes, and he must take up his own cross, and go where I go. ²⁵ Whoever tries to save his own life, will find that instead of saving his life, he will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me, he will find his life. ²⁶ What good would it be for a person to get everything he wants in this world, but then for him to lose his life? What will a man gain in his possessions that would be as valuable as his own life?

²⁷ Listen carefully. I, the Son of Man, will leave this earth, but I will return, and the angels of heaven will accompany me. At that time I will have the glorious light that my Father has, and I will reward everyone according to what they did when they were alive in this world. ²⁸ Listen carefully! Some of you who are here now will see me, the one who came from heaven, when I return as king. You will see this before you die!”

Chapter 17

¹ A week after Jesus said that, he took Peter, James, and John, the younger brother of James, and led them up a high mountain where they were away from other people. ² While they were there, the three disciples saw Jesus’ appearance change. His face shone like the sun, and his clothing shone and became as brilliant as light.

³ Suddenly Moses and Elijah, who were important prophets many years ago, appeared and started talking with him. ⁴ Peter saw them and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is excellent for us to be here! If you want me to, I will set up three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁵ While Peter was speaking, a bright cloud came over them. They heard God speaking about Jesus from inside the cloud. He said to them, "This is my Son. I love him. He pleases me very much. So you must listen to him!" ⁶ When the three disciples heard God speaking, they were exceedingly afraid. As a result, they fell face-down on the ground. ⁷ But Jesus went to them and touched them and said to them, "Stand up! Do not be afraid anymore!" ⁸ And when they looked up, they saw that Jesus was the only one who was still there.

⁹ While they were walking down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Do not tell anyone what you saw on the mountain top until God has caused me, the Son of Man, to become alive again after I die." ¹⁰ Those three disciples asked Jesus, "If what you say is true, why do the men who teach the Jewish laws say that it is necessary for Elijah to come back to earth before the Messiah comes?" ¹¹ Jesus answered them, "It is true that God promised that Elijah would come to prepare many people for the Messiah's coming. ¹² But note this: Elijah has already come and our leaders have seen him, but they did not recognize him as the one who would come before the Messiah. Instead, they treated him badly, just as they desired. And those same rulers will soon treat me, the one who came from heaven, in the same manner." ¹³ Then the three disciples understood that when he was talking about Elijah, he was referring to John the Baptizer.

¹⁴ When Jesus and the three disciples returned to the rest of the disciples and to

the crowd that had gathered, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. ¹⁵ He said to him, "Sir, have mercy on my son and heal him! He has epilepsy and suffers very much. Because of this illness, he has fallen in the fire and in the water many times. ¹⁶ I brought him to your disciples in order that they might heal him, but they were not able to heal him." ¹⁷ Jesus responded, "You people of this time do not believe at all in God's power. How confused you are! How long do I have to be with you before you are able to do what I do? Bring the boy here to me!" ¹⁸ When they brought the boy to Jesus, Jesus spoke severely to the demon that was causing the epilepsy. As a result, the demon came out of the boy, and the boy was healed from that time onward. ¹⁹ Later, some of the disciples approached Jesus when he was by himself and asked him, "Why were we not able to drive out the demon?" ²⁰⁻²¹ He answered them, "It is because you did not believe very much in God's power. Think about this: Mustard seeds are very small, but they grow and produce large plants. Similarly, if you believe even a little bit that God will do what you ask him to, you will be able to do anything! You could even say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there!' and it would go where you told it to go."

²² When the disciples had gathered together in the district of Galilee, Jesus said to them, "Someone will soon hand me, the Son of Man, over to the authorities. ²³ They will kill me, but God will cause me to become alive again on the third day after I am killed." When the disciples heard that, they became very sad.

²⁴ When Jesus and the disciples came to the city of Capernaum, the men who collected taxes for the temple approached Peter and said to him, "Your teacher pays the temple tax, does he not?" ²⁵ He answered

them, “Yes, he does pay it.” When the disciples came into Jesus’ house, before Peter began to speak, Jesus said to him, “Simon, from whom do you think rulers collect revenue or taxes? Do they collect taxes from the citizens of their own country, or from citizens of countries they have conquered?”²⁶ Peter answered him, “From citizens of other countries.” Then Jesus said to him, “So citizens of their own country do not need to pay taxes.”²⁷ But go ahead and pay the tax for us so that the temple tax collectors will not become angry with us. In order to get the money to pay it, go to the Sea of Galilee, cast your fish line and hook, and take the first fish that you catch. When you open its mouth, you will find a silver coin that is worth enough to pay the tax for you and me. Take that coin and give it to the temple tax collectors.”

Chapter 18

¹ At that precise time the disciples approached Jesus and asked him, “Who among us will be the most important when God makes you king from heaven?”

² Jesus called a child to come, and he placed that child in their midst.³ He said, “I tell you the truth: If you do not change and become as humble as little children, surely you will not come under the rule of God from heaven.”⁴ The people who become as humble as this child will be the most important people among those over whom God will rule from heaven.⁵ Also, whenever people welcome a child like this one because they love me, God considers that they are welcoming me.”

⁶ “If a person causes someone who believes in me to sin, even if it is someone who people think is as unimportant as this little child, God will severely punish that

person. He will punish that person worse than if someone had thrown him into the sea’s deep waters with a heavy stone tied to his neck!⁷ How terrible it will be for those who cause others to sin. There will always be temptations to sin, but how terrible it will be for anyone to cause another person to sin.⁸ So if you are wanting to use one of your hands or feet to sin, stop using that hand or foot! Even if you have to cut it off so you will not sin! Suppose you had only one hand or one foot and still lived forever with God, how much better is that than if you had both hands and both feet and God threw you into the eternal fire in hell because of your sin.⁹ Yes, and if what you see makes you want to sin, stop looking at those things! Even if you have to gouge out one of your eyes and throw it away to keep from sinning! Suppose you had only one eye and still lived forever with God, how much better is that than if you had both eyes and God threw you into the eternal fire in hell.”

¹⁰ “Be sure not to look down on even one of these children. I tell you truly that the angels who protect them can always go to my Father and report to him if you mistreat the children.”¹¹¹² What do you think you would do in the following situation? If you had one hundred sheep and one of them got lost, you would surely leave the ninety-nine sheep that were on the hillside and go and search for the lost one, would you not?¹³ If you found it, I affirm to you that you would rejoice very much. You would be happy that ninety-nine sheep did not stray away, but you would rejoice even more because you had found the sheep that had strayed away.¹⁴ In the same way that the shepherd does not want one of his sheep to stray away, so God, your Father in heaven, does not want even one of these children to go to hell.”

¹⁵ "If a fellow believer sins against you, go to him when you can be alone with him, and reprove him for sinning against you. If that person listens to you and feels sorry that he has sinned against you, you and he will be good brothers once more. ¹⁶ If, however, that person does not listen to you, go get one or two other fellow believers. Have them go with you so that, as the law says, 'there must be two or three witnesses to confirm every accusation.' ¹⁷ If the one who has sinned against you does not listen to them, tell the matter to the entire congregation so that they can correct him. And if the person does not listen to the congregation, exclude him from among you, just as you would exclude pagans and tax collectors as hopeless sinners. ¹⁸ Keep this in mind: Whatever you decide on earth about punishing or not punishing a member of your congregation is what has also been decided by God in heaven. ¹⁹ Also note this: If at least two of you who live here on earth agree together about whatever you ask for, my Father who is in heaven, will give you what you ask for. ²⁰ This is true, because wherever at least two or three of you assemble because you believe in me, I am with you."

²¹ Then Peter approached Jesus and said to him, "How many times must I forgive a fellow believer who keeps on sinning against me? If he keeps asking me to forgive him, must I forgive him as many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I tell you that the number of times you must forgive someone is not just up to seven, but you must forgive him seventy-seven times.

²³ God's rule from heaven is like a king and his officials. He wanted his officials to pay what they owed him. ²⁴ So those officials came to the king to settle their accounts with him. One of the officials brought to the king owed him a debt that was worth the value of more than three

metric tons of gold. ²⁵ But because he did not have enough money to pay what he owed, the king demanded that he, his wife, his children and all he possessed be sold to someone else and that the king be repaid with the money that was paid for them. ²⁶ Then that official, knowing that he did not have the money to pay that huge debt, fell on his knees in front of the king and he begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you all of it, eventually.' ²⁷ The king, knowing that the official could never pay all that huge debt, felt sorry for him. So he canceled his debt and released him. ²⁸ Then this same official went to another one of the king's officials who owed him a bit less than a year's wages. He grabbed him by the throat, started choking him, and said to him, 'Pay back what you owe me!' ²⁹ That official fell on his knees and begged him saying, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you all of it, eventually.' ³⁰ But the first official kept refusing to cancel that small debt that the man owed him. Instead, he put that official into prison and to stay there until he could pay back all the money that he owed him. ³¹ When the other officials of the king learned that this had happened, they were very distressed. So they went to the king and reported in detail what had happened. ³² Then the king summoned the official who had owed him a debt worth more than three metric tons of gold. He said to him, 'You wicked servant! I canceled that huge debt that you owed me because you begged me to do so! ³³ You should have been merciful and canceled your fellow official's debt, just like I was merciful to you and canceled your debt!' ³⁴ The king was very angry. He handed this official over to some jailers who would torture him severely until he paid all of the debt that he owed." ³⁵ Then Jesus continued by saying, "That is what my Father in heaven will do to you if you

do not feel merciful and sincerely forgive a fellow believer who sins against you.”

18:11 ^[1]The best ancient copies omit the phrase that appears as v. 11. *For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.*

Chapter 19

¹ After Jesus had said that, he took his disciples and left the district of Galilee. They went to the part of the district of Judea that is east of the Jordan River. ² Large crowds followed him there, and he healed the sick among them.

³ Some Pharisees approached him and said to him, “Does our Jewish law permit a man to divorce his wife for any reason whatever?” They asked that in order to be able to debate with him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, “You have read the scriptures, so you should know that at the time when God first created people, ‘He made one man, and he made one woman.’ ⁵ That explains why God said, ‘That is why a man leaves his father and mother and marries his wife. The two of them will live together as though they were one person.’ ⁶ Consequently, although they functioned as two separate people before, they now become as if they were one person. Since that is true, a man must not separate from his wife whom God has joined to him.”

⁷ The Pharisees then said to him, “If that is true, why did Moses command that a man who wanted to divorce his wife should give her a paper stating his reason for divorcing her, and then send her away?” ⁸ Jesus said to them, “It was because your ancestors stubbornly wanted their own ways that Moses allowed them to divorce their wives, and you are no different from

them. But when God first created a man and a woman, he did not intend for them to separate from each other. ⁹ I am telling you emphatically that God considers that any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery, unless his first wife has committed adultery.” ¹⁰ The disciples said to him, “If that is true, it is better for men never to marry!” ¹¹ He answered, “Not every man is able to accept this teaching, but only the men whom God enables to accept it. ¹² There are men who do not marry because their private parts have been defective ever since they were born. There are other men who do not marry because they have been castrated. Then there are still other men who decide not to marry in order to serve God better as he rules from heaven. You who are able to understand what I have said about marriage should accept it and obey it.”

¹³ Then some little children were brought to Jesus in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the people for doing that.

¹⁴ But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them! It is people who are humble and trusting like they are who belong to the rule of God from heaven.” ¹⁵ Jesus then laid his hands on the children to bless them. Then he left that place.

¹⁶ As Jesus was walking along, a young man approached him and said to him, “Teacher, what good deeds must I do in order to live with God forever?” ¹⁷ Jesus said to him, “Why are you asking me about what is good? Only one being is good and really knows what is good. That being is God. But in order to answer your question about desiring to live with God forever, I will tell you to keep the commandments that God gave Moses.” ¹⁸ The man asked Jesus, “Which commandments must I keep?” Jesus answered him,

"Do not murder anyone, do not commit adultery, do not steal things, do not testify falsely,¹⁹ honor your father and your mother, and love every other person as much as you love yourself." ²⁰ The young man said to Jesus, "I have always obeyed all those commandments. What else must I do in order to live with God forever?" ²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you desire to be exactly how God wants you to be, go home, sell everything that you have, and give the money to poor people. The result will be that you will be wealthy in heaven. Then come, follow me, and be my disciple!" ²² When the young man heard those words, he went away feeling sad, because he was very rich and did not want to give away everything he owned.

²³ Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Keep this in mind: It is very difficult for rich people to agree to let God rule their lives. ²⁴ Note this also: It is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It is even more difficult for rich people to come under the rule of God." ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were very astounded. They thought that rich people were the ones whom God blesses the most. So they said to Jesus, "If that is so, it does not seem likely that anyone will be saved!" ²⁶ Then Jesus looked intently at them and said, "Yes, it is impossible for people to save themselves. But God can save them, because God is able to do anything!" ²⁷ Then Peter said to him, "You know that we have left everything behind and we have become your disciples in order to follow you. So what benefit will we get for doing that?" ²⁸ Jesus said to them, "Keep this in mind: You will get many benefits. When God makes the new earth and when I, the Son of Man, sit on my throne in my glory, those of you who have accompanied me will each sit on a throne, and you will judge the people of the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ God will reward those

who, because they were my disciples, left behind a house or a plot of ground, their brothers, their sisters, their father, their mother, their children, or any other family members. God will give them a hundred times as many benefits as they have given up. And they will live with God forever. ³⁰ But many people who are important in this life now will be unimportant at that future time, and many people who are unimportant now will be important at that future time."

Chapter 20

¹ "The way God rules from heaven compares to what the owner of an estate did. Early in the morning the owner of the estate went to the marketplace, where people who wanted work gathered. He went there to hire laborers to work in his vineyard. ² He promised the men whom he hired that he would pay them the standard wage for working one day. Then he sent them to his vineyards. ³ At nine o'clock that same morning he went back to the marketplace. There he saw more men who did not have work. ⁴ He said to them, 'Go to my vineyard as other men have done, and work there. I will pay you whatever wage is right.' So they also went to his vineyard and began to work. ⁵ At noon and at three o'clock he again went to the marketplace and found other laborers whom he promised to pay a fair wage. ⁶ At five o'clock he went to the marketplace once again and saw other men standing there who were not working. He said to them, 'Why are you standing here all day and not working?' ⁷ They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'I will hire you. Go to my vineyard as other men have done, and work there.' So they went.

⁸ When evening came, the owner of the

vineyard said to his manager, ‘Tell the men to come so that you can give them their wages. First, pay the men who started working last, and pay the men last who started working first.’⁹ The manager paid a standard day’s wage to each of the men who did not start working until five o’clock in the afternoon.¹⁰ When the men who had begun working early in the morning went to get their wages, they thought that they would receive more than the standard wage. But they also received only the standard wage.¹¹ So they complained to the owner of the vineyard because they thought their payment was unfair.¹² They said to him, ‘You are not being fair! The men who started working after all of the rest of us worked for only one hour! You have paid them the same wage as you paid us! But we worked hard all day. We even worked through the hottest part!’¹³ The owner of the vineyard said to one of those who complained, ‘Friend, I did not treat you unfairly. You agreed with me to work the whole day for a standard day’s wage.¹⁴ Stop complaining to me! Take your wages and go! I desire to give the same wage that I gave you to the men who began working after all of you had begun working.¹⁵ I certainly have a right to spend my money as I desire, do I not? You should not be envious about my being generous!’¹⁶ Similarly, God will reward well some people who seem to be less important now, and he will not reward some people who seem to be more important now.”

¹⁷ When Jesus was walking on the road up to Jerusalem along with the twelve disciples, he took them to a place by themselves in order that he could talk to them privately. Then he said to them,¹⁸ “Listen carefully! We are now going up to Jerusalem. While we are there, someone will enable the chief priests and the men who teach the Jewish laws to seize me,

the Son of Man, and they will put me on trial. They will condemn me and say that I should die.¹⁹ Then they will put me in the hands of non-Jews so that they can make fun of me, whip me, and kill me by nailing me to a cross. But on the third day after that, God will cause me to live again.”

²⁰ Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, brought her two sons to Jesus. She bowed down before Jesus and asked him to do her a favor.²¹ Jesus said to her, “What do you want me to do for you?” She said to him, “Permit these two sons of mine to sit in the places of most honor when you become king, one on your right hand and the other on your left.”²² Jesus said to her and her sons, “You do not understand what you are asking for. Can you suffer like I am about to suffer?” James and John answered him, “Yes, we are able to do that.”²³ Then Jesus said to them, “Yes, you will suffer as I will suffer. But I am not the one who chooses the ones who will sit next to me and rule with me. God, my Father, will give those places to the ones whom he appoints.”

²⁴ When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had requested, they became angry with them because they also wanted to rule with Jesus in the positions of most honor.²⁵ So Jesus called all of them together and said to them, “You know that those who rule the non-Jews enjoy showing them that they are powerful. Their chief rulers enjoy commanding the people under them.²⁶ You should not be like them. On the contrary, everyone among you who wants God to consider him great must become a servant for the rest of you.²⁷ Yes, and everyone among you who wants God to consider him to be the most important must become a servant for the rest of you.²⁸ You should imitate me. Even though I am the Son of Man, I did not come for others to serve me.

On the contrary, I came in order to serve them and to allow them to kill me, so that my dying would be like a payment to rescue many people from being punished for their sins.”

²⁹ As they were leaving the city of Jericho, a large crowd of people followed them. ³⁰ As they walked along, they saw two blind men sitting alongside the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they yelled to him, “Lord, Descendant of King David, you are the Messiah! Take pity on us!” ³¹ People in the crowd scolded them and told them to be quiet. But the blind men yelled even louder, “Lord, Descendant of King David, you are the Messiah! Have pity on us!” ³² Jesus stopped and called them to come to him. Then he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³³ They said to him, “Lord, heal our eyes so that we can see!” ³⁴ Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Immediately they were able to see, and they went after Jesus.

Chapter 21

¹⁻² As Jesus and his disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the village of Bethphage, near the Mount of Olives. Jesus said to two of his disciples, “Go to the village just ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey and her colt that are tied up. Untie them and bring them here to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you about your doing that, tell him, ‘The Lord needs them.’ He will then allow you to lead them away.” ⁴⁻⁵ When all this happened, what one of the prophets had written came true. That prophet had written, “Tell the people who live in Jerusalem, ‘Look! Your king is coming to you! He will come humbly. He will show that he is humble, because he will

be riding on a colt, the offspring of a donkey.’”

⁶ So the two disciples went and did what Jesus told them to do. ⁷ They brought the donkey and its colt to Jesus. They placed their cloaks on them to make something for him to sit on. Then Jesus mounted and sat on the cloaks. ⁸ Then a large crowd spread some of their outer clothing on the road, and other people cut off branches from palm trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that walked in front of him and those who walked behind him were shouting,

“Praise the Messiah, the descendant of King David!”

“May the Lord God bless this one who comes as God’s representative and with God’s authority.”

“Praise God, who is in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ As Jesus entered Jerusalem, many people from all over the city became excited and were saying, “Why are they honoring this man like that?” ¹¹ The crowd that was already following him answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee!”

¹² Then Jesus went into the temple courtyard and chased out all of those who were buying and selling things there. He also overturned the tables of those who were changing Roman coins for temple tax money, and he overturned the seats of those who were selling pigeons for sacrifices. ¹³ Then he said to them, “A prophet wrote in the scriptures that God said, ‘I want my house to be a place where people pray to me,’ but you people have made it into a place where robbers gather!”

¹⁴ After that, many blind people and lame people came to Jesus in the temple in order that he would heal them, and he did so. ¹⁵ The high priests and the men who

taught the people the Jewish laws saw the marvelous deeds that Jesus did. They also saw the children shouting in the temple, "We praise the Messiah, the descendant of King David!" They were indignant.¹⁶ They asked him, "How can you tolerate this? Do you hear what these people are shouting?" Then Jesus said to them, "Yes, I hear them, but if you remembered what you have read in the scriptures about children praising me, you would know that God is pleased with them. The psalmist wrote, saying to God, 'You have taught infants and other children to praise you perfectly.'

¹⁷ Then Jesus left the city. The disciples went with him to the village of Bethany, and they stayed there that night.

¹⁸ Early the next morning when they were returning to the city, Jesus was hungry.¹⁹ He saw a fig tree near the road, so he went over to it to pick some figs to eat. But when he got close, he saw that there were no figs on the tree, but only leaves. So he said to the fig tree, "May you never again produce figs!" As a result, the fig tree immediately dried up.²⁰ The next day the disciples saw that the fig tree was completely dead. They were astonished and said to Jesus, "How did the fig tree dry up so quickly?"²¹ Jesus said to them, "Think about this: If you believe that God has power to do what you ask him to and you do not doubt that, you will be able to do things like what I have done to this fig tree. You will even be able to do marvelous deeds like saying to that hill over there, 'Uproot yourself and throw yourself into the sea,' and it will happen!²² In addition to that, whenever you ask God for something when you pray to him, if you believe that he will give it to you, you will receive it from him."

²³ After that, Jesus went into the temple courtyard. While he was teaching the people, the chief priests and the elders of

the people approached him. They asked, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who authorized you to do what you did here yesterday?"²⁴ Jesus said to them, "I also will ask you a question, and if you answer me, I will tell you who authorized me to do these things.²⁵ Where did John the Baptizer get his authority to baptize those who came to him? Did he get it from God or from people?" The chief priests and elders debated among themselves about what they should answer. They said to each other, "If we say, 'It was from God,' he will say to us, 'Then you should have believed his message!'²⁶ But if we say, 'It was from people,' the crowd might react violently against us, because all the people believe that John was a prophet whom God had sent."²⁷ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know where John got his authority from." Then Jesus said to them, "Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you who gave me the right to do the things I did here yesterday."

²⁸ "Tell me what you think about what I am about to tell you. There was a man who had two sons. He went to his older son and said, 'My son, go and work in my vineyard today!'²⁹ But the son said to his father, 'I will not go!' But later he changed his mind, and he went to the vineyard and worked.³⁰ Then the father approached his younger son and said what he had said to his older son. That son said, 'Sir, I will go and work in the vineyard today.' But he did not go there.³¹ So which of the man's two sons did what their father desired?" They answered, "The older son." Then Jesus said to them, "So think about this: God will be kind to the tax collectors and prostitutes by agreeing to rule over them much sooner than he will agree to rule over you. This is true, even though you condemn those people because they ignore the law of Moses.³² I say this to you

because, even though John the Baptizer explained to you how to live in the right way, you did not believe his message. But tax collectors and prostitutes believed his message, and they turned away from their sinful behavior. In contrast, even though you saw that they changed, you refused to stop sinning, and you did not believe John's message."

³³ "Listen to another parable that I will tell you. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He built a fence around it. He made a place to collect the juice that would come out of the grapes. He also built a tower in which someone could sit to guard that vineyard. He rented the vineyard to some men who would care for it and give him some of the grapes in return. Then he went away to another country. ³⁴ When it was time to harvest the grapes, the landowner sent some of his servants to the men who were caring for the vineyard to get his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. ³⁵ But the renters seized the servants. They beat one of them, they killed another one, and killed a third one of them by throwing stones at him. ³⁶ So the landowner sent more servants than he had sent the first time. The renters treated those servants the same way that they had treated the other servants. ³⁷ After he heard about this, the landowner sent his own son to the renters to get his share of the grapes. When he sent him, he said to himself, 'They will certainly respect my son and give him my share of the grapes.' ³⁸ But when the renters saw his son arriving, they said to each other, 'This is the man who will inherit this vineyard! Let us join together and kill him and divide the property among ourselves.' ³⁹ So they grabbed him, dragged him outside the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰ Now I ask you, when the landowner returns to his vineyard, what do you think he will

do to those renters?" ⁴¹ The people replied, "He will thoroughly destroy those wicked men! Then he will rent the vineyard to others. They will give him his share of the grapes when they are ripe." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "You need to think carefully about these words that you have read in the scriptures:

The men who were building a large building rejected a certain stone. But others put that same stone in its proper place, and it has become the most important stone of the building. The Lord has done this, and we marvel as we look at it.'

⁴³ I am telling you this: God will no longer let you Jews be the people over whom he rules from heaven. Instead, he will agree to rule over non-Jews, and they will do what he asks them to do. ⁴⁴ Anyone who falls on this stone will break into pieces, and the stone will crush anyone on whom it falls."

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the elders who were Pharisees heard this parable, they realized that he was accusing them because they did not believe that he was the Messiah. ⁴⁶ They wanted to seize him, but they did not do so because they were afraid of what the crowds would do if they did that, because the crowds considered that Jesus was a prophet.

Chapter 22

¹ Then Jesus told the Jewish leaders other parables. This is one of those parables. ² "God ruling from heaven is like a king who told his servants that they should make a wedding feast for his son. ³ When the feast was ready, the king sent his servants to tell the people whom he had invited that it was time for them to come to the wedding feast. The servants went out and told the people. But the people who had

been invited did not want to come. ⁴ So the king sent other servants to again tell those people to come to the feast. He said to those servants, ‘Say to the people whom I invited to come to the feast, “This is what the king says to you, ‘I have prepared the meal. The oxen and the fattened calves have been butchered and cooked. Everything is ready. It is time now for you to come to the wedding feast!’”’ ⁵ But when the servants told them that, they disregarded what the servants said. Some of them went to their own fields. Others went to their places of business. ⁶ The rest of them seized the king’s servants, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷ When the king heard what had happened, he became furious. He commanded his soldiers to go and kill those murderers and burn their city. ⁸ After his soldiers had done that, the king said to his other servants, ‘I have prepared the wedding feast, but the people who were invited do not deserve to come to it. ⁹ So go to the intersections of the main roads. Tell whomever you find that they should come to the wedding feast.’ ¹⁰ So the servants went there, and they gathered everyone they could find. They gathered both bad people and good people. They brought them into the hall where the wedding feast was about to take place. The hall was filled with people. ¹¹ But when the king went into the hall to see the guests, he saw someone who was not wearing clothes that had been provided for the guests to wear at a wedding feast. ¹² The king said to him, ‘Friend, you should never have entered this hall, because you are not wearing the clothes that guests wear at wedding feasts!’ The man did not say anything, because he did not know what to say. ¹³ Then the king said to his servants, ‘Tie this person’s feet and hands and throw him outside where there is total darkness, where people cry out and gnash their teeth because of the

pain they are in.”’ ¹⁴ Then Jesus said, “The point of this parable is that God has invited many to come to him, but only a few people are the ones whom he has chosen to be there.”

¹⁵ After Jesus said that, the Pharisees met together in order to plan how they could cause him to say something that would enable them to accuse him. ¹⁶ They sent to him some of their disciples along with those of the Herodian party. Those said to Jesus, “Teacher, we know that you are truthful and that you teach the truth about what God wants us to do. We also know that you do not change what you teach because of what someone says about you, no matter what kind of person they are. ¹⁷ So tell us what you think about this matter: Is it right that we pay taxes to the Roman government, or not?” ¹⁸ But Jesus knew that what they really wanted to do was evil. They were wanting him to say something that would get him in trouble with either the Jewish authorities or the Roman authorities. So he said to them, “You are hypocrites; you want me to say something for which you can accuse me. ¹⁹ Show me one of the coins with which people pay the Roman tax.” So they showed him a coin called a denarius. ²⁰ He said to them, “Whose picture is on this coin? And whose name is on it?” ²¹ They answered, “It has the picture and name of Caesar, the head of the Roman government.” Then he said to them, “So give to the government what they require, and give to God what he requires.” ²² When those men heard Jesus say that, they marveled that his answer did not enable anyone to accuse him. Then they left Jesus.

²³ During that same day, some Sadducees came to Jesus. They are a Jewish group who do not believe that people will become alive again after they die. They asked Jesus, ²⁴ “Teacher, Moses wrote in

the scriptures, 'If a man dies who did not have any children, his brother must marry the dead man's widow in order that she can have a child by him. The child will be considered the descendant of the man who died, and in that way the dead man will have descendants.' ²⁵ There were seven boys in a family. The oldest one married someone. He and his wife did not have any children, and he died. So the second brother married the widow. But he also died without having a child. ²⁶ The same thing happened to the third brother, and also to the other four brothers, who one by one married this same woman. ²⁷ Last of all, the woman also died. ²⁸ So, at the time when God will raise people from the dead, which of the seven brothers do you think will be her husband? Keep in mind that they had all been married to her." ²⁹ Jesus replied to them, "You are certainly wrong in what you are thinking. You do not know what is written in the scriptures. You also do not know that God has the power to make people alive again. ³⁰ The fact is that the woman will not be the wife of any of them, because after God causes all dead people to live again, no one will be married. Instead, people will be like the angels in heaven. They do not marry. ³¹ But about dead people becoming alive again, God said something about that. I am sure you have read it. Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God said to Moses, ³² 'I am the God whom Abraham worships, the God whom Isaac worships, and the God whom Jacob worships.' It is not dead people who worship God. It is living people who worship him. So we are sure that their spirits are still alive!"

³³ When the crowds of people heard Jesus teach that, they were amazed.

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had answered the Sadducees in such

a way that the Sadducees could not think of anything that they might say to respond to him, the Pharisees gathered together to plan what they would say to him. Then they approached him. ³⁵ One of them was a man who was a lawyer, who had studied well the laws that God gave Moses. He wanted to debate Jesus. He asked him, ³⁶ "Teacher, which commandment in the laws that God gave Moses is the most important?" ³⁷ Jesus quoted the scriptures as he replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your inner being. Show that you love him in all that you desire, in all that you feel, and in all that you think." ³⁸ That is the most important commandment in the laws that God gave Moses. ³⁹ The next most important commandment that everyone must surely obey is: 'You must love the people you come in contact with as much as you love yourself.' ⁴⁰ These two commandments are the basis of every law that Moses wrote in the scriptures and also of all that the prophets wrote."

⁴¹ While the Pharisees were still gathered together near Jesus, he asked them, ⁴² "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose descendant is he?" They said to him, "He is the descendant of King David." ⁴³ Jesus said to them, "If the Messiah is King David's descendant, then David should not have called him 'Lord' when David was saying what the Holy Spirit told him to say. ⁴⁴ David wrote this in the scriptures about the Messiah: 'God said to my Lord, "Sit here beside me on my right, where I will greatly honor you, while I put your enemies under your feet."' ⁴⁵ So, since King David called the Messiah 'my Lord,' the Messiah cannot be just someone descended from David! He must be much greater than David!" ⁴⁶ No one who heard what Jesus said was able to think of even one word to say to him in response. After that, no one else ever dared to ask him an-

other question to try to trap him.

Chapter 23

¹ Then Jesus said to the crowd and to his disciples, ² "The Pharisees and the men who teach our Jewish laws have made themselves the ones who interpret the laws that God had given Moses for the people of Israel. ³ Consequently, you should do whatever they tell you that you must do. But do not do what they do, because they themselves do not do those things. ⁴ They require you to obey many rules that are difficult to obey. But they themselves do not help anyone obey those rules. It is as if they were tying up very heavy loads and putting them on your shoulders for you to carry. But they will not even move one finger to help you carry them. ⁵ Whatever they do, they do those things so that other people will see them and admire them. For example, they make extra wide the tiny boxes containing portions of scripture that they wear on their arms. They enlarge the tassels on their robes to make others think that they honor God. ⁶ They want other people to honor them. For example, at dinners they sit in the seats where the most important people sit. In the synagogues they want to sit in the same kind of places. ⁷ They love for people to greet them with great honor in the markets, and for people to call them 'Teacher.' ⁸ But you, my disciples, should not allow people to call you 'Teacher,' as they do other Jewish teachers. I am the only one who is really your teacher. This means that you are all equal to each other, like brothers and sisters. ⁹ Do not honor anyone on earth by addressing him as 'Father,' because God, your Father in heaven, is your only true father. ¹⁰ Do not allow people to call you 'teacher,' because the Messiah is your only teacher. ¹¹ Instead,

everyone among you who wants God to consider them as important must serve others as servants do. ¹² God will humble those who try to make themselves important. Those who humble themselves, God will make them truly important."

¹³⁻¹⁴ "You teachers of the law and you Pharisees, you are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you, because you refuse to come under the rule of heaven and also keep others out. You yourselves do not want to go in, and you keep others from entering, too."

¹⁵ "You are hypocrites, you teachers of the law and you Pharisees! How terribly God will punish you! You work hard to get even one person to believe what you teach. You even travel across seas and lands to distant places in order to do that. And as a result, when one person believes what you teach, you make that person deserve to go to hell much more than you yourselves do."

¹⁶ "You Jewish leaders, how terribly God will punish you! You are like blind people who try to lead others. You say, 'If someone asks the temple to confirm that he will do something as if the temple were a person, then if he does not do what he promised, it means nothing. But if he asks the gold in the temple to confirm that he will do something, then he must do it.' ¹⁷ You are fools, and you are like people who are blind! The gold that is in the temple is important, but the temple is even more important, because it is the temple that makes the gold to be only for God. ¹⁸ Also you say, 'If someone asks the altar to confirm that he will do something as if the altar were a person, then if he does not do what he promised, it means nothing. But if he asks the gift that he has placed on the altar to confirm that he will do something, then he must do it.' ¹⁹ You are like people who are blind. The gift that you put

on the altar is important, but the altar is even more important because it is the altar that makes the gift only for God.²⁰ So those who promise to do something and then ask the altar to confirm that they will do it, they are also asking everything on the altar to do the same thing.²¹ Yes, and those who promise to do something and then ask the temple to confirm that they will do it, they are also asking that God, to whom the temple belongs, will confirm the same thing.²² And those who promise to do something and then ask heaven to confirm that they will do it, they are asking the throne of God to confirm that they will do it, and they are also asking God, who sits on that throne, to confirm the same thing.”

²³ “You teachers of the law and you Pharisees, how terribly God will punish you! You are hypocrites because, even though you give to God a tenth of the herbs you produce, such as mint, dill, and cummin, you do not obey God’s laws that are more important. For example, you do not act justly toward others, you do not act mercifully toward people, and you take things away from others using force. It is good to give a tenth of your herbs to God, but you should also obey these other more important laws.²⁴ You leaders are like blind people who are trying to lead others. You are careful not to offend God by swallowing even the smallest insect when you drink water, but you act as badly as if you were swallowing a camel!

²⁵ “You hypocrites, you teachers of the law and you Pharisees, how terribly God will punish you! You make yourselves appear like good people to others. You try to make people think you are righteous, but in fact you sin against them by your greed and taking what belongs to others to delight your own pleasures. You are like dishes that are clean on the outside but are still

dirty on the inside.²⁶ You blind Pharisees! First you must stop doing evil things like stealing from others. Then you will be able to do what is righteous and will be like a dish that is clean both outside and inside.”

²⁷ “You hypocrites, you men who teach the laws and you Pharisees, how terribly God will punish you! You are like buildings over people’s graves, buildings that are painted white so that people can see them and avoid touching them. The outside of those tombs are beautiful, but inside they are full of dead people’s bones and filth.²⁸ You are like those tombs. When people look at you, they think that you are righteous, but in your inner beings you are hypocrites, because you disobey God’s commands.”

²⁹ “You men who teach the Jewish laws and you Pharisees are hypocrites! How terribly God will punish you! You rebuild the tombs of the prophets whom others killed long ago. You decorate the monuments that honor righteous people.³⁰ You say, ‘If we had lived when our ancestors lived, we would not have helped those who killed the prophets.’³¹ In this way you admit that you are the descendants of those murderers; so, you are like them!³² You also, go ahead and finish committing all the sins that your ancestors began committing.³³ You people are so wicked! You are as dangerous as poisonous snakes! You foolishly think that you will escape from God punishing you in hell!³⁴ Take note that this is why I will send prophets, wise men, and teachers. You will kill some of them by nailing them to crosses, and you will kill some in other ways. You will whip some of them in the places where you worship and you will chase them from city to city.³⁵ So God will consider that you and your ancestors are guilty for killing all the righteous people

who ever lived on earth, including Adam's son Abel, who was a righteous man, and Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom your ancestors killed in the holy place between the temple and the altar. You also killed all the prophets who lived between the times that those two men lived.³⁶ Think about this: You people who have observed my ministry, it is you whom God will punish for killing all those prophets!"

³⁷ "O people of Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets who lived long ago, and you who killed with stones others whom God had sent to you. Many, many times I wanted to gather you together to protect you, like a hen gathers her young chicks under her wings. But you did not want me to do that.³⁸ So listen to this: Your city will become an uninhabited place.³⁹ Keep this in mind: You will see me again only when I return, when you say about me, 'God is truly pleased with this man who comes with God's authority.'"

Chapter 24

¹ Jesus left the temple courtyard. As he was walking along, his disciples came to him and began talking about how beautiful the temple buildings were.² He said to them, "I tell you the truth about these buildings that you are seeing: an army will completely destroy them. They will throw down every stone in these buildings. Not one stone will remain on top of another stone."

³ Later, as Jesus was sitting alone on the slope of the Mount of Olives, the disciples went to him and asked him, "When will this happen to the buildings of the temple? And what will happen to show that you are about to come again, and to show that this world is about to end?"

⁴ Jesus replied, "All that I will say is, be

sure that no one deceives you about what will happen!⁵ Many people will come and say that they are me. Yes, they will actually say, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many people.⁶ You will hear about wars that are close and wars that are far away, but do not let that trouble you. Keep in mind that God has said that those things must happen. But when they happen, it will not mean that the end of the world has come!⁷ People groups will attack each other, and kings will lead armies against each other. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places.⁸ These things will happen first, but they will be like when a woman starts to suffer pain before she gives birth to a child.

⁹ More bad things will happen. People who oppose you will take you away to suffer and die. People who live in all the people groups will hate you because you believe in me.¹⁰ Also, many people will stop believing because of the way they will suffer. They will betray their own fellow believers and will hate each other.¹¹ Many will come saying that they are prophets, but they will be lying, and they will deceive many people.¹² Because more and more people will disobey God's laws, many believers will no longer love each other.¹³ But all those who keep on believing to the end of their lives, God will save them.¹⁴ Furthermore, believers will preach the good news about how God is ruling in every part of the world, in order to announce it to all people groups. Then the end of the world will come."

¹⁵ "But before the world ends, the disgusting person who will defile the holy temple and cause people to abandon it will stand in the temple. Daniel the prophet spoke and wrote about that long ago. May everyone who reads this pay attention, because I am warning you.¹⁶ When you see

that happen in the temple, those of you who are in the region of Judea must flee to the higher hills! ¹⁷ Those who are outside their houses must not go back into their houses to get things before they run away. ¹⁸ Those who are working in a field should not turn back to get their outer clothing before they flee. ¹⁹ How terrible it will be for pregnant women at that time, and for women who will be nursing their babies, because it will be very difficult for them to run away! ²⁰ Pray that you will not have to flee in the winter when it will be hard to travel, or on the Sabbath, the day of rest; ²¹ because people will suffer very severely when those things happen. People have never suffered that severely since God created the world until now, and no one will ever suffer like that again. ²² If God had not decided to shorten that time when people will suffer so much, everyone would die. But he has decided to shorten it because he is concerned about the people whom he has chosen.”

²³ “At that time, if someone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or if someone says, ‘There is the Messiah!’ do not believe it! ²⁴ They will perform many kinds of miracles and amazing things, in order to deceive people. They will even try to deceive you people whom God has chosen. ²⁵ Do not forget that I have warned you about all this before it happens. ²⁶ So if someone says to you, ‘Look, the Messiah is in the wilderness!’ do not go there. Likewise, if someone says to you, ‘Look, he is in a secret room!’ do not believe that person, ²⁷ because just like lightning flashes from the east to the west and people see it, in the same way, when the Son of Man returns again, everyone will see. ²⁸ It will be clear to everyone just as when you see vultures gathering you know that an animal carcass is there.”

²⁹ “Immediately after people have suf-

fered during that time, the sun will become dark. The moon will not shine. The stars will fall from the sky. And God will shake all things in the sky loose from their place. ³⁰ After that, everyone will see the Son of Man appear in the sky. Then unbelieving people from all people groups on earth will wail because they will be afraid. They will see me, the Son of Man, coming on the clouds with power and great glory. ³¹ He will send his angels to the earth from everywhere in the heavens. When they hear the trumpet’s loud blast, they will gather together God’s people—the ones he has chosen—from across the whole earth.”

³² “Now be sure to learn something from how fig trees grow. When the branches of a fig tree become tender and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. ³³ Similarly, when you see all these things happening, you will know that the time for him to return is very close. ³⁴ Keep this in mind: All of these events will happen before all the people have died who have observed these things. ³⁵ You can be certain that these things that I have told you about will happen. The earth and sky will disappear one day, but what I say will always be true.”

³⁶ “But no other person, nor even any angel in heaven, nor even the Son, knows the day or the hour when these things will happen. Only God the Father knows. ³⁷⁻³⁹ It will be like what happened when Noah lived. Until the flood came, the people did not know that anything bad would happen to them. They were eating and drinking as usual. Men were getting married, and parents were giving their daughters to men to marry them. They were doing all this until the day that Noah and his family entered the big boat. And then the flood came and drowned all those who were not in the boat. Similarly, the un-

believing people will not know when the Son of Man will return. ⁴⁰ When that happens not all people will be taken up to heaven. For example, two people will be in the fields. One of them will be taken up to heaven and the other person will be left here to be punished. ⁴¹ Similarly, two women will be grinding grain with a handmill. One of them will be taken up to heaven and the other will be left. ⁴² So, because you do not know what day your Lord will return to the earth, you need to be ready all the time. ⁴³ You know that if the owner of a house knew at what time in the night thieves would come, he would be awake and prevent the thieves from breaking in. Similarly, the Son of Man will come as unexpectedly as a thief. ⁴⁴ So you need to be ready because the Son of Man will return to the earth at a time when you do not expect him to come.”

⁴⁵ “Think about what every faithful and wise servant is like. The house owner appoints one servant to supervise the other servants. He tells him to give them food at the proper times. Then he leaves on a long trip. ⁴⁶ If the servant is doing that work when the house owner returns, the house owner will be very pleased with him. ⁴⁷ Think about this: The house owner will appoint that one servant to be the supervisor of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But a wicked servant might say to himself, ‘The owner has been away for a long time, so he probably will not return soon and find out what I am doing.’ ⁴⁹ So he will begin to beat the other servants and eat and drink with those who are drunk. ⁵⁰ Then the house owner will come back at a time when the servant does not expect him. ⁵¹ He will punish that servant severely and he will put him where the hypocrites are put. In that place the people cry and grind their teeth because they suffer very much.”

Chapter 25

¹ ”God’s rule from heaven will be like what happened to ten unmarried girls who got ready to go to a wedding feast. They were to take their lamps and go wait for the bridegroom to come. ² Now five of these girls were foolish, and five were wise. ³ The foolish girls took their lamps, but they did not take any extra olive oil for them. ⁴ But the wise girls took oil in their flasks as well as in their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was taking a long time to come, and it became late at night. So all the girls became sleepy and fell asleep. ⁶ In the middle of the night someone woke them up by shouting, ‘Here he is! The bridegroom is arriving! Go outside and meet him!’ ⁷ So all the girls got up and adjusted their lamps for burning. ⁸ The foolish girls said to the wise ones, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are about to go out!’ ⁹ The wise girls replied, ‘No, because there might not be enough oil for our lamps and yours. Go to the sellers and buy some for yourselves!’ ¹⁰ But while the foolish girls were on their way to buy oil, the bridegroom arrived. Then the wise girls, who were ready, went with him into the wedding hall, where the bride was waiting. Then the door was closed. ¹¹ Later, the rest of the girls came to the wedding hall, and they called to the bridegroom, ‘Sir, open the door for us!’ ¹² But he said to them, ‘The truth is that I do not know you, so I will not open the door for you!’” ¹³ Then Jesus continued by saying, “So, in order that this does not happen to you, stay prepared because you do not know when it will be.”

¹⁴ ”When the Son of Man returns from heaven as king, it will be like a man who was about to go on a long journey. He called his servants together and gave them each some of his wealth to invest

and gain more money for him.¹⁵ He gave them money according to their ability to use it. For example, he gave one servant five bags of gold weighing about 165 kilograms, he gave another servant two bags weighing about sixty-six kilograms, and he gave another servant one bag weighing about thirty-three kilograms. Then he left on his journey.¹⁶ The servant who had received five bags of gold went immediately and used that money to gain five more bags.¹⁷ Similarly, the servant who had received two bags of gold gained two bags more.¹⁸ But the servant who had received one bag of gold went and dug a hole in the ground, and he hid it there to keep it safe.

¹⁹ After a long time the servants' master returned. He called them together to find out what they had done with his money.²⁰ The servant who had received five bags of gold brought him ten bags. He said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of gold to take care of. Look, I have gained five more!'²¹ His master replied, 'You are a very good servant! You have been very faithful to me. You have managed a small amount of money very well, so I will put you in charge of a lot of things. Come and be happy with me!'

²² The servant who had received two bags of gold also came, and he said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of gold to take care of. Look, I have gained two more!'²³ His master replied, 'You are a very good servant! You have been very faithful to me. You have managed a small amount of money very well, so I will put you in charge of a lot of things. Come and be happy with me!'

²⁴ Then the servant who had received one bag of gold came. He said, 'Master, I was afraid of you. I knew that you are a man who expects to make a lot of money even if you invest nothing, like a farmer who tries

to harvest a field he did not plant.²⁵ I was afraid of what you might do if I lost the money you lent me to invest, so I hid it in the ground. Here it is now; please take it back!'²⁶ His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! You knew that I expect to make money even when I have invested nothing.²⁷ So then, you should have at least put my money on deposit in a bank, so that when I returned I would get it back with the interest it earned!'²⁸ Then the master said to his other servants, 'Take the bag of gold from him and give it to the servant who has the ten bags!²⁹ To those who use well what they have received, God will give more, and they will have plenty. But from those who do not use well what they have received, even what they already have will be taken away.³⁰ Furthermore, throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness, where he will be with those who are wailing and grinding their teeth in pain.'³¹

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes again in his brilliant light and brings all his angels, he will sit as king on his throne to judge everyone.³² Everyone from all the people groups will be gathered in front of him. Then he will separate the people one from another, as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats.³³ He will put the righteous people on his right and the unrighteous ones on his left, just like sheep and goats."

³⁴ Then he will say to those on his right, 'You people who have been blessed by my Father, come! Come receive all the good things he will give you, for he is now giving you the blessings of his rule—things he has been preparing since the time he created the world.³⁵ These things belong to you, because you gave me something to eat when I was hungry. You gave me something to drink when I was thirsty. When I was a stranger in your town, you

invited me to stay in your houses.³⁶ When I needed clothes, you gave me some. When I was sick, you took care of me. When I was in prison, you came to visit me.'

³⁷ Then the people whom God has declared to be good will reply, 'Lord, when were you hungry and we saw you and gave you something to eat? When were you thirsty and we gave you something to drink? ³⁸ When were you a stranger in our town and we invited you to stay in our houses? When did you need clothes and we gave you some? ³⁹ When were you sick or in prison and we went to visit you? We do not remember doing any of these things for you.

⁴⁰ The King will reply, 'The truth is that whatever you did for any one of your fellow believers, even the most unimportant one, you certainly did it for me.'

⁴¹ But then he will say to those on his left, 'You people whom God has cursed, leave me! Go into the eternal fire that God has prepared for the devil and his angels! ⁴² It is right for you to go there, because you did not give me anything to eat when I was hungry. You did not give me anything to drink when I was thirsty. ⁴³ You did not invite me into your homes when I was a stranger in your town. You did not give me any clothes when I needed them. You did not take care of me when I was sick or in prison.'

⁴⁴ They will answer, 'Lord, when were you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and we did not help you?'

⁴⁵ He will reply, 'The truth is that whenever you did not do anything to help any one of my people, even the most unimportant person, it was I for whom you did not do it.'

⁴⁶ Then those people on my left will go

away to the place where God will punish them forever, but the people good in God's sight will go to where they will live forever with God."

Chapter 26

¹ When Jesus had finished saying all those things, he said to the disciples, ² "You know that two days from now we will celebrate the Passover festival. At that time someone will hand the Son of Man over to those who will nail him to a cross."

³ At the same time the chief priests and the Jewish elders gathered in the home of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas.⁴ There they planned how they could arrest Jesus in some tricky way so that they could have him executed.⁵ But they said, "We must not do it during the Passover festival, because if we do it then, the people might riot."

⁶ While Jesus and his disciples were in the village of Bethany, they ate in the home of Simon, whom Jesus had healed of leprosy.⁷ During the meal, a woman came into the house. She was carrying a beautiful stone jar containing very expensive perfume. She went up to Jesus as he was eating and poured all the perfume on his head.⁸ When the disciples saw that, they were very angry. One of them said, "It is terrible that this perfume was wasted!⁹ We could have sold it and gotten a lot of money for it! Then we could have given the money to poor people."¹⁰ Jesus knew what they were saying, so he said to them, "You should not be bothering this woman! She has done a beautiful thing to me.¹¹ Keep in mind that you will always have poor people among you, so you can help them whenever you want to. But I will not always be with you!¹² When she poured this perfume on my body, it was as if she

knew that I am going to die soon. And it is as if she had anointed my body for being buried. ¹³ I will tell you this: Wherever in the entire world people preach the good news about me, they will tell what this woman has done, and as a result, people will always remember her.”

¹⁴ Then Judas Iscariot, even though he was one of the twelve disciples, went to the chief priests. ¹⁵ He asked them, “If I enable you to arrest Jesus, how much money are you willing to give me?” They agreed to give him thirty silver coins. So they counted out the coins and gave them to him. ¹⁶ From that time Judas watched for an opportunity when they could arrest Jesus.

¹⁷ On the first day of the week-long Festival of Bread with No Yeast, the disciples went to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to prepare the meal for the Passover Celebration so that we can eat it with you?” ¹⁸ Jesus instructed two of the disciples about what they should do. He said to them, “Go into the city to a man with whom I have previously arranged this. Tell him that I, the Teacher, say this: ‘The time that I told you about is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover meal with my disciples at your house, and I have sent these two to prepare the meal.’” ¹⁹ So the two disciples did as Jesus told them. They went and prepared the Passover meal in that man’s house.

²⁰ When that evening had come, Jesus was eating the meal with the twelve disciples.

²¹ He said to them, “Listen carefully to this: One of you is going to enable my enemies to arrest me.” ²² The disciples were very sad. They began to say to him, one after the other, “Lord, it is surely not I!” ²³ He replied, “The one who will enable my enemies to arrest me is the one of you who is dipping bread into the sauce in the dish along with me. ²⁴ It is certain that

I, the Son of Man, will die, because that is what the scriptures say about me. But there will be terrible punishment for the man who enables my enemies to arrest me! It would be better for that man if he had never been born!” ²⁵ Then Judas, the one who was going to betray him, said, “Teacher, surely it is not I!” Jesus replied, “Yes, you are admitting it.”

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and thanked God for it. He broke it into pieces, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take this bread and eat it. It is my body.” ²⁷ Later he took a cup of wine and thanked God for it. Then he gave it to them and said, “Drink from this cup, all of you.

²⁸ The wine in this cup is my blood, which will soon flow from my body. This blood will mark the new covenant that God is making to forgive the sins of many people.

²⁹ Note this carefully: I will not drink wine in this way anymore until the time when I drink it with you with a new meaning. That will happen when my Father rules completely.”

³⁰ After they sang a hymn, they started out toward the Mount of Olives.

³¹ On the way, Jesus told them, “This night all of you will desert me because of what will happen to me! This is certain to happen because these words that God said are written in the scriptures:

‘I will cause men to kill the shepherd,
and they will scatter all the sheep.’

³² But after I have died and become alive again, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there.” ³³ Peter replied, “Perhaps all the other disciples will desert you when they see what happens to you, but I certainly will never leave you!” ³⁴ Jesus replied to him, “The truth is that this very night, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me!” ³⁵ Peter said to him, “Even if they kill me

while I am defending you, I will never say that I do not know you!" All the rest of the disciples also said the same thing.

³⁶ Then Jesus went with the disciples to a place that is called Gethsemane. There he said, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ He took Peter, James, and John with him. He became extremely distressed. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "I am very sorrowful, so much so that I feel as if I were about to die! Remain here and stay awake with me!" ³⁹ After going a little farther, he threw himself facedown on the ground. He prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, do not make me suffer in the way I know I will have to. But do not do as I want. Instead, do as you want!" ⁴⁰ Then he returned to the three disciples and saw that they were sleeping. He woke Peter and said to him, "I am disappointed that you men fell asleep and were not able to stay awake with me for just a short time! ⁴¹ You must keep alert and pray so that you can resist when anyone tempts you to sin. You want to do what I tell you, but you are not strong enough to actually do it."

⁴² He went away a second time. He prayed, "My Father, if it is necessary for me to suffer, may what you want happen!"

⁴³ When he returned to the three disciples, he saw that they were asleep again. They could not keep their eyes open. ⁴⁴ So he left them and went away again. He prayed a third time, saying the same thing that he had prayed before. ⁴⁵ Then he returned to all the disciples. He woke them up and said to them, "I am disappointed that you are still sleeping and resting! Look! Someone is about to enable sinful men to arrest me, the Son of Man! ⁴⁶ Get up! Let us go to meet them! Here comes the one who is enabling them to arrest me!"

⁴⁷ While Jesus was still speaking, Judas arrived. Even though he was one of the twelve disciples, he came to enable Jesus'

enemies to arrest him. A large crowd carrying swords and clubs was coming with him. The chief priests and elders had sent them. ⁴⁸ Judas had previously arranged to give them a signal. He had told them, "The man whom I will kiss is the one you want. Arrest him!" ⁴⁹ He immediately went to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Teacher!" Then he kissed Jesus. ⁵⁰ Jesus replied, "Friend, what you are about to do, do it quickly." Then the men who came with Judas stepped forward and seized Jesus. ⁵¹ Suddenly, one of the men who was with Jesus pulled his sword out of its sheath. He struck the servant of the high priest to kill him, but only cut off his ear. ⁵² Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back in its sheath! All those who try to kill others with a sword—someone else will kill them with a sword! ⁵³ Do you think that if I asked my Father, he would not immediately send more than twelve armies of angels to help me? ⁵⁴ But if I did that, what the prophets have written in the scriptures about what will happen to the Messiah would not be fulfilled."

⁵⁵ At that time Jesus said to the crowd that was seizing him, "You have come here to seize me with swords and clubs, as if I were a bandit! Day after day I sat in the temple courtyard, teaching the people. Why did you not arrest me then? ⁵⁶ But all this is happening to fulfill what the prophets have written in the scriptures about me." Then all of the disciples deserted Jesus and ran away.

⁵⁷ The men who had arrested Jesus took him to the house where Caiaphas, the high priest, lived. The men who taught the Jewish laws and the Jewish elders had already gathered there. ⁵⁸ Peter followed Jesus at a distance. He came to the high priest's courtyard. He entered the courtyard and sat down with the guards to see what would happen.

⁵⁹ The chief priests and the rest of the Jewish council were trying to find persons who would tell lies about Jesus so that they could condemn him to death. ⁶⁰ But even though many people spoke lies about him, they did not find anyone who said anything that was useful. Finally two men came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This man said, 'I am able to destroy God's temple and to rebuild it within three days.'" ⁶² Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to reply? What do you say about these things that they are saying to accuse you?" ⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I command you to tell us the truth; you know that the all-powerful God is listening to you: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" ⁶⁴ Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say. But I will also say this to all of you: Some day you will see the Son of Man sitting beside Almighty God and ruling. You will also see him coming on the clouds from heaven!"

⁶⁵ The high priest was so upset that he tore his outer garment. Then he said, "This man has insulted God! He claims to be equal with God! We certainly do not need anyone else to testify against this man! You heard what he said!" ⁶⁶ What do you think?" The Jewish leaders replied, "According to our laws, he is guilty and deserves to be executed!" ⁶⁷ Then some of them spat in his face. Others struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸ and said, "Since you claim that you are the Messiah, tell us who hit you!"

⁶⁹ Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came up to him and looked at him. She said, "You also were with Jesus, that man from the district of Galilee!" ⁷⁰ But while everyone there was listening, he denied it. He said, "I do not know what you are talking about!" ⁷¹

Then he went out to the gateway of the courtyard. Another servant girl saw him

and said to the people who were standing nearby, "This man was with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." ⁷² But Peter again denied it. He said, "May God punish me if I am lying! I tell you, I do not even know that man!" ⁷³ After a little while, the people who were standing there approached Peter and said to him, "It is certain that you are one of those who were with that man. We can tell from your accent that you are from Galilee." ⁷⁴ Then Peter began to proclaim loudly that God should curse him if he was lying. He asked God in heaven to witness that he was telling the truth and said, "I do not know that man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵ Then Peter remembered the words that Jesus had spoken to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me." And Peter went out of the courtyard, crying hard because he was so sad about what he had done.

Chapter 27

¹ Very early the next morning all the chief priests and Jewish elders decided how to persuade the Romans to execute Jesus. ² Then they tied his hands and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

³ Then Judas, the one who had betrayed Jesus, realized that they had decided that Jesus must die. So was overcome with regret about what he had done. He took the thirty coins back to the chief priests and elders. ⁴ He said, "I have sinned. I have betrayed a man who is innocent." They replied, "That means nothing to us! That is your problem!" ⁵ So Judas took the money and threw it into the temple courtyard. Then he went away and hanged himself.

⁶ The high priests picked up the coins and said, "This is money that we paid for a

man to die, and our law does not allow us to put money like this into the temple treasury.” ⁷ So they decided to use that money to buy a field that was called the Potter’s Field. They made that field a place where they buried strangers who died in Jerusalem. ⁸ That is why that place is still called “The Field of Blood.” ⁹ By buying that field, they made come true these words that the prophet Jeremiah had written long ago: “They took the thirty silver coins—that was what the leaders of Israel decided that he was worth—¹⁰ and with that money they bought the field of the potter. They did that as the Lord had commanded me.”

¹¹ Then Jesus stood in front of the governor. The governor asked him, “Do you say you are the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “Yes, it is as you have just said.”

¹² But when the chief priests and elders accused Jesus of doing various wrong things, he did not answer. ¹³ So Pilate said to him, “You hear how many things they are accusing you of; are you not going to reply?” ¹⁴ But Jesus did not say anything. He did not reply to any of the things about which they were accusing him. As a result, the governor was very surprised.

¹⁵ Now it was the governor’s custom each year during the Passover Celebration to release one person who was in prison. He released whatever prisoner the people wanted. ¹⁶ At that time there was in Jerusalem a well-known prisoner whose name was Barabbas. ¹⁷ So when the crowd gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which prisoner would you like me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus, whom they call the Messiah?” ¹⁸ He asked that question because he realized that the chief priests had brought Jesus to him only because they were jealous of Jesus. And Pilate thought that the crowd would prefer that he release Jesus.

¹⁹ While Pilate was sitting in the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Early this morning I had a bad dream because of that man. So do not condemn that righteous man!”

²⁰ But the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd to ask Pilate to release Barabbas, and to order that Jesus be executed. ²¹ So when the governor asked them, “Which of the two men do you want me to release for you?” They replied, “Barabbas!” ²² Pilate asked them, “So what should I do with Jesus who some of you say is the Messiah?” They all answered, “Command that your soldiers crucify him!” ²³ Pilate replied, “Why? What crime has he committed?” But they shouted even louder, “Have him crucified!”

²⁴ Pilate realized that he was accomplishing nothing. He saw that instead, the people were starting to riot. So he took a basin of water and washed his hands as the crowd was watching. He said, “By washing my hands I am showing you that if this man dies, it is your fault, not mine!”

²⁵ And all the people answered, “May we be guilty for causing him to die, and may our children be guilty, too!” ²⁶ Then he ordered the soldiers to release Barabbas for them. But he ordered that his soldiers whip Jesus. And then he turned Jesus over to the soldiers for them to nail Jesus to a cross.

²⁷ Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the soldiers’ barracks. The whole cohort gathered around him. ²⁸ They pulled off his clothes and put a bright red robe on him, pretending he was a king. ²⁹ They took some branches with thorns and wove them to make a crown and put it on his head. They put in his right hand a reed like a staff that a king would hold. Then they knelt in front of him and made fun of him, saying, “Greetings to the king of the

Jews!" ³⁰ They kept spitting on him. They took the staff and kept striking him on the head with it. ³¹ When they had finished ridiculing him, they pulled off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to the place where they would nail him to a cross.

³² After Jesus carried his cross a short distance, the soldiers saw a man named Simon, who was from the city of Cyrene. They forced him to carry the cross for Jesus. ³³ They came to a place called Golgotha. That name means "the place like a skull." ³⁴ When they got there, they mixed with wine something that tasted very bitter. They gave it to Jesus to drink so that he would not feel so much pain when they nailed him on the cross. But when he tasted it, he refused to drink it. Some soldiers took his clothes. ³⁵ Then they nailed him to the cross. Afterwards, they divided his clothes among themselves by gambling with something like dice to decide which piece of clothing each one would get. ³⁶ Then the soldiers sat down there to guard him, to prevent anyone from trying to rescue him. ³⁷ They fastened to the cross above Jesus' head a sign on which had been written why they were nailing him to the cross. But all it said was, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' ³⁸ They also nailed two bandits to crosses. They placed one cross on the right side of Jesus and the other on the left side. ³⁹ The people who were passing by insulted him by shaking their heads as if he were an evil man. ⁴⁰ They said, "You said you would destroy the temple and then build it again within three days! So if you can do that, you should be able to save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

⁴¹ Similarly, the chief priests, the men who taught the Jewish laws, and the elders made fun of him. They said things like,

⁴² "He saved others from their sicknesses, but he cannot help himself!" "He says that he is the King of Israel. So he should come down from the cross. Then we would believe him!" ⁴³ "He says that he trusts in God, and that he is the man who is also God. So if God is pleased with him, God should rescue him now!" ⁴⁴ And the two bandits who on crosses with him also insulted him, saying similar things.

⁴⁵ At noon it became dark over the whole land. It stayed dark until three o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁶ At about three o'clock Jesus shouted loudly, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" ⁴⁷ When some of the people standing there heard the word "Eli," they thought that he was calling for the prophet Elijah. ⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with sour wine. Then he put the sponge on the tip of a reed and held it up in order that Jesus could suck out the wine that was in it. ⁴⁹ But the other people there said, "Wait! Let us see if Elijah comes to save him!" ⁵⁰ Then after Jesus shouted out loudly again, he died, giving his spirit over to God. ⁵¹ At that moment the heavy thick curtain that closed off the Most Holy Place in the temple split into two pieces from top to bottom. The earth shook, and some large rocks split open. ⁵² Tombs opened up, and the bodies of many people who had honored God became alive again. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus became alive again, they went into Jerusalem and appeared to many people there.

⁵⁴ The officer who supervised the soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross was standing nearby. His soldiers who were guarding the crosses were also there. When they felt the earthquake and saw all the other things that happened, they were terrified. They exclaimed, "Truly he was the Son of

God!"

⁵⁵ Many women were there, watching from a distance. They were women who had accompanied Jesus from Galilee in order to provide the things he needed.

⁵⁶ Among these women were Mary from Magdala, another Mary who was the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of James and John.

⁵⁷ When it was almost evening, a rich man named Joseph came there. He was from the town of Arimathea. He also was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ He went to Pilate and asked Pilate to allow him to take the body of Jesus and bury it. Pilate ordered his soldiers to allow him to take the body. ⁵⁹ So Joseph and others took the body and wrapped it in a clean white cloth. ⁶⁰ Then they placed it in Joseph's own new tomb that workers had dug out of a rock cliff. They rolled a huge circular flat stone in front of the entrance to the tomb. Then they left. ⁶¹ Mary from Magdala and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb, watching.

⁶² The next day was Saturday, the Jewish day of rest. The chief priests and some of the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³ They said, "Sir, we remember that while that deceiver was still alive, he said, 'Three days after I die I will become alive again.' ⁶⁴ So we ask you to order soldiers to guard the tomb for three days. If you do not do that, his disciples may come and steal the body. Then they will tell people that he has risen from the dead. If they deceive people by saying that, it will be worse than the way he deceived people before." ⁶⁵ Pilate replied, "You can take some soldiers. Go to the tomb and make it as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by fastening a cord from the stone that was in front of the entrance to the rock cliff on each side and sealing it. They also left some soldiers there to guard

the tomb.

Chapter 28

¹ After the Sabbath ended, on Sunday morning at dawn, Mary from the town of Magdala and the other Mary went to look at the tomb of Jesus. ² There was a strong earthquake because an angel from God came down from heaven. He went to the tomb and rolled the stone away from the entrance. Then he sat on the stone. ³ His body was as bright as lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. ⁴ The guards trembled because they were very afraid, and then they fell down like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the two women, "You should not be afraid! I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was nailed to a cross. ⁶ He is not here! God has made him alive again, just as Jesus told you he would! Come and see the place where his body lay! ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead! He will go ahead of you to the district of Galilee. You will see him there.' Pay attention to what I have told you!"

⁸ So the women left the tomb quickly. They were afraid, but they were also very joyful. They ran to tell the disciples what had happened. ⁹ Suddenly, as they were running, Jesus appeared to them. He said, "Greetings to you!" The women came close to him. They knelt down and clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid! Go and tell all my disciples that they should go to Galilee. They will see me there."

¹¹ While the women were going, some of the soldiers who had been guarding the tomb went into the city. They reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² So the chief priests and Jewish

elders met together. They thought of a way to explain why the tomb was empty. They gave the soldiers a lot of money as a bribe.¹³ They said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came during the night and stole his body while we were sleeping.'¹⁴ If the governor hears about this, we ourselves will make sure that he does not get angry and punish you. So you will not have to worry."¹⁵ So the soldiers took the money and did as they were told. And this story has been told among the Jews to this very day.

¹⁶ Later the eleven disciples went to the district of Galilee. They went to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.¹⁷ They saw him there and worshiped him. But some doubted that it was really Jesus and that he had become alive again.¹⁸ Then Jesus came close to them and said, "My Father has given me all authority over everything and everyone in heaven and on earth.¹⁹ So go, and use my authority to teach my message to people of all people groups so that they may become my disciples. Baptize them to be under the authority of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember that I will be with you always, until the end of this age."

MARK

Chapter 1

¹⁻² This is the good news concerning Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. Isaiah the prophet mentioned this good news when he wrote:

"Listen! I am sending my messenger ahead of you.

He will prepare the people to welcome you.

³ He will call out to anyone who hears him in the wilderness,

'Make yourselves ready to welcome the Lord.'"

⁴ The messenger that Isaiah wrote about was John. People called him "The Baptizer." John was in the wilderness; he was baptizing people and telling them, "Be sorry that you have sinned, and decide to stop it, so that God may forgive you. Then I will baptize you." ⁵ A great number of people from the district of Judea and the city of Jerusalem went out to the wilderness to hear John speak. Many of those who heard him agreed that they had sinned. Then John baptized them in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore rough clothes made of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. He ate grasshoppers and honey that he found in that wilderness area. ⁷ He was preaching, "Very shortly one will come who is very great. I am nothing compared to him. I am not even worthy to stoop down and untie his sandals. ⁸ I baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹ During the time when John was preaching, Jesus came from Nazareth, a town in the district of Galilee. He went to where John was preaching, and John baptized

him in the Jordan River. ¹⁰ Immediately after Jesus came up out of the water, he saw heaven open up and the Spirit of God descending on himself. The Spirit of God came down like a dove. ¹¹ God spoke from heaven and said, "You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. I am very pleased with you." ¹² Then the Spirit of God sent Jesus out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was there for forty days. During that time, Satan was tempting him. There were wild animals in that place, and angels were taking care of him.

¹⁴ Later, after John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee. In Galilee, he was preaching God's good news. ¹⁵ He was saying, "The time has come at last. God will soon show that he is king. Be sorry that you have sinned, and decide to stop it, so that God may forgive you. Believe the good news."

¹⁶ One day, while Jesus was walking along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two men, Simon and Simon's brother, Andrew. They were casting their fishing net into the sea. They earned money by catching and selling fish. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "Just like you have been gathering fish, come with me and I will teach you how to gather people." ¹⁸ Immediately they left their nets, and they went with him. ¹⁹ After they had gone on a little further, Jesus saw two other men, James and James' brother, John. They were the sons of a man named Zebedee. They were both in a boat mending fishing nets. ²⁰ As soon as Jesus saw them, he told them to come with him. So they left their father, who remained in the boat with the hired servants, and they went away with Jesus.

²¹ Jesus and the disciples went into a nearby town called Capernaum. On the next Sabbath, he went into the synagogue and began teaching the people who had gathered there. ²² They were amazed

at the way he taught. He taught like a teacher who relies on what he himself knows. He did not teach like those who taught the Jewish laws, who repeated the different things that other men had taught. ²³ In the synagogue where Jesus taught, there was a man that an evil spirit controlled. The man with the evil spirit began shouting, ²⁴ “Hey! Jesus, from Nazareth! We evil spirits have nothing to do with you! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the Holy One from God!” ²⁵ Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, saying, “Be quiet and come out of him!” ²⁶ The evil spirit shook the man violently. He screamed loudly, and then he came out of the man and left. ²⁷ All the people who were there were amazed. As a result, they discussed this among themselves, saying, “This is amazing! Not only does he teach in a new and authoritative way, but he also commands the evil spirits and they obey him!” ²⁸ The people very soon told many others throughout the whole district of Galilee what Jesus had done.

²⁹ After they left the synagogue, Jesus, Simon and Andrew, along with James and John, went directly to the house of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon’s mother-in-law was lying in bed because she had a high fever. Right away someone told Jesus about her being sick. ³¹ Jesus went to her, took her by the hand, and helped her up. She immediately recovered from the fever and began serving them.

³² That evening, after the sun had gone down, some people brought to Jesus many others who were sick and those that evil spirits controlled. ³³ It seemed as though everyone who lived in the town was gathered at the doorway of Simon’s house. ³⁴ Jesus healed many people who were sick with various diseases. He also forced many evil spirits to come out from people.

He did not allow the demons to tell people about him, because they knew that he was the Holy One from God.

³⁵ Jesus got up very early the next morning while it was still dark. He left the house and went away from the town to a place where there were no people. Then he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions searched for him. ³⁷ When they found him they said, “Everyone in town is looking for you.” ³⁸ He said to them, “We need to go to the neighboring towns so that I can preach there as well. This is the reason I came here.” ³⁹ So they went throughout Galilee. As they went, Jesus would preach in the synagogues and forced evil spirits to come out from people.

⁴⁰ One day a man who had a bad skin disease called leprosy came to Jesus. He knelt down in front of Jesus and pleaded with him, saying, “Please heal me, because you are able to heal me if you are willing!” ⁴¹ Jesus felt compassion for him. He reached out his hand and touched the man. Then he said to him, “Since I am willing to heal you, be healed!” ⁴² Immediately the man was healed! He was no longer a leper! ⁴³ Jesus gave the man a warning as he was sending him away. ⁴⁴ He said, “Do not tell anyone what just happened. Instead, go to a priest and show yourself to him in order that he may examine you. Then make the offering that Moses commanded for people who have been healed from leprosy. This will be the testimony to the community that you have been healed.” ⁴⁵ The man did not follow Jesus’ instruction. He began telling many people about how Jesus had healed him. As a result, Jesus was no longer able to enter towns publicly because the crowds of people would surround him. Instead, he remained outside the towns in places where no one lived. But people kept coming to him from all over that region.

Chapter 2

¹ After some days had passed, Jesus returned to Capernaum. People spread the news quickly to others that Jesus had returned and was in the house. ² Soon a great number of people gathered where Jesus was staying. The number was so great that the house was full. There was no longer space to stand, not even around the doorway. Jesus spoke God's message to them. ³ Some people came to the house bringing to Jesus a man who was paralyzed. Four men carried him on a sleeping pad. ⁴ They were not able to bring the man to Jesus because of the crowd that had gathered. So, they went up on the roof of the house and made a big hole in the roof above Jesus. They lowered the paralyzed man on his sleeping pad through the hole in front of Jesus. ⁵ After Jesus perceived that the men believed that he could heal this man, he said to the paralyzed man, "My child, I have forgiven your sins!" ⁶ Some men who taught the Jewish laws were sitting there. They started thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Who does this man think he is? He is proud and insults God by saying that! Only God can forgive sins!" ⁸ Jesus knew right away within himself what they were thinking. He said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which would be easier for me to say, 'I have forgiven your sins' or 'Get up! Take your sleeping pad and walk'? ¹⁰ I will show you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Then he said to the paralyzed man, ¹¹ "Get up! Pick up your sleeping pad! And go home!" ¹² The man stood up immediately! He picked up the sleeping pad, and then he went away, while all the people there were watching. They were all amazed, and they praised God and said, "We have never before seen anything like what happened just now!"

¹³ Jesus left Capernaum and walked along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd came to him and he taught them. ¹⁴ As he walked, he saw a man named Levi whose father's name was Alpheus. He was sitting in his office where he collected taxes. Jesus said to him, "Come with me." He got up and went with Jesus. ¹⁵ Later, Jesus was eating a meal in Levi's house. Many sinners and men who collected taxes were eating with Jesus and his disciples. ¹⁶ Men who taught the Jewish laws and who were members of the Pharisee sect saw that Jesus was eating with sinners and men who collected taxes. They asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does he eat and drink with sinners and men who collect taxes?" ¹⁷ After Jesus heard what they were asking, he said to the men who taught the Jewish laws, "Healthy people do not need a doctor. On the contrary, it is those who are sick who need a doctor. I did not come to invite those who think they are righteous to come me, but those who know that they have sinned."

¹⁸ Now at this time, the disciples of John the Baptizer and some men who belonged to the Pharisee sect were abstaining from food, as they often did. Some men came to Jesus and asked him, "The disciples of John and the Pharisees often abstain from food. Why do your disciples not abstain from food?" ¹⁹ Jesus said to them, "When a man is marrying a woman, his friends will certainly not abstain from food while he is still with them. The wedding is a time of feasting and celebrating with the groom. It is not a time for abstaining from food, especially while the groom is with them. ²⁰ But some day, the groom will be taken away from them. Then in those days, they will abstain from food."

²¹ Jesus went on to say to them, "People do not sew a patch of unshrunken cloth on an old garment in order to mend a hole. If

they did, when they washed the garment, the patch would shrink and the new piece of cloth would tear off more of the old cloth. As a result, the hole would become even bigger! ²² Similarly, people do not put new wine into old skin bags to store it. If they did, the new wine will burst the skin bags because they would not stretch when the wine ferments and expands. As a result both the wine and the skin bags would be ruined! On the contrary, people must put new wine into new skin bags!"

²³ On one Sabbath, Jesus was walking through some grain fields with his disciples. As they were walking along through the grain fields, the disciples were plucking some of the heads of grain. ²⁴ Some of the Pharisees saw what they were doing and said to Jesus, "Look! They are breaking the Jewish law concerning the Sabbath. Why are they doing that?" ²⁵ Jesus said to them, "Have you never read the scriptures concerning King David and the men who were with him when they were hungry? ²⁶ During the time Abiathar was high priest, King David entered the house of God and asked for some bread. The high priest gave him some of the bread that had been on display before God. According to our laws, only the priests could eat that bread! But David ate some of it. Then he also gave some of it to the men who were with him." ²⁷ Jesus said to them further, "The Sabbath was established for the needs of people. People were not made in order to meet the requirements of the Sabbath! ²⁸ So, to be clear, the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath!"

Chapter 3

¹ On another Sabbath Jesus again went into a synagogue. There was a man there

whose hand was withered. ² Some men of the Pharisee sect watched him carefully in order to see whether he would heal the man on the Sabbath; they wanted to be able to accuse him of doing something wrong. ³ Jesus said to the man whose hand was withered, "Stand up here in front of everyone!" So the man stood up. ⁴ Then Jesus said to the people, "Do the laws that God gave Moses permit people to do good on the Sabbath, or do evil? Do the laws permit us to save a person's life on the Sabbath, or permit us to refuse to help a person and let them die?" But they did not reply. ⁵ He looked around at them angrily. He was very disappointed that they were stubborn and not willing to help the man. So he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" When the man stretched out his withered hand, it became all right again! ⁶ The Pharisees left the synagogue. They immediately met with some of the Jews who supported Herod Antipas, who ruled the district of Galilee. Together they planned how they could kill Jesus.

⁷ Jesus and his disciples left that town and went to an area further along the Sea of Galilee. A great crowd of people followed him. The people that followed him came from Galilee and Judea, ⁸ from Jerusalem, from towns in the district of Judea, from the district of Idumea, from the region on the east side of the Jordan River, and from the region around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. They all came to him because they had heard about what he was doing. ⁹⁻¹⁰ Because he had healed many people, many other people who had various illnesses pushed forward in order to touch him. They believed that if only they touched him, it would make them well. So he told his disciples that they should get a small boat ready for him in order that the crowd would not crush him when they pushed forward to touch him. ¹¹ Whenever the evil spirits saw Jesus, they caused

the people whom they controlled to fall down in front of Jesus and call out to him, "You are the Son of God!"¹² Jesus commanded the evil spirits strongly that they must not tell anyone who he was.

¹³ Jesus went up into the hills. As he went, he called out to those that he wanted to go with him and they went with him.¹⁴ He appointed twelve men to be with him and for him to send them out to preach. He called them apostles.¹⁵ He also gave them power in order that they might force evil spirits to come out from people.¹⁶ These were the twelve men he appointed: Simon (and Jesus gave him the new name Peter).¹⁷ And along with Peter, Jesus also appointed James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, to both of whom he added the new name, 'Men who are like Thunder' because of their fiery zeal;¹⁸ and he appointed Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, and James who was the son of Alphaeus; and he appointed Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot,¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

²⁰ Jesus and his disciples went to a house. Again a crowd gathered where he was staying. Many people crowded around him. He and his disciples did not even have time to eat.²¹ When his relatives heard about this, they went to take him home with them because some people were saying that he was insane.

²² Some men who taught the Jewish laws came down from Jerusalem. They heard that Jesus was forcing evil spirits to come out of people. So they were telling people, "Beelzebul, who rules the evil spirits, controls Jesus. He is the one who gives Jesus the power to force evil spirits out from people!"²³ So Jesus called those men over to himself. Jesus spoke to them in parables and said, "How can Satan cast out Satan?²⁴ If people who live in the same coun-

try are fighting against one another, their country will cease to be a united country.²⁵ And if people who live in the same house fight each other, they will certainly not remain united as one family.²⁶ Similarly, if Satan and his evil spirits were fighting one another, instead of remaining strong, he would become powerless.²⁷ No one can go into the house of a strong man and take his possessions away from him unless he first ties up the strong man. Only then will he be able to steal the things in that man's house."²⁸ Jesus also said, "Consider this carefully! People may sin in many ways and they may speak evil about God. God can still forgive them,²⁹ but if anyone speaks evil words about the Holy Spirit, God will never forgive them. That person is eternally guilty of sin."

³⁰ Jesus told them this because they were saying, "An evil spirit is controlling him!"

³¹ Jesus' mother and younger siblings arrived. While they stood outside, they sent someone inside in order to call him outside.³² A crowd was sitting around Jesus. One of them said to him, "Your mother and younger siblings are outside. They want to see you."³³ Jesus asked them, "Who is my mother? Who are my siblings?"³⁴ After he looked around at those who sat with him, he said, "Look here! You are my mother and my siblings.³⁵ Those who do what God wants are my brother, my sister, or my mother!"

Chapter 4

¹ Another time Jesus began to teach people alongside the Sea of Galilee. As he was teaching, a very large crowd gathered around him. He got into a boat and pushed out onto the water. Then he sat down in the boat so that he could speak to the crowd better. At the same time, the

crowd was on the shore close to the water. ² Then he taught them many parables. While he was teaching them, he told them this: ³ "Listen to this: A man went out to his field to sow some seeds. ⁴ As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the path. Then some birds came and ate those seeds. ⁵ Other seeds fell on ground where there was not much soil on top of the rock. Very soon the seeds sprouted because the sun warmed the moist soil quickly where it was not deep. ⁶ But after the sun shone on those young plants, they became scorched. Then they withered because they did not have deep roots. ⁷ As he sowed, other seeds fell on ground that contained roots of thorny plants. The seeds grew, but the thorny plants also grew up and crowded out the good plants. So the plants produced no grain. ⁸ But as he sowed, other seeds fell on good soil. As a result, they sprouted, they grew well, and then they produced plenty of grain. Some plants bore thirty times as much as the seed that the man had planted. Some bore sixty times as much. Some bore one hundred times as much." ⁹ Then Jesus said, "If you want to understand this, you should consider carefully what I have just said."

¹⁰ Later, when only the twelve disciples and other close followers were with him, they asked him about the parables. ¹¹ He said to them, "To you I will explain the message about how God reveals himself as king, but to the others I will speak in parables.

¹² When they see what I am doing, they will not learn.

When they hear what I say, they will not understand.

If they learned or understood,

they would be sorry that they had sinned and decide to stop sinning,

and God would forgive them."

¹³ He also said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand when I teach you other parables? ¹⁴ In the parable that I told you, the man who sows seeds represents someone who teaches God's message to others. ¹⁵ Some people are like the path where some of the seeds fell. When they hear God's message, Satan comes at once and causes them to forget what they have heard. ¹⁶ Some people are like the ground where the soil was not very deep over the rock. When they hear God's message, they immediately accept it with joy. ¹⁷ But, because the message does not grow deep, they believe it for only a short time. They are like the plants that did not have deep roots. When others treat them badly or cause them to suffer because they believed God's message, those people who are suffering soon stop believing God's message. ¹⁸ Some people are like the soil that has thorny weeds in it. Those people hear God's message, ¹⁹ but they desire to be rich and they want to own many other things. So they only worry about what they have and they forget God's message and they do not do the things that God wants them to do. ²⁰ But some people are like the good soil. They hear God's message and they accept it and they believe it, and they do the things that God wants them to do. They are like the good plants that produced thirty, sixty, or one hundred grains."

²¹ He told them another parable: "People certainly do not light an oil lamp and then bring it in the house in order to put something over it to cover its light. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that the light will shine. ²² Similarly, things that were hidden—one day everyone will know them, and the things that have happened in secret—one day everyone will

see them in full light. ²³ If you want to understand this, you should consider carefully what you have just heard.”

²⁴ “Consider carefully what you hear me say to you. For whatever size container you use, it will be filled for you. ²⁵ For if person has some understanding, he will receive even more. But if a person does not have understanding, even what little he has, he will lose.”

²⁶ Jesus also said, “When God begins to show himself as king, it is like a man who has scattered seed on the ground.

²⁷ Afterwards he slept each night and rose up each day without worrying about the seeds. During that time the seeds sprouted and grew in a way that he did not understand. ²⁸ The ground produced the crop on its own. First the stalks appeared. Then the heads appeared. Then the full kernels in the heads appeared. ²⁹ As soon as the grain was ripe he sent people to harvest it because it was time to harvest the grain.”

³⁰ Jesus told them another parable. He said, “When God begins to show himself as king, what is it like? What parable can I use to describe it? ³¹ It is like mustard seeds. You know what happens to mustard seeds when we plant them. Though mustard seeds are among the smallest of seeds, they become large plants. ³² After they are planted, they grow up and become larger than the other garden plants. They put out big branches so that birds are able to make nests in their shade.”

³³ Jesus used many parables when he talked to the people about God message. If they were able to understand some, he kept telling them more. ³⁴ He always used parables when he spoke to them. But he explained all the parables to his own disciples when he was alone with them.

³⁵ On that same day, when the sun was

setting, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.”

³⁶ Jesus was already in the boat, so they left the crowd of people and sailed away. Other people also went along with them in their boats. ³⁷ A strong wind came up and the waves started coming into the boat! The boat was soon nearly full of water! ³⁸ Jesus was in the back part of the boat. He was sleeping with his head on a cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher! Are you not concerned that we are about to die?” ³⁹ So Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and he spoke to the sea, “Be quiet! Be still!” The wind stopped blowing and then the sea became very calm. ⁴⁰ He said to the disciples, “Why are you afraid? Do you not yet have faith?” ⁴¹ They were terrified. They said to one another, “Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Chapter 5

¹ Jesus and his disciples arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. People called the Gerasenes lived near the place where they landed. ² When Jesus stepped out of the boat, a man came out from the tombs in a cemetery. Evil spirits controlled the man.

³ The man was coming out of the cemetery because he lived in tombs. The people knew him and at times they tried to restrain him. They could not restrain him, not even with chains. ⁴ Whenever they used chains and shackles, the man would break them apart. He was so strong that no one was able to subdue him.

⁵ Day and night the man would spend his time in the cemetery. He would scream out loud and cut himself with sharp stones. ⁶ When he saw Jesus in the distance getting out of the boat, he ran over to him and knelt before him. ⁷⁻⁸ Jesus had been saying to the evil spirit, “You

evil spirit, come out of this man!” But the demon did not leave quickly. It shouted very loudly, “Jesus, I know that you are the Son of God, so we have nothing in common. Leave me alone! In God’s name, I beg you. Do not torture me!”⁹ Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion because there are many of us evil spirits in this man.”¹⁰ Then the evil spirits kept asking Jesus fervently that he not send them out of the region.¹¹ At the same time, a large herd of pigs was grazing nearby on the hillside.¹² So the evil spirits pleaded with Jesus, “Allow us to go to the pigs in order that we might enter them!”¹³ Jesus permitted them to do that. So the evil spirits left the man and entered the pigs. The herd, which numbered about two thousand, rushed down the steep hill into the lake, where they drowned.

¹⁴ The men who were tending the pigs ran and reported in the town and the countryside what had happened. Many people went to see for themselves what had happened.¹⁵ They came to the place where Jesus was. Then they saw the man whom evil spirits had previously controlled. He was sitting there with clothes on and mentally sound. They were afraid when they saw all this.¹⁶ The people who had seen the events told those who had come from the town and from the countryside about what had happened to the man whom the evil spirits previously controlled. They also described what had happened to the pigs.¹⁷ Then the people pleaded with Jesus to leave their region.

¹⁸ As Jesus got in the boat to leave, the man whom the evil spirits previously controlled begged Jesus, “Please let me go with you!”¹⁹ But Jesus did not let him go with him. Instead, he said to him, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and tell

them how he has been so kind to you.”²⁰ So the man went and traveled around the Ten Towns in that district. He told people how much Jesus had done for him. All the people who heard what the man said were amazed.

²¹ Once more Jesus crossed over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in a boat. When he arrived, a large crowd gathered around Jesus while he was standing on the shore.²² One of the men who presided over a synagogue, whose name was Jairus, came there. When he saw Jesus, he knelt at his feet.²³ Then he pleaded with Jesus earnestly, “My daughter is sick and nearly dead! Please come to my house and place your hands on her. Heal her and make her live!”²⁴ So Jesus and the disciples went with him. A large crowd followed and many pushed in close to Jesus.²⁵ There was a woman in the crowd who had a bleeding disorder. She had been bleeding every day for twelve years.²⁶ She had suffered much over the years while doctors treated her. She had spent all her money to pay the doctors and after all they did to her, she got worse instead of better.²⁷ When she heard that Jesus healed people, she came to where he was and pushed in the crowd close behind Jesus.²⁸ She was thinking, “If I touch him or even if I touch his clothes, it will heal me.” So she touched Jesus’ clothes.²⁹ At once her bleeding stopped. At the same time, she sensed within herself that she had been cured of her illness.³⁰ Jesus also immediately sensed within himself that his power had healed someone. So he turned around in the crowd and then he asked, “Who touched my clothes?”³¹ His disciples replied, “You can see that many people are crowding close to you! Probably many people touched you! So why do you ask, ‘Who touched me?’”³² But Jesus kept looking around in order to see the one who had done it.³³ The woman was

very afraid and trembling. She knelt before him and told him what she had done.

³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, because you have believed that I could heal you, I have now healed you. You may go home with peace in your heart, because I promise that you will not be sick with this disease anymore.”

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking to that woman, some people arrived who had come from Jairus’ house. They said to Jairus, “Your daughter has now died. So there is no need to bother the teacher any longer, to bring him to your house!” ³⁶

But when Jesus heard what these men said, he said to Jairus, “Do not think that the situation is hopeless! Just keep believing that she will live!” ³⁷⁻³⁸ Then he allowed only his three closest disciples, Peter, James, and John, to go with him to Jairus’ house. He did not allow any other people to go with him. After they arrived near the house, Jesus saw that the people there were grieving. Some were weeping and others were wailing. ³⁹ He entered the house and then he said to them,

“Why are you so upset and crying? The child is not dead, but only sleeping.” ⁴⁰

The people laughed at him, because they knew that she was dead. He sent all the other people outside the house. Then he took the child’s father and mother and the three disciples who were with him. He went into the room where the child was lying. ⁴¹ He took hold of the child’s hand and said to her in her own language, “Talitha koum!” That means, “Little girl, get up!” ⁴² At once the girl got up and walked around. (It was not surprising that she could walk, because she was twelve years old.) When this happened, all who were present were greatly amazed. ⁴³ Jesus ordered them strictly, “Do not tell anyone about what I have done!” Then he told them to give the girl something to eat.

Chapter 6

¹ Jesus left Capernaum and went to his hometown, Nazareth. His disciples went with him. ² On the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and taught the people. Many who were listening to him were amazed. They wondered where he gained all his wisdom and the power to perform miracles. ³ They said, “He is just an ordinary carpenter! We know him and his family! We know Mary his mother! We know his younger brothers James, Joses, Judas and Simon! And his younger sisters also live here with us!” So they resented him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, “It is certainly true that people honor me and other prophets in other places, but not in our hometowns! Even our relatives and the people who live in our own houses do not honor us!”

⁵ So, although he healed a few sick people there, he was not able to perform any other miracle. ⁶ He was amazed by their unbelief, but he went through their villages and taught them.

⁷ One day he called the twelve disciples together, and then he told them that he was going to send them out two by two to teach people in various towns. He gave them power to force evil spirits out from people. ⁸⁻⁹ He also instructed them to wear sandals and to take along a walking stick when they were traveling. He told them not to take food, nor a bag in which to put supplies, nor any money for their journey. He also did not allow them to take an extra tunic. ¹⁰ He also instructed them, “After you enter a town, if someone invites you to stay in his house, go into his house. Eat and sleep in that same home until you leave that town. ¹¹ Wherever the people do not welcome you and wherever the people do not listen to you, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that place. By doing that, you will be testifying

that they did not welcome you.”¹² So after the disciples went out to various towns, they were preaching that people should be sorry that they have sinned, and decide to stop it, so that God may forgive them.¹³ They were also forcing many evil spirits out from people, and they were anointing many sick people with olive oil and healing them.

¹⁴ Now King Herod Antipas heard about what Jesus was doing, because many people were talking about it. Some people were saying about Jesus, “He must be John the Baptizer! He has risen from the dead! That is why he has God’s power to perform these miracles!”¹⁵ Others were saying about Jesus, “He is the ancient prophet Elijah, whom God promised to send back again.” Others were saying about Jesus, “No, he is a different prophet, like one of the other prophets who lived long ago.”

¹⁶ Having heard what the people were saying, King Herod Antipas himself said, “The man performing those miracles must be John! I commanded my soldiers to cut off his head, but he has become alive again!”¹⁷ What happened was this—some time before, Herod had taken and married Herodias, although she was the wife of his brother, Philip.¹⁸ After that,

John kept telling Herod, “God’s law does not permit you to marry the wife of your brother while he is still alive.” Then, because Herodias urged him to put John in prison, Herod himself sent soldiers to John. They arrested John and put him in prison.¹⁹ But because Herodias wanted to get further revenge on John, she wanted someone to execute him. But she could not do that because while John was in prison, Herod kept John safe from her.²⁰ Herod did this because he respected John, because he knew that he was a righteous man who devoted himself to God. Whenever Herod listened to him, he became very disturbed and did not know what he

should do with him, but he liked to listen to him.²¹ But Herodias was able to eventually have someone execute John. One day when they honored Herod on his birthday, he invited the most important government officials, the most important army leaders, and the most important men in the district of Galilee to eat and celebrate with him.²² While they were eating, Herodias’ daughter came into the room and danced for the king and his guests. She pleased King Herod and his guests so much that he said to her, “Ask me for whatever you wish and I will give it to you!”²³ He also said to her, “Whatever you ask, I will give it to you! I will give you up to half of what I own and rule, if you ask for it.”²⁴ The girl left the room and went to her mother. She told her what the king had said, and asked her, “What should I ask for?” Her mother replied, “Ask the king to give you the head of John the Baptizer!”²⁵ The girl quickly entered the room again. She went to the king and she said, “I want you to command someone to cut off the head of John the Baptizer and bring it to me at once on a platter!”²⁶ The king became very distressed when he heard what she asked for because he knew John was a very righteous man. But he could not refuse what she requested because he had promised that he would give her anything she asked for, and his guests had heard him promise.²⁷ So the king at once ordered someone to go and cut off John’s head and bring it to the girl. That man went to the prison and cut off John’s head.²⁸ He put it on a platter, brought it back, and gave it to the girl. The girl took it to her mother.²⁹ After John’s disciples heard what happened, they went to the prison and took John’s body; then they buried it.

³⁰ The twelve apostles returned to Jesus from the places to which they had gone. They reported to him what they had done

and what they had taught to people.³¹ He said to them, "Come with me to a place where no people are living, in order that we can be alone and rest a little while!" He said this because many people were continually coming to them and going away again, with the result that Jesus and his disciples did not have time to eat or do anything else.³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a place where no people were living.³³ But many people saw them leaving. They also recognized that they were Jesus and the disciples, and they saw where they were going. So they ran ahead on land from all the nearby towns to the place where Jesus and his disciples were going. They actually arrived there before Jesus and the disciples.³⁴ As Jesus and his disciples got out of the boat, Jesus saw this great crowd. He felt compassion for them because they were confused, like sheep that do not have a shepherd. So he taught them many things.

³⁵ Late in the afternoon the disciples came to him and said, "This is a place where no one lives, and it is very late.³⁶ So send the people away in order that they may go to the surrounding places where people live and to villages in order that they can buy for themselves something to eat!"³⁷ But he replied to them, "No, you yourselves give them something to eat!" They replied to him, "We could not buy enough bread to feed this crowd, even if we had as much money as a man earns by working 200 days!³⁸ But he replied to them, "How many loaves of bread do you have? Go and find out!" They went and found out and then they told him, "We have only five flat loaves and two cooked fish!"³⁹ He instructed the disciples to tell all the people to sit down on the green grass.⁴⁰ So the people sat in groups. There were fifty people in some groups and one hundred people in other groups.⁴¹ Jesus took the five flat loaves and the two fish. He looked

up toward heaven and thanked God for them. Then he broke the loaves and fish into pieces and kept giving them to the disciples in order that they would distribute them to the people.⁴² Everyone ate this food until they all had enough to eat!⁴³ The disciples then collected twelve baskets full of pieces of bread and of the fish that were left over.⁴⁴ There were about five thousand men who ate the bread and fish. They did not even count the women and children.

⁴⁵ Right away Jesus told his disciples to get into the boat and then go ahead of him to Bethsaida, which was further around the Sea of Galilee. He stayed and dismissed the many people who were there.⁴⁶ After he said goodbye to the people, he went up into the hills in order to pray.⁴⁷ When it was evening, the disciples' boat was in the middle of the lake, and Jesus was by himself on the land.⁴⁸ He saw that the wind was blowing against them as they rowed. As a result, they were having great difficulty. He approached them early in the morning, when it was still dark, by walking on the water. He intended to walk by them.⁴⁹ They saw him walking on the water, but they thought that he was a ghost. They screamed⁵⁰ because they all were terrified when they saw him. But he spoke to them. He said to them, "Be calm! Do not be afraid, because it is I!"⁵¹ He got into the boat and sat down with them and the wind stopped blowing. They were completely amazed about what he had done.⁵² Although they had seen Jesus multiply the bread and the fish, they did not understand how powerful he was, as they should have.

⁵³ After they went further around the Sea of Galilee in a boat, they came to shore at Gennesaret. Then they fastened the boat there.⁵⁴ As soon as they got out of the boat, the people there recognized Je-

sus. ⁵⁵ So they ran throughout the whole district in order to tell others that Jesus was there. Then the people placed those who were sick on stretchers and carried them to any place where they heard people say that Jesus was. ⁵⁶ In whatever village, town or place in the countryside where he went, they would bring to the marketplaces those who were sick. Then the sick people would beg Jesus to let them touch him or even the edge of his clothes in order that Jesus might heal them. All those who touched him or his robe were healed.

Chapter 7

¹ One day some Pharisees and some men who teach the Jewish laws who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus. ² The Pharisees saw that the disciples often ate without washing their hands first. ³⁻⁴ They and all of the other Jews strictly observe their traditions that their ancestors taught. Specifically, they wash in a special way their cups, pots, kettles, containers, and beds in order that using these things will not make God reject them. For example, they refuse to eat until they first wash their hands with a special ritual, especially after they return from buying things in the marketplace. There are many other such traditions that they accept and try to obey.

⁵ That day, those Pharisees and men who taught the Jewish laws saw that some of his disciples were eating food with hands that they had not washed using the special ritual. So they questioned Jesus and said, "Your disciples disobey the traditions of our elders! Why do they eat food if they have not washed their hands using our ritual!" ⁶ Jesus said to them, "Isaiah rebuked your ancestors, and his words de-

scribe very well you people who only pretend to be good! He wrote these words that God said:

"These people speak as if they honor me,
but they really do not think about honoring me at all.

"It is useless for them to worship me,
because they teach only what people say
as if I myself had commanded them.'

⁸ You, like your ancestors, refuse to do what God has commanded. Instead, you follow only the traditions that others have taught." ⁹ Jesus also said to them, "You think that you are clever in refusing to do what God commanded just so that you can obey your own traditions! ¹⁰ For example, our ancestor Moses wrote God's command, 'Honor your fathers and your mothers'. He also wrote, 'The authorities must execute a person who speaks evil about his father or mother.' ¹¹⁻¹² But you teach people that it is all right if people no longer help their parents. You teach people that it is all right if they say they will give what they own to God instead of to their parents. You allow them to say to their parents, 'What I was going to give to you to provide for you, I have now promised to give to God. So I cannot any longer help you!' As a result, you are actually telling people that they no longer have to help their parents! ¹³ In this way you disregard what God commanded! You teach your own things to others and tell them that they should obey them! And you do many other things like that."

¹⁴ Then Jesus again called the crowd to come closer. Then he said to them, "All of you people listen to me! Try to understand what I am about to tell you. ¹⁵ Nothing that people eat causes God to consider them to be defiled. On the contrary, it is

that which comes from people's inner beings that causes God to consider them to be defiled.”^{16[1]}

¹⁷ After Jesus had left the crowd, he entered a house with the disciples. They questioned him about the parable that he had just spoken. ¹⁸ He replied to them, “Did you not understand what it means? You ought to understand that nothing that enters us from outside can cause God to consider us defiled. ¹⁹ Instead of entering and ruining our minds, it goes into our stomachs, and afterwards the refuse passes out of our bodies.” By saying this, Jesus was declaring that people can eat any food without causing God to consider them defiled. ²⁰ He also said, “It is the thoughts and actions that come from within people that cause God to consider them defiled. ²¹ Specifically, it is people's innermost being that causes them to think things that are evil; they act immorally, they steal things, they commit murder. ²² They commit adultery, they are greedy, they act maliciously, they deceive people. They act indecently, they envy people, they speak evil about others, they are proud, and they act foolishly. ²³ People think these thoughts and then they do these evil actions, and that is what causes God to consider them defiled.”

²⁴ After Jesus and his disciples left Galilee, they went to the region around the cities of Tyre and Sidon. While he stayed at a certain house, he did not want anyone to know it, but people soon found out that he was there. ²⁵ A certain woman, whose daughter had an evil spirit within her, heard about Jesus. At once she came to him and knelt at his feet. ²⁶ Now this woman was not a Jew. Her ancestors were not Jews. She herself had been born in the area around the region of Phoenicia, in the district of Syria. She pled with Jesus that he force the evil spirit out from her

daughter. ²⁷ He said to the woman, “First let the children eat all they want, because it is not good for someone to take the food the mother has prepared for the children and then throw it to the little dogs.” ²⁸ She replied to him, “Sir, what you say is correct, but even the house dogs, who lie under the table, eat the crumbs that the children drop.” ²⁹ Jesus said to her, “Because of what you have said, go home. I have caused the evil spirit to leave your daughter.” ³⁰ The woman returned to her house and saw that her child was lying quietly on the bed and that the evil spirit had left.

³¹ Jesus and his disciples left the region around Tyre and went north through Sidon, then toward the east through the area of the Ten Towns, and then south to the towns near the Sea of Galilee. ³² There, people brought to him a man who was deaf and could not talk. They begged Jesus to lay his hands on him in order to heal him. ³³ So Jesus took him away from the crowd in order that the two of them could be alone. Then he put one of his fingers into each of the man's ears. After he spat on his fingers, he touched the man's tongue with his fingers. ³⁴ Then he looked up toward heaven, he sighed and then in his own language he said to the man's ears, “Ephphatha,” which means, “Be opened!”

³⁵ At once the man could hear plainly. He also began to speak clearly because what was causing him to be unable to speak was healed. ³⁶ Jesus told the people not to tell anyone what he had done. But, although he ordered them and others repeatedly not to tell anyone about it, they kept talking about it all the more. ³⁷ People who heard about it were utterly amazed and were saying, “Everything he has done is wonderful! Besides doing other amazing things, he enables deaf people to hear! And he enables those who cannot speak to speak!”

7:16 ^[1]The best ancient copies omit the phrase that appears as v. 16. *If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.*

Chapter 8

¹ During those days, a large crowd of people gathered again. After they had been there for two days, they had no food to eat. So Jesus called the disciples to come close to him, and then he said to them, ² "This is the third day that these people have been with me, and they have nothing left to eat, so now I am very concerned for them. ³ If I send them home while they are still hungry, some of them will faint on the way home. Some of them have come from far away." ⁴ The disciples knew that he was suggesting that they give the people something to eat, so one of them replied, "We cannot possibly find food to satisfy this crowd. No one lives in this place!" ⁵ Jesus asked them, "How many loaves of bread do you have?" They replied, "We have seven flat loaves." ⁶ Jesus commanded the crowd, "Sit down on the ground!" After they sat down, he took the seven loaves, thanked God for them, broke them into pieces, and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. ⁷ They had also found that they had a few small fish. So after he thanked God for these, he told the disciples, "Distribute these also." After they distributed the fish to the crowd, ⁸ the people ate this food, and they had plenty to satisfy themselves. The disciples collected the pieces of food that were left over and filled seven large baskets. ⁹ The disciples estimated that there were about four thousand people who ate on that day. Then Jesus dismissed the crowd. ¹⁰ Immediately after that, he got into the boat along with his disciples, and they went

around the Sea of Galilee to the district of Dalmanutha.

¹¹ Then some Pharisees came to Jesus. They began arguing with him and insisting that he perform a miracle to show that God had sent him. ¹² Jesus sighed deeply within himself, and then he said, "Why are you asking me to perform a miracle? I will not do a miracle for you!" ¹³ Then he left them. He got into the boat again, along with his disciples, and they went further around the Sea of Galilee. ¹⁴ The disciples had forgotten to bring along enough food. Specifically, they had only one flat loaf of bread with them in the boat. ¹⁵ As they were going, Jesus warned them and said, "Be careful! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod!" ¹⁶ The disciples misunderstood him. So they said to one another, "He must have said that because we have no bread." ¹⁷ Jesus knew what they were discussing among themselves. So he said to them, "Why are you talking about not having enough bread? You should understand what I have said by now! You are not thinking! ¹⁸ You have eyes, but you do not understand what you see! You have ears, but you do not understand what I say!" Then he asked, "Do you not remember what happened ¹⁹ when I broke only five loaves and fed the five thousand people? Not only was everyone satisfied, but there was food left over! How many baskets of pieces of bread that were left over did you collect?" They replied, "We collected twelve baskets full." ²⁰ Then he asked, "When I broke the seven loaves in order to feed the four thousand people, again when everyone had plenty to eat, how many large baskets of pieces of bread that were left over did you collect?" They replied, "We collected seven large baskets full." ²¹ Then he said to them, "Do you not understand?"

²² They arrived in the boat at Bethsaida.

People brought to Jesus a blind man and begged him touch the man in order to heal him. ²³ Jesus took the hand of the blind man and led him outside the town. Then he spat into the man's eyes, he put his hands on the man and then asked him, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴ The man looked up and then he said, "Yes, I see people! They are walking around, but I cannot see them clearly. They look like trees!" ²⁵ Then Jesus again touched the eyes of the blind man. The man looked intently, and at that moment he was completely healed! He could see everything clearly. ²⁶ Jesus said to him, "Do not go into the town!" Then he sent the man to his home.

²⁷ Jesus and the disciples left Bethsaida and went to the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he questioned them, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸ They replied, "Some people say that you are John the Baptizer. Others say that you are the prophet Elijah. And others say that you are one of the other former prophets."

²⁹ He asked them, "What about you? Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied to him, "You are the Messiah!" ³⁰ Then Jesus warned them strongly that they should not tell anyone yet that he was the Messiah.

³¹ Then Jesus began to teach them that he, the Son of Man, would certainly suffer very much. He would be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the men who teach the Jewish laws. He would even be killed. But on the third day after he died, he would become alive again. ³² He said this to them clearly. But Peter took Jesus aside and started to scold him for talking this way. ³³ Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples. Then he rebuked Peter, saying, "Stop thinking like that! Satan is causing you to talk like that! Instead of wanting what God wants me to do, you are wanting me to do only what people

would want me to do."

³⁴ Then he called the crowd together along with his disciples so that they might listen to him. He told them, "If any one of you wants to be my disciple, you must not do only what makes you live easily. You must be willing to suffer pain like criminals who are forced to carry crosses to the places where they will be crucified. That is what anyone who wants to be my disciple must do. ³⁵ You must do that, because those who try to save their lives by denying that they belong to me will lose their lives. Those who are killed because they are my disciples and because they tell others the good news will live forever with me. ³⁶ People might get everything they want in this world, but they are really gaining nothing if they do not gain eternal life! ³⁷ Think carefully about the fact that there is absolutely nothing that people can give to God that would enable them to gain eternal life! ³⁸ And think about this: Those who refuse to say that they belong to me, and who reject what I say in these days when many people have turned away from God and are very sinful, I, the Son of Man, will also refuse to say that they belong to me when I come back with the holy angels and have the glory that my Father has!"

Chapter 9

¹ He also said to his disciples, "Listen carefully! Some of you who are here now will see God show himself with great power as king. You will see him do this before you die!"

² Six days later Jesus took Peter, James and James' brother John and led them up a high mountain. While they were alone up there, he appeared very different to them.

³ His clothes became dazzling white. They

were whiter than anyone on earth could make them by bleaching them. ⁴ Two prophets who had lived long ago, Moses and Elijah, appeared to them. Then the two of them began talking with Jesus. ⁵ After a short time, Peter said, "Teacher, it is wonderful to be here! So allow us to make three shelters. One will be for you, one will be for Moses, and one will be for Elijah!" ⁶ He said this because he wanted to say something, but he did not know what to say. He and the other two disciples were terrified. ⁷ Then a shining cloud appeared that covered them. God spoke to them from the cloud saying, "This is my Son. He is the one whom I love. Therefore, listen to him!" ⁸ When the three disciples looked around, they saw that suddenly Jesus was alone with them, and that there was no longer anyone else there.

⁹ While they were coming down the mountain, Jesus told them that they should not tell anyone yet what had just happened to him. He said, "You may tell them after I, the Son of Man, rise from the dead after I die." ¹⁰ So they did not tell others about it for a long time. But they discussed among themselves what it meant when he said that he would rise from the dead.

¹¹ They asked Jesus, "Why do the men who teach our laws say that Elijah must come back to the earth before the Messiah comes to earth?" ¹²⁻¹³ Jesus answered them, "It is true that God promised to send Elijah to come first to put everything as it should be. But Elijah has already come, and our leaders treated him very badly, just like they wanted to do, as prophets long ago had said they would. But there is much written in the scriptures about me, the Son of Man. The scriptures say that I will suffer much and that people will reject me."

¹⁴ Then Jesus and those three disciples arrived where the other disciples were.

They saw a large crowd around the other disciples and some men who taught the Jewish laws arguing with them. ¹⁵ The crowd was very surprised to see him come. So they ran to him and greeted him. ¹⁶ He asked them, "What are you arguing about?" ¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son here in order that you would heal him. There is an evil spirit in him that makes him unable to talk. ¹⁸ Whenever the spirit begins to control him, it throws him down. He foams at the mouth, he grinds his teeth together, and he becomes stiff. I asked your disciples to expel the spirit, but they were not able to do it." ¹⁹ Jesus replied by saying to those people, "You faithless people! You test my patience! Bring the boy to me." ²⁰ So they brought the boy to Jesus. As soon as the evil spirit saw Jesus, it shook the boy severely, and the boy fell on the ground. He rolled around and foamed at the mouth. ²¹ Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" He replied, "This started to happen when he was a child. ²² The spirit does not only do this, but he also often throws him into the fire or into the water in order to kill him. Pity us and help us, if you can!" ²³ Jesus exclaimed to him, "Of course I can! God can do anything for people who believe in him!" ²⁴ Immediately the child's father shouted, "I believe that you can help me, but I do not believe strongly. Help me to believe more strongly!" ²⁵ Jesus saw that the crowd was growing. He rebuked the evil spirit: "You evil spirit, you who are causing this boy to be deaf and unable to talk! I command you to come out of him and never enter him again!" ²⁶ The evil spirit shouted and shook the boy violently; then it left the boy. The boy did not move. He seemed like a dead body. So most of the people there said, "He is dead!" ²⁷ However, Jesus took him by the hand and helped him get up. Then the boy stood up.

²⁸ Later, when Jesus and his disciples were alone in a house, they asked him, "Why were we not able to force the evil spirit out?" ²⁹ He said to them, "You can force this kind of evil spirit out only by prayer. There is no other way."

³⁰ After Jesus and his disciples left that region, they traveled through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone else to know where he was. ³¹ He wanted to have time to teach his disciples. He was telling them, "Some day my enemies will arrest me, the Son of Man, and I will be put into the hands of other men. Those men will kill me. But on the third day after I die, I will become alive again!" ³² They did not understand what he was telling them, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.

³³ Then Jesus and his disciples returned to Capernaum. When they were in the house, he asked them, "What were you talking about while we were traveling on the road?" ³⁴ But they did not reply. They had been arguing with each other about which one of them was the most important. ³⁵ He sat down, he called the twelve disciples to come close to him and then said to them, "If anyone wants God to consider him to be the most important person of all, he must consider himself to be the least important person of all, and he must serve everyone else." ³⁶ Then he took a child and placed him among them. He took the child in his arms and then he said to them, ³⁷ "Those who welcome a child like this one because they love me, God considers that they are welcoming me. It is also true that they are also welcoming God, who sent me."

³⁸ John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone who was forcing evil spirits out of people. He claimed that he had authority from you to do that. So we told him to stop doing it because he was not one of the disciples." ³⁹ Jesus said, "Do not tell

him to stop doing that. For no one will say bad things about me soon after performing a mighty deed with my authority. ⁴⁰ Those who are not opposing us are trying to achieve the same goals that we are. ⁴¹ God will certainly reward those who help you in any way, even if they simply give you a cup of water to drink because you follow me, the Messiah!"

⁴² Jesus also said, "But if you cause someone who believes in me to sin, God will severely punish you, even if that person is socially unimportant like this little child. If someone tied a heavy stone around your neck and threw you into the sea, it would be better for you than if God punished you for causing a person who believes in me to sin. ⁴³ So if you are wanting to use one of your hands to sin, do not use it! Even if you have to cut your hand off and throw it away to avoid sinning, do it! It is good that you live eternally, even though you lack one of your hands while you are here on earth. But it is not good that you sin and as a result God throws your whole body into hell. ^{44[1]} ⁴⁵ If you are wanting to use one of your feet to sin, do not use it! Even if you have to cut off your foot to avoid sinning, do it! It is good that you live eternally, even though you lack one of your feet while you are here on earth. But it is not good that you sin and as a result God throws your whole body into hell. ^{46[2]} ⁴⁷ If because of what you see you are tempted to sin, stop looking at those things! Even if you have to gouge out your eye and throw it away to avoid sinning, do it! It is better to have only one eye and for God to agree to rule over you, than him to throw you with two eyes into hell. ⁴⁸ In that place worms feed on the people there forever and the fires are never put out."

⁴⁹ "For God will put fire on everyone, just like people put salt on their food. ⁵⁰ Salt is

useful to put on food, but you cannot make it taste salty again if it becomes flavorless. We are to be like salt that adds flavor to food. And live in peace with one another.”

9:44 ^[1]The best ancient copies omit this phrase from verses 44 and 46, *where worms never stop feeding on them, and the fire that burns them never goes out*

9:46 ^[2]The best ancient copies do not have verse 46

Chapter 10

¹ Jesus left that place with his disciples, and they went through the district of Judea and on across to the east side of the Jordan River. When crowds of people gathered around him again, he taught them again, as he customarily did. ² While he was teaching them, some Pharisees approached him and asked him, “Does our law permit a man to divorce his wife?” They asked that in order to be able to criticize him whether he answered “yes” or “no.” ³ He answered them, “What did Moses command your ancestors about this?” ⁴ One of them replied, “Moses permitted that a man may write out divorce papers so that he may send her away.” ⁵ Jesus said to them, “Your ancestors stubbornly wanted to be able to send their wives away. That is why Moses wrote that law. ⁶ But when God first created people, it says, ‘God made them male and female.’ ⁷ That explains why God said, ‘When a man marries, he must leave his parents and join with his wife. ⁸ They will become like one person. They will no longer be like two people, but like one.’ ⁹ Because that is true, a man must not separate from his wife. God has joined them together and he wishes them to stay together!”

¹⁰ When Jesus and his disciples were alone in a house, they asked him again about this. ¹¹ He said to them, “God considers that any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery. ¹² God also considers a woman who divorces her husband and marries another man to be committing adultery.”

¹³ Now people were bringing children to Jesus so that he would touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded those people. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw that, he became angry. He said to the disciples, “Allow the children to come to me! Do not forbid them! It is people who have qualities like children over whom God will agree to rule. ¹⁵ Note this: Those who do not welcome God as their king in the same manner as children would, God will certainly not agree to rule over them.” ¹⁶ Then he embraced the children. He also put his hands on them and called on God to do good to them.

¹⁷ As Jesus was starting to travel again with his disciples, a man ran up to him. He knelt before Jesus and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to have eternal life?” ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? Only God is good! ¹⁹ But to answer your question, you know the commandments of Moses: ‘Do not murder anyone, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not testify falsely, do not cheat anyone, and honor your father and mother.’” ²⁰ The man said to him, “Teacher, I have obeyed all those commandments ever since I was young.” ²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. He said to him, “There is one thing that you have not yet done. You must go home, sell all that you possess, and then give the money to poor people. As a result, you will have riches in heaven. After you have done what I have told you, come and

follow me!" ²² The man became disappointed when he heard Jesus' instructions. He went away sad, because he was very rich. ²³ Jesus looked around at the people. Then he exclaimed to his disciples, "It is very difficult for people who are wealthy to agree for God to rule over them." ²⁴ The disciples were confused by what he said. Jesus said again, "My dear friends, it is very difficult for anyone to agree for God to rule over them. ²⁵ In fact, it would be easier for a very large animal like a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for rich people to accept God to rule over them." ²⁶ The disciples were very astonished. So they said to each other, "If that is so, then no one will be saved!" ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and then he said, "Yes, it is impossible for people to save themselves! But God certainly can save them, because God can do anything!" ²⁸ Peter said, "Look, we have left behind everything and followed you." ²⁹ Jesus replied, "I want you to know this: Those who have left their houses, their brothers, their sisters, their father, their mother, their children, or their plots of ground for me and for the good news, ³⁰ they will receive in this life a hundred times as much as they left behind. That will include houses and people as dear as brothers and sisters and mothers and children, and plots of ground. Furthermore, although people will persecute them here on earth because they believe in me, in the future age they will have eternal life. ³¹ But I warn you all: Many who now consider themselves to be very important will be unimportant at that future time, and many who now consider themselves to be unimportant will be very important at that future time!"

³² Some days later as they continued to travel, Jesus and his disciples were walking on the road that leads up to Jerusalem. Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were astonished and the other

people who were with them were afraid. Along the way he took the twelve disciples to a place by themselves. Then he began to tell them again about what was going to happen to him; he said, ³³ "Listen carefully! We are going up to Jerusalem. There the chief priests and the men who teach the laws will arrest me, the Son of Man. They will declare that I must die. Then they will take me to the Roman authorities. ³⁴ Their men will ridicule me and spit on me. They will whip me, and then they will kill me. But on the third day after that, I will become alive again!"

³⁵ Along the way, James and John, who were the two sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do something for us!" ³⁶ He said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷ They said to him, "When you rule in your kingdom, let one of us sit at your right side and one sit at your left side." ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not understand what you are asking for." Then he asked them, "Can you endure suffering like I am about to suffer? Can you die the kind of death I am about to die?" ³⁹ They said to him, "Yes, we are able to do that!" Then Jesus said to them, "It is true that you will endure suffering like I will suffer, and you will endure others to kill you as they will kill me. ⁴⁰ But I am not the one who chooses who will sit next to me. God will give those places to the ones whom he chooses in advance."

⁴¹ The other ten disciples later heard about what James and John had requested. So they said they were unhappy with the two disciples. ⁴² Then Jesus called them all together and said, "You know that kings and others who rule over people enjoy showing that they are powerful. You also know that their officials enjoy commanding others. ⁴³ But do not be like them! On the contrary, all those among you who

want God to consider them great must become like servants to the rest of you.⁴⁴ Furthermore, if anyone among you wants God to consider him to be the most important, he must act like a slave for the rest of you.⁴⁵ I, the Son of Man, did not come to be served. On the contrary, I came to serve others and to free many people by giving my life for them.”

⁴⁶ On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus and the disciples came to Jericho. Then, while they were leaving Jericho along with a great crowd, a blind man who habitually begged for money was sitting beside the road. His name was Bartimaeus, and his father’s name was Timaeus.⁴⁷ When he heard people say that Jesus from Nazareth was passing by, he shouted, “Jesus! You who are the Messiah descended from King David, be merciful to me!”⁴⁸ Many people scolded him and told him that he should be quiet. But he shouted even more, “You who are the Messiah descended from King David, be merciful to me!”⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him to come over here!” They called the blind man, saying, “Jesus is calling you! So cheer up and get up and come!”⁵⁰ He threw aside his cloak as he jumped up, and he came to Jesus.⁵¹

Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “Teacher, I want to be able to see again!”⁵² Jesus said to him, “I am healing you because you believed in me. So you may go!” He could see immediately. And he went with Jesus along the road.

us. As soon as you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied up that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it to me.³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing that?’ say, ‘The Lord needs to use it. He will send it back here with someone as soon as he no longer needs it.’”⁴ So the two disciples went and found a young donkey. It was tied close to the door of a house, which was beside the street. Then they untied it.⁵ Some of the people who were there said to them, “Why are you untying that donkey?”⁶ They told them what Jesus had said. So the people permitted them to take the donkey.⁷ The two disciples brought the donkey to Jesus and put their cloaks on it to make something for him to sit on.⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road in front of him. Others cut branches from palm trees in nearby fields and spread them along the road.⁹ The people who were going in front of him and behind him were all shouting, “Praise God!” and “May God bless this one who comes with his authority.”¹⁰ They also shouted, “May you be blessed when you rule like our ancestor King David ruled!” and “Praise God who is in the highest heaven!”

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem with them, and then he went into the temple courtyard. After he looked around at everything there, he left the city because it was already late in the afternoon. He returned to Bethany with the twelve disciples.

¹² The next day, as Jesus and his disciples were leaving Bethany, he felt hungry.¹³ He saw in the distance a fig tree with all its leaves, so he went to it to see if he could find any figs on it. But when he came to it, he found no fruit on it, because it was not yet the season for figs to appear.¹⁴ He said to the tree, “No one will ever eat from you again.” And the disciples heard this.

¹⁵ Jesus and his disciples went back into

Chapter 11

¹ When Jesus and his disciples came near to Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus called two of his disciples² and said to them, “Go to that village just ahead of

Jerusalem and entered the temple courtyard. He saw people who were selling and buying animals for sacrifices. He chased those people from the temple courtyard. He also overturned the tables of those who were selling temple tax money in exchange for Roman coins. And he overturned the seats of the men who were selling pigeons for sacrifice.¹⁶ He would not allow anyone who was carrying anything to sell to go through the temple area.¹⁷ Then as he taught those people, he said to them, "It is written in the scriptures that God said, 'I want my house to be a house where people from all nations can pray,' but you bandits have made it like a cave where robbers hide."¹⁸ The chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws later heard about what he had done. They were planning how they might kill him, but they feared him because they realized that the crowd was amazed at what he was teaching.¹⁹ Every evening Jesus and his disciples would leave the city.

²⁰ The next morning while they were going along the road toward Jerusalem, they saw that the fig tree that Jesus had cursed had withered completely.²¹ Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the fig tree and he said to Jesus, "Teacher, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered!"²² Jesus replied, "Trust in God!²³ Also note this: If anyone says to this mountain, 'Be raised up and thrown into the sea!' and if he does not doubt that it will happen, that is, if he believes that it will happen, God will do it for him.²⁴ So I tell you, whenever you ask God for something when you pray, believe that you will receive it, and, if you do, God will do it for you.²⁵ Now, I tell you this also: Whenever you are praying, if you have a grudge against people because they have harmed you, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven will likewise forgive your sins."^{26[1]}

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples arrived in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem again. While Jesus was walking there, a group consisting of chief priests, some men who taught the Jewish laws, and elders came to him.²⁸ They said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things? Who authorized you to do things like those you did here yesterday?"²⁹ Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you who authorized me to do those things.³⁰ Was it God who authorized John to baptize those who came to him? Or was it people who authorized him?"³¹ They debated among themselves as to what they should answer. They said to each other, "If we say that it was God who authorized him, he will say to us, 'Then you should have believed what John said!'³² On the other hand, if we say that it was people who authorized John, then what will happen to us?" They were afraid to say that about John, because they knew that the people would be very angry with them. They knew that all the people truly believed that John was a prophet whom God had sent.³³ So they answered Jesus, "We do not know from whom John received his authority." Then Jesus said to them, "Because you did not answer my question, I will not tell you who authorized me to do those things here yesterday."

11:26 ^[1]Some ancient authorities include:*But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.*

Chapter 12

¹ Then Jesus began to tell them a parable. He said, "A certain man planted a

vineyard. He built a fence around it. He made a stone tank to collect the grape juice. He also built a tower for someone to sit in to guard his vineyard. He leased the vineyard to some farmers to cultivate it, and then he went away to another country. ² When the time came to harvest the grapes, the owner of the vineyard sent a servant to the men who had taken a lease on his vineyard because he wanted to receive from them his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. ³ But when the servant arrived, they grabbed him and beat the servant, and they did not give him any fruit. Then they sent him away. ⁴ Later the owner sent another servant to them. But they beat that one on the head and they hurt him terribly, for which they should be ashamed. ⁵ Later the owner sent still another servant. That man the farmers killed. They also mistreated many other servants whom he sent. Some they beat and some they killed. ⁶ The owner still had one other person with him, his son, whom he loved very much. So he sent his son to them because he thought that they would respect him. ⁷ But when the farmers saw his son coming, they said to each other, ‘Look! Here comes the owner’s son, who will some day inherit the vineyard! So let us kill him in order that this vineyard will be ours!’ ⁸ They seized the owner’s son and killed him. Then they threw his body outside the vineyard. ⁹ So do you know what the owner of the vineyard will do? He will come and kill those evil men who had taken a lease on his vineyard. Then he will arrange for other people to take care of it. ¹⁰ Now think carefully about these words, which you have read in the scriptures:

“The men who were building the building refused to use a certain stone. But the Lord has put that same stone in its proper place, and it has become the most important stone in the building! ¹¹ The Lord has

done this, and we marvel as we look at it.”

¹² Then the Jewish leaders realized that Jesus was accusing them when he told this story about what those wicked people did. So they wanted to arrest him. But they were afraid of what the crowds of people would do if they did that. So they left him and went away.

¹³ The Jewish leaders sent to Jesus some Pharisees and some members of the party that supported Herod Antipas. They wanted to trick Jesus; they wanted to make him say something wrong so they could show people that he taught wrong things so they could bring charges against him. ¹⁴ After they arrived, they said to him, “Teacher, we know that you teach the truth. We also know that you are not concerned about what people say about you, even if an important person does not like what you say. Instead, you teach truthfully what God wants us to do. So tell us what you think about this matter: Is it right that we pay taxes to the Roman government, or not? Should we pay the taxes, or should we not pay them?” ¹⁵ Jesus knew that they did not really want to know what God wanted them to do. So he said to them, “I know that you are just trying to make me say something wrong for which you can accuse me. But I will answer your question anyway. Bring me a coin so that I might look at it.” ¹⁶ After they had brought him a coin, he asked them, “Whose picture is on this coin? And whose name is on it?” They replied, “It is a picture and the name of Caesar.” ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, “That is correct, so give to Caesar what belongs to him, and give to God what belongs to him.” They were completely amazed by what he said.

¹⁸ Men who belong to the group of Sadducees deny what other Jews believe, that people become alive again after they die. Some Sadducees came to Jesus and asked

him,¹⁹ "Teacher, Moses wrote for us Jews that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, his brother should marry the widow and raise up a descendant for his brother.²⁰ So here is an example. There were seven brothers in one family. The oldest one married a woman, but he and his wife did not bear any children. Then he later died.²¹ The second brother also married that woman, but he, too, did not bear any children. Then he later died. The third brother did like his other brothers did. But he also did not bear any children, and later died.²² Eventually all seven brothers married that woman one by one, but no one had any children, and one by one they died. Afterwards the woman died, too.²³ Now on the day when people will become alive again after they die, whose wife will that woman be? Keep in mind that she had been married to all seven brothers!"²⁴ Jesus replied to them, "You are certainly wrong. You do not know what the scriptures teach about this. You also do not understand God's power to make people alive again.²⁵ That woman will not be the wife of any of those brothers, because when people become alive again, instead of men having wives and women having husbands, they will be like the angels in heaven. Angels do not marry.²⁶ But let me talk about people becoming alive again after they die. In the book that Moses wrote, he wrote about people who have died; I am sure that you have read it. When Moses was looking at the bush that was burning, God said to him, 'I am the God whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worship.'²⁷ Now it is not dead people who worship God. It is living people who worship him. So when you say that dead people do not become alive again, you are very wrong."

²⁸ A man who taught the Jewish laws heard their discussion. He knew that Je-

sus had answered the Sadducees' question very well. So he stepped forward and asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the most important?"²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord.³⁰ You must love the Lord your God in all that you want and feel, in all that you think, and in all that you do!'³¹ The next most important commandment is: 'You must love the people around you as much as you love yourself.' No other commandment is more important than these two!"³² The man said to Jesus, "Teacher, you have answered well. You correctly said that God is the only God and that there is no other God.³³ You have also said correctly that we should love God in all that we want and feel, in all that we think, and in all that we do. And you have said correctly that we must love people with whom we come in contact as much as we love ourselves. And you have also correctly said that doing these things pleases God more than offering animals to him or burning other sacrifices."³⁴ Jesus realized that this man had answered wisely. So he said to him, "You are close to the point where God will agree to rule over you." After that, the Jewish leaders were afraid to ask him any more questions like that to try to trick him.

³⁵ Later, while Jesus was teaching in the temple area, he said to the people, "How is it that those who teach the law say—and they are correct in saying—that the Messiah is the son of David?³⁶ The Holy Spirit caused David to say about the Messiah, 'God said to my Lord, "Sit here beside me at my right hand, in the place where I will highly honor you above everyone else! Sit here while I completely defeat your enemies!"'³⁷ In this Psalm of David he refers to the Messiah as 'Lord.' But how—as the teachers of the law correctly say—can the Messiah also be the son of David?" Many

people listened to him gladly as he taught these things.

³⁸ While Jesus was teaching the people, he said to them, "Beware that you do not act like the men who teach our laws. They like people to honor them, so they put on long robes and walk around in order to show people how important they are. They also like people to greet them respectfully in the marketplaces. ³⁹ They like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues. At festivals, they like to sit in the seats where the most honored people sit. ⁴⁰ They swindle the houses and property of widows by cheating them. Then they pretend that they are good by praying long prayers in public. God will certainly punish them severely!"

⁴¹ Later, Jesus sat down in the temple area opposite the boxes in which people put offerings. As he was sitting there, he watched as they put money in one of the boxes. Many rich people put in large amounts of money. ⁴² Then a poor widow came along and put in two small copper coins, which had a very small value. ⁴³⁻⁴⁴ Jesus gathered his disciples around him and said to them, "The truth is that those other people have a lot of money, but they gave only a small part of it. But this woman, who is very poor, has put in all the money that she had to pay for the things she needed for today. So this poor widow has put more money into the box than all the others!"

Chapter 13

¹ While Jesus was leaving the temple area, one of his disciples said to him, "Teacher, look at how marvelous these huge stones are and how wonderful these buildings are!" ² Jesus said to him, "Yes, these buildings that you are looking at are wonder-

ful, but I want to tell you something about them. They will be destroyed completely. No stone here in this temple area will remain on top of another stone."

³ After they arrived at the Mount of Olives across the valley from the temple, Jesus sat down. When Peter, James, John, and Andrew were alone with him, they asked him, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things happen? What will happen to show us these things are about to take place?" ⁵ Jesus replied to them, "Beware that no one deceive you concerning what will happen!

⁶ Many people will come and say that I sent them. They will say, 'I am the Messiah!' They will deceive many people. ⁷ When you hear the sound of soldiers fighting battles, or when you hear news about wars that are far away, do not be troubled. These things will definitely happen. But when they do happen, do not think that God will finish all that he has planned at that time! ⁸ Groups who live in various countries will fight each other, and various kings and leaders will fight each other. There will also be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines. Yet, when these things happen, people will have only just begun to suffer. These first things that they suffer will be like the first pains a woman suffers who is about to bear a child. They will suffer much more after that.

⁹ Be ready for what people will do to you at that time. They will arrest you and put you on trial before groups of leaders. People will beat you in various synagogues. They will put you on trial in the presence of high government authorities. As a result, you will be able to tell them about me. ¹⁰ My followers must proclaim the good news to people in all nations before God finishes everything that he has planned. ¹¹ When people arrest you, do not worry about what you will say. In-

stead, say what God puts into your mind at that time. Then it will not be just you who will be speaking. It will be the Holy Spirit who will be speaking through you.

¹² Some brothers and sisters will betray other brothers and sisters. Some fathers will betray their children. Some children will betray their parents so that government officials will kill their parents. ¹³

Most people will hate you because you believe in me. But all you who continue to trust in me until your life is finished will be saved.

¹⁴ During that time the detestable thing will enter the temple. It will defile the temple and cause people to abandon it. When you see it where it should not be, you should run away quickly! (May everyone who is reading this pay attention to this warning!) At that time those people who are in the district of Judea should flee to higher hills. ¹⁵ Those people who are outside their houses should not enter their houses in order to get anything. ¹⁶ Those who are working in a field should not return to their houses in order to get additional clothes. ¹⁷ I feel very sorry for women who will be pregnant and women who will be nursing their babies in those days, because it will be very difficult for them to run away! ¹⁸⁻¹⁹ In those days people will suffer very severely. People have never suffered like that since the time when God first created the world until now; and people will not suffer that way again. So pray that this painful time will not happen in winter, when it will be hard to travel. ²⁰ If the Lord God had not decided that he would shorten that time when people suffer so much, everyone would die. But he has decided to shorten that time because he is concerned about the people whom he has chosen. ²¹⁻²² At that time people will falsely say that they are the Messiah. And some will appear claiming to be prophets from God. Then

they will perform many kinds of miracles. They will even try to deceive the people whom God has chosen. So at that time if someone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!', or if someone says, 'Look, there he is!', do not believe it! ²³ Be alert! Remember that I have warned you about all this before it happens!

²⁴ After the time when people suffer like that, the sun will become dark, and the moon will not shine; ²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky, and all powerful things in the sky will be shaken out of their place.

²⁶ Then people will see me, the Son of Man, coming through the clouds powerfully and gloriously. ²⁷ Then I will send out my angels so they can gather together the people whom God has chosen from everywhere, from the most remote places on earth.

²⁸ Now I want you to learn something from how fig trees grow. When their branches become tender and their leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near for us. ²⁹ Similarly, when you see what I have just described happening, you yourselves will know that it is very near the time for me to return. It will be as though I am already at the door. ³⁰ Keep this in mind: this generation will not die until these things take place. ³¹ You can be certain that these things that I have prophesied will happen. The earth and what is in the sky will one day be destroyed, but these things that I have told you will certainly happen. ³² But no one knows the exact time when I will return. The angels in heaven also do not know. Even I, God's Son, do not know. Only my Father knows. ³³ So be ready! Always be alert, because you do not know when that time will come when all these events will happen! ³⁴ When a man who wants to travel to a distant place is about to leave his house, he tells his servants that they

should manage the house. He tells each one what he should do. Then he tells the doorkeeper to be ready for his return.³⁵ That man must always be ready, because he does not know whether his master will return in the evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or at dawn. Similarly, you also must always be ready, because you do not know when I will return.³⁶ May it not happen that when I come suddenly, I will find that you are not ready!³⁷ These words that I am saying to you disciples I am saying to everyone: Always be ready!"

Chapter 14

¹ It was only two days before the people would begin to celebrate the week-long festival that they called the Passover. During those days they also celebrated the festival which they called Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws were planning how they could arrest Jesus secretly and put him to death.² But they were saying to one another, "We must not do it during the festival because if we do it then, the people will be very angry with us and riot!"

³ Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon, who was known as a leper. While they were eating, a woman came to him. She was carrying a stone jar that contained expensive, fragrant perfume called nard. She opened the jar and then poured all the perfume on Jesus' head.⁴ Some of the people who were present became angry and said to themselves, "It is terrible that she wasted that perfume!⁵ It could have been sold for almost a year's wages and then the money could have been given to poor people!" So they scolded her.⁶ But Jesus said, "Stop scolding her! She has done to me what I consider to be very

appropriate. So you should not bother her!⁷ You will always have poor people among you. So you can help them whenever you want to. But I will not be here with you much longer.⁸ It is appropriate that she has done what she could do. It is as if she had known that I was going to die soon, because she has anointed my body ahead of time so that it is ready for burial.⁹ I will tell you this: Wherever my followers preach the good news throughout the world, they will also tell what she has done, and people will remember her."

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests to talk about helping them to capture Jesus. He did that even though he was one of the twelve disciples.¹¹ When the chief priests heard what he was willing to do for them, they were very happy. They promised that they would give him a large amount of money in return. Judas agreed and began watching for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them.

¹² On the first day of the festival that they call Unleavened Bread, when they kill the lambs for the Passover, Jesus' disciples said to him, "Where do you want us to go and prepare the meal for the Passover Celebration so that we can eat it?"¹³ So Jesus chose two of his disciples to prepare everything. He said to them, "Go into Jerusalem. A man will meet you, who will be carrying a large jar full of water. Follow him.

¹⁴ When he enters a house, say to the man who owns the house, 'Our teacher wants us to prepare the meal of the Passover Celebration so that he can eat it with us his disciples. Please show us the room.'¹⁵ He will show you a large room that is on the upper floor of the house. It will be furnished and ready for us to eat a meal in it. Then prepare the meal there for us."¹⁶ So the two disciples left. They went into the city and found everything to be just like he had told them. They prepared the

meal for the Passover Celebration there.
¹⁷ When it was evening, Jesus arrived at that house with the twelve disciples.

¹⁸ As they were all sitting there and eating, Jesus said, "Listen carefully to this: One of you will make it possible for my enemies to arrest me. It is one of you who is eating with me right now!" ¹⁹ The disciples became very sad and they said to him one by one, "Surely it is not I?" ²⁰ Then he said to them, "It is one of you twelve disciples, the one who is dipping bread into the sauce in the dish along with me. ²¹ It is certain that I, the Son of Man, will die, because that is what has been written about me. But there will be terrible punishment for the man who betrays me! In fact, he would have been better off if he had never been born!"

²² While they were eating, he took a flat loaf of bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke it into pieces and gave it to them and said to them, "This bread is my body. Take it and eat it." ²³ Afterwards, he took a cup that contained wine and thanked God for it. Then he gave it to them and they all drank. ²⁴ He said to them, "This wine is my blood, which is about to be shed when my enemies kill me. With this blood I will confirm the covenant that God has made to forgive the sins of many people. ²⁵ I want you to know this: I will not drink any more wine until the time when I drink it again when God shows himself as king." ²⁶ After they sang a hymn, they went out toward the Mount of Olives.

²⁷ While they were on their way, Jesus said to them, "They wrote in the scriptures that God said about me, 'I will kill the shepherd and scatter his sheep.' Those words will come true. You will leave me and run away. ²⁸ But after God makes me alive again, I will go ahead of you to the district of Galilee and meet you there." ²⁹ Then Peter said to him, "Perhaps all the other

disciples will leave you, but I will not! I will not leave you!" ³⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "The truth is that this very night, before the rooster crows two times, you will say about me three times, that you do not know me. ³¹ But Peter replied strongly, "Even if they kill me, I will not say that I do not know you." And all the other disciples said the same thing.

³² On the way, Jesus and the disciples came to the place that people call Gethsemane. Then he said to some of his disciples, "Stay here while I pray!" ³³ Then he took Peter, James, and John with him. He became extremely upset. ³⁴ He said to them, "I am very sorrowful. It is as if I were about to die. You men stay here and keep watch!" ³⁵ He went a bit farther and threw himself on the ground. Then he prayed that if it were possible, he would not have to suffer. ³⁶ He said, "O my Father, because you are able to do everything, rescue me so that I do not have to suffer now! But do not do what I want. Instead, do what you want!" ³⁷ Then he returned and found his disciples sleeping. He woke them up and said, "Simon! Are you sleeping? Were you not able to stay awake for just a short time?" ³⁸ And he said to them, "You want to do what I say, but you are weak. So keep awake and pray so that you can resist when you are tempted!" ³⁹ Then he went away again and prayed again what he prayed before. ⁴⁰ When he returned, he found that they were sleeping again; they were so sleepy that they could not keep their eyes open. Because they were ashamed, they did not know what to say to him when he awakened them. ⁴¹ Then he went and prayed again. He returned a third time and found them sleeping again. He said to them, "You are still asleep? No more of this! The time for me to suffer is about to begin. Look! Someone is about to enable sinful men to capture me, the Son of Man. ⁴² So get up! Let us go! Look!

Here comes the one who is enabling them to capture me!"

⁴³ While he was still speaking, Judas arrived. Even though he was one of Jesus' twelve disciples, he came to enable Jesus' enemies to capture him. A crowd who carried swords and clubs was with him. The leaders of the Jewish council had sent them. ⁴⁴ Judas, who was betraying Jesus, had previously told this crowd, "The man whom I kiss is the one whom you want. When I kiss him, seize him and lead him away." ⁴⁵ So, when Judas arrived, he immediately went to Jesus and said, "My teacher!" Then he kissed Jesus. ⁴⁶ Then the crowd seized Jesus. ⁴⁷ But one of the disciples who was standing nearby drew his sword. He struck the servant of the high priest with it, but he only cut off his ear. ⁴⁸⁻⁴⁹ Jesus said to them, "It is ridiculous that you come here to seize me with swords and clubs, as if I were a robber! Day after day I was with you in the temple courtyard teaching the people! Why did you not arrest me then? But this is happening so that what the prophets have written in the scriptures about me may come true."

⁵⁰ All the disciples at once left him and ran away. ⁵¹ At that time, a young man was following Jesus. He was wearing only a linen cloth around his body. The crowd seized him, ⁵² but, as he pulled away from them, he left behind the linen cloth in their hands, and then he ran away naked.

⁵³ The men who had seized Jesus led him away to the high priest's house. All of the Jewish council were gathering there. ⁵⁴ Peter followed Jesus at a distance. He went into the courtyard of the house where the high priest lived, and he sat there with the men who guarded the house of the high priest. He was warming himself beside a fire. ⁵⁵ The chief priests and all the rest of the Jewish council were look-

ing for evidence against Jesus that would be strong enough to put him to death. But they did not find any evidence that would require the officials to put him to death. ⁵⁶ Many other people told lies about Jesus, but the statements they made did not agree with each other. And so, their statements were not strong enough to make a charge against Jesus. ⁵⁷ Finally, some stood up and accused him falsely by saying, ⁵⁸ "We heard him when he said, 'I will destroy this temple that was built by men, and then within three days I will build another temple without help from anyone else.'" ⁵⁹ But what some of these men said also did not agree with what others of them said.

⁶⁰ Then the high priest himself stood up in front of them and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to reply? What do you say about all the things that they are saying in order to accuse you?" ⁶¹ But Jesus was silent and did not reply. Then the high priest tried again. He asked him, "Are you the Messiah? Do you say that you are the Son of God?" ⁶² Jesus said, "I am. Furthermore, you will see me, the Son of Man, ruling beside God, who is completely powerful. You will also see me coming down through the clouds in the sky!" ⁶³ When Jesus said this, the high priest tore his own outer garment in protest, and the high priest said, "Do we need more witnesses to testify against this man? ⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy! He claims to be God!" They all agreed that Jesus was guilty and that he deserved to be put to death. ⁶⁵ Then some of them began spitting on Jesus. They put a blindfold on him, and then they began striking him and saying to him, "If you are a prophet, tell us who hit you!" And those who were guarding Jesus struck him with their hands.

⁶⁶ While Peter was outside in the courtyard of the high priest's house, one of the

girls who worked for the high priest came near him.⁶⁷ When she saw Peter warming himself beside the fire, she looked at him closely. Then she said, "You also were with Jesus, that man from Nazareth!"⁶⁸ But he denied it by saying, "I do not know what you are talking about! I understand nothing of it!" Then he went away from there to the gate of the courtyard.⁶⁹ The servant girl saw him there and said again to the people who were standing nearby, "This man is one of those who have been with that man they arrested."⁷⁰ But he denied it again. After a little while, those who were standing there said to Peter again, "You also are from Galilee. So it is certain that you are one of those who accompanied Jesus!"⁷¹ But he began to say that God could punish him if he were not telling the truth; he said, "I do not know the man that you are talking about!"⁷² Immediately the rooster crowed a second time. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him earlier: "Before the rooster crows a second time, you will deny three times that you know me." When he realized that he had denied him three times, he started crying.

Chapter 15

¹ Very early in the morning the chief priests met together with the rest of the Jewish council in order to decide how to accuse Jesus before the Roman governor. Their guards tied Jesus' hands again. They took him to the residence of Pilate, the governor.² Pilate asked Jesus, "Do you say that you are the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "You yourself have said so."³ Then the chief priests claimed that Jesus had done many bad things.⁴ So Pilate asked him again, "Do you have nothing to reply? Listen to how many bad things they are saying that you have

done!"⁵ But Jesus did not say anything more. The result was that Pilate was very much surprised.

⁶ Now it was the governor's custom each year during the Passover Celebration to release one person who was in prison. He usually released any prisoner the people requested.⁷ At that time there was a man called Barabbas who was in prison with some other men. They had committed murder when they rebelled against the Roman government.⁸ A crowd approached Pilate and asked him to release someone, just as in the past.⁹ Pilate answered them, "Would you like me to release for you the man whom you people say is your king?"¹⁰ He asked this because he realized what the chief priests were wanting to do. They were accusing Jesus because they were jealous of him because many people were becoming his disciples.¹¹ But the chief priests urged the crowd to request that Pilate release Barabbas for them instead of Jesus.¹² Pilate said to them again, "If I release Barabbas, what do you want me to do with your king?"¹³ Then they shouted back, "Crucify him!"¹⁴ Then Pilate said to them, "Why? What crime has he committed?" But they shouted even louder, "Crucify him!"¹⁵ So because Pilate wanted to please the crowd, he released Barabbas to them. Then his soldiers flogged Jesus; after that, Pilate told them to take him away and crucify him.

¹⁶ The soldiers took Jesus into the courtyard of the barracks. Then they summoned the whole cohort who were on duty there.¹⁷ After the soldiers gathered together, they put a purple robe on Jesus. Then they placed on his head a crown that they had woven from thorn-bush branches.¹⁸ Then they greeted him like they would greet a king, in order to ridicule him; they said, "Greetings, King of

the Jews!" ¹⁹ They repeatedly struck his head with a reed and spat on him. They knelt down in front of him to pretend to honor him. ²⁰ When they had finished mocking him, they pulled off the purple robe. They put his own clothes on him, and then they led him outside of the city in order to nail him to a cross.

²¹ Now a man named Simon from Cyrene came along. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus, and he was passing by Jesus on his way to the city from somewhere else. The soldiers compelled Simon to carry the cross for Jesus. ²² The soldiers brought them both to a place that they call Golgotha. That name means, "A place like a skull." ²³ Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with myrrh. But he refused to drink it. ²⁴ Some of the soldiers took his clothes. Then they nailed him to a cross. Afterwards, they divided his clothes among themselves by gambling for them.

²⁵ It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ They attached to the cross above Jesus' head a sign on which it had been written the reason why they were nailing him to the cross. It said, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ They also nailed to crosses two men who were robbers. They nailed one to a cross at the right side of Jesus and one to a cross at his left side. ^{28[1]} ²⁹ The people who were passing by insulted him by shaking their heads at him. They said, "Aha! You said that you would destroy the temple and then you would build it again within three days. ³⁰ If you could do that, then rescue yourself by coming down from the cross!" ³¹ The chief priests, along with the men who taught the Jewish laws, also wanted to make fun of Jesus. So they said to each other, "He has saved others from trouble, but he cannot save himself! ³² He said, 'I am the Messiah. I am the King who rules the people

of Israel.' If his words are true, he should come down now from the cross! Then we will believe him!" The two men who were crucified beside him also insulted him.

³³ At noon the whole land became dark, and it stayed dark until three o'clock in the afternoon. ³⁴ At three o'clock Jesus shouted loudly, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" That means, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" ³⁵ When some of the people who were standing there heard the word 'Eloi', they misunderstood it and said, "Listen! He is calling for the prophet Elijah!" ³⁶ One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine. He placed it on the tip of a reed, and then held it up to try to get Jesus to suck on it. He said, "Wait! Let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down from the cross!" ³⁷ And then Jesus shouted loudly, stopped breathing, and died. ³⁸ At that moment the curtain in the temple sanctuary split into two pieces from top to bottom. ³⁹ The officer who supervised the soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross was standing in front of Jesus. When he saw how Jesus had died, he exclaimed, "Truly, this man was the Son of God!" ⁴⁰⁻⁴¹ There were also some women there; they were watching these events from a distance. They had accompanied Jesus when he was in Galilee, and they had provided what he needed. They had come with him to Jerusalem. Among those women was Mary from Magdala. There was another Mary, who was the mother of the younger James and of Joses. There was also Salome.

⁴²⁻⁴³ When evening was near, a man named Joseph from Arimathea came there. He was a member of the Jewish council, one whom everyone respected. He was also one of those who had been waiting expectantly for when God would show himself as king. Evening was now approaching. It was the day before the

Sabbath, a day the Jews called the day of preparation. So he went with courage to Pilate and asked him to permit him to take the body of Jesus down from the cross and bury it immediately.⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised when he heard that Jesus was already dead. So he summoned the officer who was in charge of the soldiers who had crucified Jesus, and he asked him if Jesus had already died.⁴⁵ When the officer told Pilate that Jesus was dead, Pilate allowed Joseph to take away the body.⁴⁶ After Joseph had bought a linen cloth, he and others took Jesus' body down from the cross. They wrapped it in the linen cloth and laid it in a tomb that previously had been dug out of the rock cliff. Then they rolled a huge flat stone in front of the entrance to the tomb.⁴⁷ Mary from Magdala and Mary the mother of Joses were watching where Jesus' body was placed.

15:28 ^[1]The best ancient copies do not have verse 28

Chapter 16

¹ When the Sabbath had ended, Mary from Magdala, Mary the mother of the younger James, and Salome bought fragrant ointments to anoint Jesus' body for burial. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after the sun rose, they took the fragrant ointment and started toward the tomb. ³ While they were going there, they were asking each other, "Who will roll away for us the stone that blocks the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ After they arrived, they looked up and saw that someone had rolled away the stone, which was very large. ⁵ They entered the tomb and saw an angel who looked like a young man. He was sitting at the right side of the

cave. He was wearing a white robe. As a result, they were astonished.⁶ The young man said to them, "Do not be astonished! I know that you are looking for Jesus, the man from Nazareth, who was nailed to a cross and crucified. But he has become alive again! He is not here! Look! Here is the place where they placed his body.⁷ Go and tell his disciples. Particularly be sure that you tell Peter. Tell them, 'Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee, and you will see him there, just like he told you previously'!"⁸ The women went outside and ran from the tomb. They were trembling because they were afraid, and they were astonished. But they did not say anything to anyone about this because they were afraid.

⁹ When Jesus became alive again early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary from Magdala. She was the woman from whom he had previously forced out seven evil spirits.¹⁰ She went to those who had been with Jesus, while they were mourning and crying. She told them what she had seen.¹¹ But when she told them that Jesus was alive again and that she had seen him, they refused to believe it.¹² Later that day, Jesus appeared in a different form to two of his disciples while they were walking from Jerusalem to the surrounding area.¹³ After they recognized him, those two went back to Jerusalem. They told his other followers what had happened, but they did not believe it.¹⁴ Later Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles while they were eating. He scolded them because they had stubbornly refused to believe the reports of those who saw him after he had become alive again.

¹⁵ He said to them, "Go into the whole world and preach the good news to everyone!¹⁶ God will save everyone who believes your message and who is baptized.

He will condemn everyone who does not believe. ¹⁷ Those who believe the good news will perform miracles to show that I am with them. By my power they will do miracles like these: they will force evil spirits out of people. They will speak in languages that they have not learned. ¹⁸ If they pick up snakes or if they drink any poisonous liquid, they will not be hurt. God will heal sick people on whom they lay their hands."

¹⁹ After the Lord Jesus had said this to the disciples, God took him up into heaven. Then he sat down on his throne beside God at the place of highest honor at his right hand, to rule with him. ²⁰ As for the disciples, they went out from Jerusalem, and then they preached everywhere. Wherever they went, the Lord enabled them to perform miracles. By doing that, he showed people that God's message is true.

LUKE

Chapter 1

¹ Dear Theophilus,

Many people have written reports about the amazing events that have happened among us. ² We heard about these things from people who saw them happen, from the time everything first started happening. These people taught others about God's message. ³ I myself have carefully studied everything that these people wrote and taught. So I decided that it would also be good for me to write for you, noble Theophilus, an accurate account of these matters. ⁴ I am doing this so that you may know that what you have been taught about these things is true.

⁵ When King Herod ruled the province of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He belonged to the group of priests called the Abijah group. He and his wife Elizabeth were both descended from Aaron. ⁶ God considered that both of them were righteous, because they always obeyed without fault everything that God had commanded. ⁷ But they had no children, because Elizabeth was unable to bear children. Furthermore, she and her husband were very old.

⁸ One day Zechariah was serving as a priest in the temple in Jerusalem during his group's regular time of service there. ⁹ Following their custom, the priests chose him by lot to go into the Lord's temple and burn incense. ¹⁰ When the time came for him to burn the incense, many people were praying in the courtyard outside the temple. ¹¹ Then an angel whom the Lord had sent appeared to him. The angel was standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw the angel,

he was startled and became very afraid. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Zechariah, do not be afraid! When you prayed, the Lord heard your request. So your wife Elizabeth will bear a son for you. You must name him John. ¹⁴ You will be very happy, and many other people will also be happy because he is born. ¹⁵ God will consider him to be very important. He must never drink wine or any other alcoholic drink. He will be empowered by the Holy Spirit even before he is born. ¹⁶ He will persuade many descendants of Israel to stop sinning and start obeying the Lord their God again. ¹⁷ Your son will go in advance of the Lord as his forerunner and will be powerful in his spirit like the prophet Elijah was. He will cause parents to love their children again. He will cause many people who do not obey God to live wisely and to obey him as righteous people do. He will do this in order to cause many people to be ready when the Lord comes."

¹⁸ Then Zechariah said to the angel, "I am very old, and my wife is also very old. So how can I believe that the things you said will really happen?"

¹⁹ Then the angel said to him, "I am Gabriel! I stand in God's presence! I was sent to tell you this good news about what will happen to you. ²⁰ What I have told you will certainly happen at the time God has decided, but you did not believe my words. So now God will cause you to be unable to talk until the day your son is born!"

²¹ While Zechariah and the angel were talking in the temple, the people in the courtyard were waiting for Zechariah to come out. They wondered why he was staying in the temple for such a long time. ²² When he came out, he was not able to speak to them. Because he could not talk, he made motions with his hands to try to explain what had happened. Then they realized that he had seen a vision from God

while he was in the temple.

²³ When Zechariah's time to work as a priest in the temple was finished, he left Jerusalem and went to his home.

²⁴ Some time after this, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, but she did not go out in public for five months. ²⁵ She said to herself, "The Lord has enabled me to become pregnant. In this way, he had compassion on me and has taken away the reason that people looked down on me!"

²⁶ When Elizabeth had been pregnant for almost six months, God sent the angel Gabriel to the town of Nazareth in the district of Galilee. ²⁷ He went there to speak to a virgin who was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel said to her, "Greetings! The Lord is with you and has shown great kindness to you!" ²⁹ But Mary felt very troubled when she heard his greeting. She wondered what the angel meant by these words. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have received favor from God! ³¹ You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you must name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king over his people as his ancestor David was. ³³ He will rule forever over the descendants of Jacob. He will rule forever!"

³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this happen, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come to you and the power of God will cover you. So the baby you will bear will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ And listen to this. Your relative Elizabeth is pregnant with a son, even though she is very old. And though people thought that she could not bear children, she has now been pregnant for almost six months. ³⁷ For God can do anything!" ³⁸ Then Mary

said, "All right, I am the Lord's servant, so let what you have said about me happen!" Then the angel left her.

³⁹ Very soon after that, Mary got ready and went quickly to the highlands of Judea, to the city where Zechariah lived. ⁴⁰ She entered his house and greeted his wife Elizabeth. ⁴¹ As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary greet her, the baby leaped inside Elizabeth's womb. Immediately the Holy Spirit guided Elizabeth to start praising God. ⁴² She exclaimed loudly to Mary, "God has blessed you more than he has blessed other women, and he has blessed the baby you will bear!" ⁴³ How wonderful it is that you, the mother of my Lord, have come to me! ⁴⁴ As soon as I heard you greet me, the baby in my womb leaped because he was so happy that you had come! ⁴⁵ You are blessed because you believed that what the Lord told you would come true."

⁴⁶ Then Mary praised God by saying:

"Oh, how I praise the Lord!

⁴⁷ I feel very joyful about God,
who is the one who saves me.

⁴⁸ I was only his lowly servant girl, but he did not forget me.

So from now on, people living in all time periods will say that God has blessed me.

⁴⁹ They will say this because of the great things that God, the Powerful One, has done for me.

His name is holy!

⁵⁰ He acts mercifully from one generation to the next toward those who respect him.

⁵¹ He shows people that he is very powerful.

He scatters those who think proudly within their inner beings.

⁵² He has stopped kings from ruling,

and he has honored people who are oppressed.

⁵³ He has given good things to eat to those who are hungry,

and he has sent away rich people without giving them anything.

⁵⁴⁻⁵⁵ He has helped Israel, the people who serve him.

Long ago he promised our ancestors that he would be merciful to them.

He has kept that promise and has always acted mercifully toward Abraham and all who descended from him.”

⁵⁶ Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months. Then she returned to her home.

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth to bear her child, she bore a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had been so kind to her, and they were happy along with Elizabeth. ⁵⁹ On the eighth day after this, people gathered together for the ceremony to circumcise the baby. Since his father’s name was Zechariah, they wanted to give the baby the same name. ⁶⁰ But his mother said, “No, his name must be John!” ⁶¹ So they said to her, “But John is not the name of any of your relatives!” ⁶² Then they made motions with their hands to his father, for him to indicate what name he wanted to be given to his son. ⁶³ So he signaled that they should give him a tablet to write on. When they gave him one, he wrote on it, “His name is John.” All those who were there were surprised! ⁶⁴ Immediately Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God. ⁶⁵ Everyone who lived nearby was completely awed by what God had done. They told many other people about what had happened and the news spread all over the highlands of Judea. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard

it kept thinking about it. They were saying, “We wonder what work this child will do when he grows up!” Because of everything that had happened, they were sure that God would be helping him in a powerful way. ⁶⁷ After Zechariah’s son was born, Zechariah was controlled by the Holy Spirit and he spoke these words from God:

⁶⁸ ”Praise the Lord, the God whom we people of Israel worship,

because he has come to set us, his people, free.

⁶⁹ He is sending us someone who will powerfully save us,

someone who is descended from his servant, King David.

⁷⁰ Long ago God caused his prophets to say that he would do that.

⁷¹ This powerful Savior will rescue us from our enemies,

and he will save us from the power of all those who hate us.

⁷² He has done this because he is merciful to our ancestors and remembers his holy covenant,

⁷³ which is the oath that he promised to our ancestor Abraham.

⁷⁴ God promised to rescue us from the power of our enemies,

and to enable us to serve him without being afraid,

⁷⁵ in holy and righteous ways all of our lives.

⁷⁶ Then Zechariah said this to his baby son:

”My child, you will be called a prophet of the Most High God.

You will go ahead of the Lord

to prepare a people to be ready when he comes.

⁷⁷ You will tell people that God is able to forgive them and save them from being punished for their sins.

⁷⁸ God will forgive us because he is kind and merciful to us.

And because of that, this Savior, who is like the rising sun,

will come to us from heaven to help us.

⁷⁹ He will shine on people who live in spiritual darkness and in the fear of death.

He will guide us so that we will live peacefully.

⁸⁰ Over time, Zechariah and Elizabeth's baby boy grew up and became spiritually strong. Then he lived in a desolate region and was still living there when he began to preach publicly to God's people, Israel.
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place for them to stay in a place where visitors usually stayed. So they had to stay in a place where animals slept overnight. While they were there the time came for Mary to give birth and she gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him in wide strips of cloth and laid him down where the food was kept for the animals inside the barn.

⁸ That night, there were some shepherds who were taking care of their sheep in the fields near Bethlehem. ⁹ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to them. A bright light shone all around them, showing the Lord's glory. So they became very afraid. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid! I have come to tell you good news, which will benefit all people and will make you all very happy! ¹¹ Today, in the city of David, a baby has been born who will save you from your sins! He is the Messiah, the Lord! ¹² This is how you will recognize him: In Bethlehem you will find a baby who has been wrapped in strips of cloth and placed in a feeding place for animals."

¹³ Suddenly a large group of angels from heaven appeared and joined the other angel. They all praised God, saying,

¹⁴ "May all the angels in the highest heaven praise God! And may there be peace on earth among people who are pleasing to God!"

¹⁵ After the angels left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "We should go right now to Bethlehem to see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about!" ¹⁶ So they went quickly and when they had found the place where Mary and Joseph were staying, they saw the baby lying in a feeding place for animals. ¹⁷ After seeing him, they told everyone what had been told to them about this child. ¹⁸ All the people who heard what the shepherds

Chapter 2

¹ Around that time Caesar Augustus sent out an official order that every person living under Roman rule must be registered in a public record. ² This first happened during the time that Quirinius was governing the province of Syria. ³ So everyone had to go to his family's hometown to be registered. ⁴⁻⁵ Joseph also traveled to his family's hometown, along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. Because Joseph was a descendant of King David, they left the town of Nazareth in the region of Galilee and traveled to the region of Judea, to the town of Bethlehem, which is also known as the city of David. Joseph and Mary went there to be registered in the public record. ⁶⁻⁷ When they arrived in Bethlehem, there was no

said to them were amazed. ¹⁹ But Mary kept thinking about all the things she had heard and carefully remembered them.

²⁰ The shepherds returned to the fields where their sheep were. They kept talking about how great God is and praising him for all the things that they had heard and seen, because everything happened exactly like the angels had told them.

²¹ Eight days later, it was the day when the baby was circumcised, and they gave him the name Jesus. This was the name the angel had told them to give him, even before he was conceived.

²² When the required number of days for their purification had gone by, according to the law of Moses, Mary and Joseph traveled up to Jerusalem to dedicate their son to the Lord. ²³ It had been written in the law of the Lord, "Every male offspring that is the first to be born will be set apart to be holy to the Lord." ²⁴ The law of the Lord also said the parents of a newborn son must offer as a sacrifice: "two turtle-doves or two young pigeons."

²⁵ At that time there was an old man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. He did what was pleasing to God and obeyed God's laws. He was eagerly waiting for God to send the Messiah to encourage the Israelite people, and the Holy Spirit was directing him. ²⁶ The Holy Spirit had previously revealed to him that he would see the Lord's promised Messiah before he died. ²⁷ When Joseph and Mary brought their baby, Jesus, to the temple in order to perform the rituals that God had commanded in his laws, the Spirit led Simeon to enter the temple courtyard. ²⁸ Then he took Jesus up in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹ "Lord, you have made me content and I can now die in peace according to your promise.

³⁰ I have seen the one whom you sent to save people,

³¹ the one you prepared in the midst of all the peoples.

³² He will be like a light that will reveal your truth to the Gentiles, and he will bring honor to the Israelite people."

³³ Jesus' father and mother were very amazed at what Simeon said about him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Jesus' mother, Mary, ³⁴ "Note what I say: God has determined that because of this child, many Israelite people will turn away from God, and many others will turn to God. He will be like a sign to warn people, and many people will oppose him. ³⁵ As a result, the thoughts of many people will be made evident. A sword will also pierce your own soul."

³⁶ There was also in the temple courtyard a prophetess named Anna who was very old. Her father Phanuel was a member of the tribe of Asher. She had been married for seven years and then her husband died. ³⁷ After that, she lived eighty-four more years as a widow. She was always serving in the temple area and worshiped God night and day. She often fasted and prayed. ³⁸ At that very moment, Anna came up to them and began thanking God for the baby. Then she spoke about Jesus to many people who were expecting God to redeem Jerusalem.

³⁹ After Joseph and Mary had finished doing everything required of them by the laws of the Lord, they returned to their own town, Nazareth, in the district of Galilee. ⁴⁰ As the child grew up, he became strong and very wise, and God was very pleased with him.

⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. ⁴² So when Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem for the festival as

they always did.⁴³ When all the days for the festival had ended, his parents started to return home, but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know he was still there.⁴⁴ They assumed that he was with the other people who were traveling with them. After walking a whole day's journey, they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.⁴⁶ After three days, they found him in the temple courtyard, sitting in the midst of the Jewish religious teachers. He was listening to them teach, and he was asking them questions.⁴⁷ All the people who heard what he said were amazed at how much he understood and how well he answered the questions that the teachers asked.⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were very surprised. His mother said to him, "My son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been very worried as we have been searching for you!"⁴⁹ He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I needed to be involved in what my Father does?"⁵⁰ But they did not understand the meaning of what he said to them.⁵¹ Then he returned with them to Nazareth and he always obeyed them. His mother kept thinking deeply about all those things.

⁵² As the years passed, Jesus continued to become wiser and he grew taller. God and people continued to approve of him more and more.

Chapter 3

¹ When Tiberius Caesar had been ruling the Roman Empire for about fifteen years, Pontius Pilate was the governor of the province of Judea, Herod Antipas was ruling the district of Galilee, his brother

Philip was ruling the regions of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was ruling the region of Abilene.² During that time, when Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests in Jerusalem, God spoke to Zechariah's son John while he was living out in the wilderness.³ John was traveling all around the area near the Jordan River. He kept telling people, "If you want God to forgive your sins, you must repent; then I will baptize you!"⁴ The prophet Isaiah wrote these words on a scroll long ago:

"In the wilderness, someone will be calling out:

Prepare the way of the Lord,
Make straight paths for him.

⁵ Every valley will be filled,
And every mountain and hill will be made level;

The crooked roads will become straight,
And the rough ways will be made smooth.

⁶ Then everyone will see God's way of saving people."

⁷ John said to the crowds of people who were coming to be baptized by him, "You people are evil like poisonous snakes! No one warned you that one day God will punish everyone who sins, did they? Do not think that you can escape from him!

⁸ Do the things that show that you have truly turned away from your sinful behavior! And do not start saying to yourself, 'We are descendants of Abraham!' Because I tell you that God could make even these stones become descendants of Abraham!⁹ The ax is already placed at the root of the trees, so that every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."¹⁰ Then some of the people in the crowd asked

him, "What, then, should we do?" ¹¹ He answered them, "If any of you has two shirts, you should give one of them to someone who does not have a shirt. If any of you has plenty of food, you should give some to those who do not have food." ¹² Some tax collectors also came to John to be baptized. They asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He said to them, "Do not collect from the people more money than the Roman government tells you to collect!" ¹⁴ Some soldiers asked him, "And us? What should we do?" He said to them, "Do not force people to give you money by threatening them, and do not falsely accuse anyone of doing something wrong! Be content with the amount of money you earn." ¹⁵ People were getting very hopeful that the Messiah might be coming soon, and many of them were wondering if John might be the Messiah. ¹⁶ But John replied to them all, "No, I am not. The Messiah is far greater than I am. He is so great that I am not worthy even to untie the straps of his sandals! When I baptized you, I used only water. But when the Messiah comes, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." ¹⁷ A winnowing fork is in his hand, ready to separate good grain from the useless chaff. He will store the grain safely in his barn but will burn up the chaff in a fire that never stops burning. ¹⁸ In many different ways like this, John urged the people to repent and turn back to God, as he kept telling them the good message from God. ¹⁹ He also rebuked King Herod for marrying his brother's wife, Herodias, while his brother was still alive, and for doing many other evil things. ²⁰ Then Herod had his soldiers put John in prison, which was another very evil thing. ²¹ But before John was put in prison, when many people were being baptized, Jesus also was baptized. Afterwards, while he was praying, the sky opened. ²² Then the Holy

Spirit, resembling a dove, came down and landed on Jesus. And God spoke to Jesus from heaven, saying, "You are my Son, the one whom I love dearly. I am very pleased with you!" ²³ When Jesus began his work for God, he was about thirty years old. He was the son of Joseph (or so it was thought). Joseph was the son of Heli. ²⁴ Heli was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. Levi was the son of Melchi. Melchi was the son of Jannai. Jannai was the son of Joseph. ²⁵ Joseph was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Amos. Amos was the son of Nahum. Nahum was the son of Esli. Esli was the son of Naggai. ²⁶ Naggai was the son of Maath. Maath was the son of Mattathias. Mattathias was the son of Semein. Semein was the son of Josech. Josech was the son of Joda. ²⁷ Joda was the son of Joanan. Joanan was the son of Rhesa. Rhesa was the son of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel. Shealtiel was the son of Neri. ²⁸ Neri was the son of Melchi. Melchi was the son of Addi. Addi was the son of Cosam. Cosam was the son of Elmadam. Elmadam was the son of Er. ²⁹ Er was the son of Joshua. Joshua was the son of Eliezer. Eliezer was the son of Joram. Joram was the son of Matthat. Matthat was the son of Levi. ³⁰ Levi was the son of Simeon. Simeon was the son of Judah. Judah was the son of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Jonam. Jonam was the son of Eliakim. ³¹ Eliakim was the son of Melea. Melea was the son of Menna. Menna was the son of Mattatha. Mattatha was the son of Nathan. Nathan was the son of David. ³² David was the son of Jesse. Jesse was the son of Obed. Obed was the son of Boaz. Boaz was the son of Salmon. Salmon was the son of Nahshon. ³³ Nahshon was the son of Amminadab. Amminadab was the son of Admin. Admin was the son of Arni. Arni was the son of Hezron. Hezron was the son of Perez. Perez was the son

of Judah. ³⁴ Judah was the son of Jacob. Jacob was the son of Isaac. Isaac was the son of Abraham. Abraham was the son of Terah. Terah was the son of Nahor. ³⁵ Nahor was the son of Serug. Serug was the son of Reu. Reu was the son of Peleg. Peleg was the son of Eber. Eber was the son of Shelah. ³⁶ Shelah was the son of Cainan. Cainan was the son of Arphaxad. Arphaxad was the son of Shem. Shem was the son of Noah. Noah was the son of Lamech. ³⁷ Lamech was the son of Methuselah. Methuselah was the son of Enoch. Enoch was the son of Jared. Jared was the son of Mahalalel. Mahalalel was the son of Cainan. ³⁸ Cainan was the son of Enos. Enos was the son of Seth. Seth was the son of Adam. Adam was the son of God, the man God created.

Chapter 4

¹ Then Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan River, and the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness. ² The Holy Spirit led him around in the wilderness for forty days. While he was there, the devil kept tempting him. During the entire time Jesus was in the wilderness he did not eat anything, so when the forty days were over, he was very hungry. ³ Then the devil said to Jesus, "If you really are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread for you to eat!" ⁴ Jesus replied, "No, I will not do that, because it is written in the scriptures, 'People need more than just food in order to live.'" ⁵ Then the devil took Jesus up to the top of a high mountain and showed him in an instant all the nations in the world. ⁶ Then he said to Jesus, "I will give you the right to rule all these nations and you will possess all their splendor and wealth. God has permitted me to control them all, and so I can do whatever I want to do with them." ⁷

So if you worship me, I will let you rule them all!" ⁸ But Jesus replied, "No, I will not worship you, because it is written in the scriptures, 'You must only worship the Lord, your God. He is the only one you may serve!'"

⁹ Then the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem. He set him on the highest part of the temple and said to him, "If you really are the Son of God, jump down from here. ¹⁰ You will not be hurt, because it is written in the scriptures,

'God will command his angels to protect you.' ¹¹ And it also says,

'They will lift you up in their hands when you are falling, so that you will not get hurt. You will not even strike your foot on a stone.'" ¹² But Jesus replied, "No, I will not do that, because it is written in the scriptures: 'Do not try to test the Lord your God'."

¹³ Then, after the devil had finished trying to tempt Jesus in many ways, he left him until a later time.

¹⁴ After this, Jesus left the wilderness and returned to the district of Galilee. The Holy Spirit was empowering him. Throughout that region, people heard about Jesus and told others about him. ¹⁵ He taught people in their synagogues and they all spoke highly of him because of his teaching.

¹⁶ Then Jesus went to Nazareth, the town where he grew up. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue, as he usually did. He stood up to read aloud something from the scriptures. ¹⁷ A synagogue attendant handed him a scroll containing the words that the prophet Isaiah had written long ago. Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place where these words were written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is in me.

He has appointed me to declare God's good news to people who are poor.

He has sent me here to proclaim that the captives will go free,

And will tell those who are blind that they will see again.

I will free people who have been oppressed.

¹⁹ He sent me here to declare that now is the time when the Lord will act favorably toward people."

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue was looking intently at him. ²¹ He said to them, "Today this scripture passage was fulfilled as you heard it." ²² Everyone there heard what he said and marveled at him, and they were amazed at how well he spoke. But some of them said, "This man is only Joseph's son, right?" ²³ He said to them, "Surely some of you will quote to me the proverb that says, 'Doctor, heal yourself! You will say, 'Do here in your hometown the same kind of miracles that you did in Capernaum!'" ²⁴ Then he said, "It is certainly true that the people in a prophet's own hometown do not accept his message.

²⁵ But think about this: There were many widows in Israel during the time when the prophet Elijah lived, when there was a great famine throughout the country because there had been no rain for three and half years. ²⁶ But God did not send Elijah to help any of those Israelite widows. God sent him to the town of Zarephath near the city of Sidon, to help a widow. ²⁷ There were also many Israelite lepers in Israel during the time when the prophet Elisha lived. But Elisha did not heal any of them. He healed only Naaman, a man from Syria." ²⁸ When all the people in the synagogue heard him say that, they were very angry. ²⁹ So they all got up and

shoved him out of the city. They took him to the top of the hill outside their city in order to throw him off the cliff and kill him. ³⁰ But he simply walked through their midst and went away.

³¹ One day he went down to Capernaum, a city in the district of Galilee. On the next Sabbath, he taught the people in the synagogue. ³² They were continually amazed at what he was teaching, because he spoke with confidence. ³³ That day, there was a man in the synagogue who was controlled by an evil spirit. The man shouted very loudly, ³⁴ "Ha! Jesus, from Nazareth! Evil spirits have nothing to do with you! Have you come to destroy us all? I know who you are. You are the Holy One from God!"

³⁵ Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" The demon threw the man down on the ground in the midst of the people and came out of him without harming him. ³⁶ All the people in the synagogue were very amazed. They said to each other, "He speaks with confidence, and his words have so much power! Even evil spirits obey him and come out of people when he commands them to!" ³⁷ And in every place throughout the surrounding regions, people kept talking about what Jesus had done.

³⁸ Then Jesus left the synagogue and went to Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law was sick and had a high fever. Some people who were there asked Jesus to heal her.

³⁹ So he bent over her and commanded the fever to leave her. Immediately she became well! She got up and served them some food.

⁴⁰ When the sun was setting that day, many people brought to Jesus their friends or relatives who were sick with various diseases. He put his hands on them and healed all of them. ⁴¹ He also was forcing evil spirits to come out of many people. As the evil spirits left those

people, they shouted to Jesus, “You are the Son of God!” But he commanded those evil spirits not to tell people about him, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

⁴² The next morning Jesus went out to an uninhabited place. Crowds of people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said to them, “I must tell people in other cities also the message about how God is going to rule everyone, because that is what I was sent to do.” ⁴⁴ So he kept preaching in the synagogues in various towns in the province of Judea.

that they began to sink. ⁸ Seeing this, Simon Peter fell at the knees of Jesus and said, “Please leave me, because I am a sinful man, Lord.” ⁹ He said this because he marveled at the huge number of fish that they had caught. All the men who were with him also marveled, including James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were two of Simon’s fishing partners. ¹⁰ But Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid! Until now you gathered in fish, but from now on you will gather in people to become my disciples.” ¹¹ So after the men brought the boats to the shore, they left their fishing business and everything else and went with Jesus.

¹² While Jesus was in one of the towns nearby, there was a man there who was covered with a skin disease called leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed down to the ground in front of him and pleaded with him, “Lord, please heal me, because you are able to heal me if you are willing!” ¹³ Then Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. He said, “I am willing to heal you, and I heal you now!” Immediately the man was healed. He no longer had leprosy! ¹⁴ Then Jesus told him, “Make sure that you do not tell people about your healing immediately. First, go to a priest in Jerusalem and show yourself to him so that he can examine you and see that you no longer have leprosy. Also take to the priest the offering that Moses commanded that people who have been healed from leprosy should offer.” ¹⁵ But many people heard about how Jesus had healed the man. The result was that large crowds came to Jesus to hear him teach and to have him heal them from their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But he often would go away from them to isolated areas and pray.

¹⁷ One day when Jesus was teaching, some men from the Pharisee sect were sitting nearby. Some of them were expert

Chapter 5

¹ One day, while many people were crowding around Jesus and listening to him teach God’s message, he was standing next to Lake Gennesaret. ² He saw two fishing boats there at the edge of the lake. The fishermen had left the boats and were washing their fishing nets. ³ Jesus stepped into one of the two boats. (This boat belonged to Simon.) Jesus asked Simon to push the boat out a short distance from the shore. Jesus sat in the boat and continued to teach the crowds from there. ⁴ After he finished teaching them, he said to Simon, “Take the boat out to deeper water and let your nets down into the water to catch some fish.” ⁵ Simon replied, “Master, we worked hard through the whole night, and yet we did not catch any fish. But I will let down the nets again, because you told me to.” ⁶ So Simon and his men let down their nets and they caught so many fish that their nets began to break. ⁷ They motioned to their fishing partners in the other boat to come and help them. So they came and filled both boats so full with fish

teachers of the Jewish laws. They had come from many villages in the district of Galilee and also from Jerusalem and other cities in the province of Judea. At that same time, the Lord was giving Jesus power to heal people. ¹⁸ While Jesus was there, several men brought to him a man who was paralyzed. They were carrying the man on a sleeping pad and tried to bring him into the house to lay him down in front of Jesus. ¹⁹ But they were not able to bring him in because there was such a large crowd of people in the house, so they went up the outside steps onto the roof. Then they removed some of the tiles from the roof to make an opening. They lowered the man on his sleeping pad through the opening into the middle of the crowd and put him down right in front of Jesus. ²⁰ When Jesus perceived that they believed that he could heal the man, he said to him, "Friend, I forgive your sins!" ²¹ The men who were expert teachers of the Jewish laws and the rest of the Pharisees began to think to themselves, "This man is proud and insults God by saying that! We all know that nobody except God can forgive sins!" ²² Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, "You should not question within yourselves about what I said! Consider this: ²³ It is easy to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' because no one can see whether or not the person was really forgiven. But it is not easy to say 'Get up and walk' because people can immediately see whether or not he was healed. ²⁴ So I will heal this man so that you will know that God has also given to me, the Son of Man, permission to forgive people on earth their sins." Then he said to the man who was paralyzed, "To you I say, get up, pick up your sleeping pad, and go home!" ²⁵ Immediately the man was healed! He got up in front of them all. He picked up the sleeping pad on which he

had been lying, and he went home, praising God. ²⁶ All the people there were astonished! They praised God and were overcome with amazement at what they saw Jesus do. They kept saying, "We have seen wonderful things today!"

²⁷ Then Jesus left that place and saw a man named Levi who collected taxes for the Roman government. He was sitting in the booth where the people came to pay him the taxes that the government required. Jesus said to him, "Come with me and become my disciple!" ²⁸ So Levi left his work and went with Jesus.

²⁹ Later on, Levi prepared a big feast in his own house for Jesus and his disciples. There was a large group of tax collectors and others eating together with them. ³⁰ Some men who belonged to the Pharisee sect, including those of them who taught Jewish laws, complained to Jesus' disciples, saying, "You should not be eating with tax collectors and other terrible sinners. ³¹ Then Jesus said to them, "It is people who are sick who know they need a doctor, not those who think they are well. ³² Similarly, I did not come from heaven to invite those who think they are righteous to come to me. On the contrary, I came to invite those who know that they are sinners, to turn from their sinful behavior and come to me."

³³ Those Jewish leaders said to Jesus, "The disciples of John the Baptizer often abstain from food and pray, and the disciples of the Pharisees do that, too. But your disciples keep on eating and drinking! Why do they not fast like the others?" ³⁴ Jesus answered, You do not tell the friends of the bridegroom to fast while he is still with them, do you? No, no one would do that! ³⁵ But some day the bridegroom will be taken away from his friends. Then, at that time, they will abstain from food."

³⁶ Then Jesus gave other examples to explain what he meant: He said, "People never tear a piece of cloth from a new garment and attach it to an old garment to mend it. If they did that, they would ruin the new garment by tearing it and the new piece of cloth would not match the old garment. ³⁷ And no one puts newly squeezed wine into old skin bags to store it. If anyone did that, the skin bags would tear open because they would not stretch when the new wine fermented and expanded. Then the skin bags would be ruined, and the wine would also be ruined because it would spill out. ³⁸ On the contrary, new wine must be put into new skin bags.

³⁹ Furthermore, those who have drunk only old wine are content with that. They do not want to drink the new wine, because they say, 'The old wine is good!'"

not priests, he ate some of the bread, and also gave some to the men who were with him!" ⁵ Jesus also said to them, "In the same way, the Son of Man has the authority to determine what is right for people to do on the Sabbath!"

⁶ On another Sabbath day, Jesus was teaching the people in the synagogue and a man was there whose right hand was withered.

⁷ The men who taught the Jewish laws and the Pharisees who were there were watching Jesus closely. They wanted to see if he would heal the man, and then they would accuse him of disobeying their laws about not working on the Sabbath. ⁸ But Jesus knew what they were thinking. So he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come and stand here in front of everyone!" So the man got up and stood there. ⁹ Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you this: Do the laws that God gave Moses command people to do good on the Sabbath, or to do harm? To save a life on the Sabbath, or destroy it?" ¹⁰ No one answered him, so he looked around at them all and then said to the man, "Stretch out your withered hand!" The man did that, and his hand became completely well again! ¹¹ But the religious leaders were very angry, and they discussed with one another about what they could do to get rid of Jesus.

¹² One day, some time after that, Jesus went up into the hills to pray. He prayed to God all night there. ¹³ The next day he summoned all his disciples to come near him. From them he chose twelve men whom he also called apostles. ¹⁴

These men were: Simon, to whom he gave the new name, Peter; Andrew, Peter's younger brother; James and his younger brother, John; Philip; Bartholomew; ¹⁵ Matthew, whose other name was Levi; Thomas; another James, the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas, the son of a different man named James; and Ju-

Chapter 6

¹ One Sabbath day, as Jesus and his disciples were walking through some grain fields, the disciples were picking some heads of grain. They rubbed them in their hands to separate the grains from the husks, and ate the grain. ² Some Pharisees who were watching this said to them, "You should not be doing work; our laws forbid us to do work on the Sabbath day!"

³ Jesus replied to the Pharisees, "Certainly you have read what is written in the scriptures about what David did (before he was king), when he and the men with him were hungry! ⁴ As you know, David entered the tabernacle and asked for some food. The priest gave him the bread that had been on display before God. In one of Moses' laws God had said that only the priests were permitted to eat that bread. But even though David and his men were

das Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus.

¹⁷ Jesus came down from the hills with his disciples and stood on a level area. There was a great crowd of his disciples there. There was also a large group of people who had come from Jerusalem and from many other places in the region of Judea, and from the coastal areas near the cities of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸ They came to hear Jesus teach them and to be healed from their diseases. He also healed those whom evil spirits had troubled. ¹⁹ Everyone in the crowd tried to touch him, because he was healing everyone by his power. ²⁰ Then he looked at his disciples and said, "It is very good for you who are poor, because God is ruling you. ²¹ It is very good for you who are hungry now, because God will give you everything you need.

It is very good for you who are grieving now, because God will someday make you laugh with joy.

²² It is very good when other people hate you, when they reject you, when they insult you and say that you are evil because you follow me, the Son of Man. ²³ When that happens, rejoice! Jump up and down because you are so happy! God will give you a great reward in heaven! Do not forget that their ancestors did similar things to God's prophets long ago!

²⁴ But how sad for you who are rich; your riches have already given you all the comfort you will get. ²⁵ How sad for you who think that you have everything that you need now; you will realize that these things will not satisfy you.

How sad for you who are joyful now; later you will grieve and be very sad. ²⁶ How sad it is when everyone says good things about you. In the same way, their ancestors used to say good things about men who falsely claimed to be God's prophets.

²⁷ "But I say this to each of you who are lis-

tening to what I say: Love your enemies, not only your friends! Do good things for those who hate you! ²⁸ Ask God to bless those who curse you! Pray for those who treat you badly! ²⁹ If someone insults you by striking you on one of your cheeks, turn your face so that he can strike the other cheek also. If someone wants to take away your coat, let him also have your shirt. ³⁰ Give something to everyone who asks you. If someone asks you to give him things that belong to you, do not ask him to return them. ³¹ In whatever way you want others to act toward you, that is the way that you should act toward them.

³² If you love only those who love you, do not expect God to praise you for doing that, because even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good things only for those who do good things for you, do not expect God to reward you for doing that, because even sinners do that. ³⁴ If you lend money or property only to those who will give it back to you, do not expect that God will reward you for doing that! Even sinners lend to other sinners, because they expect them to pay everything back. ³⁵ Instead, love your enemies! Do good things for them! Lend to them, and do not expect them to pay anything back! Then God will give you a great reward. And you will be children of God the Most High, since God is kind even to people who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶ So you should act mercifully toward other people, just like your Father in heaven acts mercifully toward people.

³⁷ Do not harshly criticize people, and then God will not harshly criticize you. Do not condemn other people, and then he will not condemn you. Forgive others for the evil things that they have done, and then God will forgive you. ³⁸ Give good things to others, and then God will give good things to you. It will be like he is giv-

ing you a generous amount of grain, pressing it down in a basket and shaking the basket to make sure it is completely full, to the point that some of the grain even spills over the sides! Remember that the standard you use to judge or bless others will be the standard God uses to judge or bless you!"

³⁹ He also gave his disciples this parable: "A blind man should not try to lead another blind man. If he did, they both would fall into a hole!" ⁴⁰ A disciple is not greater than his teacher. But when he is fully trained, he will become like his teacher. So you should become like me.

⁴¹ None of you should be concerned about someone else's small faults. That is like noticing a speck of straw in that person's eye while not noticing a huge wooden plank in your own eye. ⁴² If you do that, you are a hypocrite! You should first remove the plank out of your own eye before trying to get the speck out of someone else's eye. When you have stopped sinning, then you will have the spiritual insight to help others get rid of their sins.

⁴³ Everyone knows that healthy trees do not produce bad fruit and unhealthy trees do not produce good fruit. ⁴⁴ And anyone can tell what kind of tree it is by looking at the kind of fruit it has. For example, a thornbush does not produce figs and a bramble bush does not produce grapes. In the same way it is easy to know what a person is like inside by looking at what that person does. ⁴⁵ Good people do good things which show that they think good thoughts, and evil people do evil things which show that they think evil thoughts. People will speak and act according to what they think about in their minds."

⁴⁶ Jesus said to the people, "Why do you call me 'Lord' when you do not even obey what I say to do? ⁴⁷ Let me tell you what people are like who come to me, hear my

teachings, and obey them. ⁴⁸ They are like a man who dug deep into the ground to prepare to build his house. He made sure that the foundation for the house was built on solid rock. Then there was a flood and a torrent of water was beating against the house. But the torrent could not even shake the house, because the house was built on a solid foundation. ⁴⁹ But some people who hear my teachings do not obey them. They are like a man who built a house on top of the ground without building a foundation. When the river flooded, the house collapsed immediately and was completely ruined."

Chapter 7

¹ After Jesus finished speaking to the people, he went to the town of Capernaum.

² In that town there was a centurion in the Roman army who had a slave that was dear to him. This slave was so sick that he was about to die. ³ When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Jesus to ask him to come and heal his slave. ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they earnestly asked him to help the centurion's slave. They said, "He deserves that you do this for him," ⁵ because he loves our people and he built our synagogue for us." ⁶ So Jesus went with them to the officer's house. When he was almost there, the officer sent some friends to give this message to Jesus: "Lord, do not trouble yourself any further, since I am not worthy that you should come into my house." ⁷ That is why I do not think that I am worthy to come to you myself. But you can heal my slave if you say just one word. ⁸ I know that you can do this because I am a man who must obey the orders of my superiors, and I also have soldiers who must obey my orders. When I say to one of them, 'Go!', he goes, and when I say to another,

'Come!', he comes. When I say to my slave, 'Do this!', he does it.' ⁹ When Jesus heard what the officer had said, he was amazed at him. Then he turned to the crowd that was with him and said, "I tell you, I have not found any Israelite who trusts me as much as this Gentile does!" ¹⁰ When those people who had come from the centurion returned to his house, they found out that the slave was in good health again.

¹¹ Soon after that, Jesus traveled to the town of Nain. His disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹² As Jesus came near to the town gate, he saw a large crowd coming out of the town, carrying a man who had just died. Now his mother was a widow, and he was her only son. She was with the crowd, and they were going to bury her son. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not cry!" ¹⁴ Then he came close to them and touched the stretcher on which the body was lying. The men carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" ¹⁵ The man sat up and began to talk! Then Jesus led him back to his mother. ¹⁶ Everyone there was overcome with awe. They praised God and said to each other, "A great prophet has come among us!" and "God has come to care for his people!" ¹⁷ Then this news about what Jesus had done spread throughout the region of Judea and all the other nearby areas.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ The disciples of John the Baptizer told him about all these things. So John called for two of his disciples and told them to go to the Lord and ask him: "Are you the one whom God promised would come, or should we be expecting someone else?" ²⁰ When those two men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptizer sent us to ask you, 'Are you the one whom God promised would come, or should we expect someone else?'" ²¹ At that same time Jesus was

healing many people from sicknesses and serious diseases, and from evil spirits. He also healed many blind people so that they were able to see. ²² So he answered those two men, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: People who were blind are now seeing. People who were lame are now walking. People who had skin diseases are being healed. People who were deaf can now hear. People who were dead are being made to live again and good news is being proclaimed to the poor. ²³ And also tell him, "God will bless anyone who sees what I do and hears what I teach and does not turn away from me."

²⁴ When the men whom John had sent left, Jesus began to talk to the crowd of people about John. He said, "What did you go into the wilderness to see? A thin stalk of a plant shaken by the wind? ²⁵ But what did you go out to see? A man in fancy clothing? Look, those who wear splendid clothes and who have the best of everything live in kings' palaces. ²⁶ Then what did you go out there to see? A prophet? Yes! But I tell you that John is more important than an ordinary prophet. ²⁷ He is the one about whom the prophets wrote long ago: 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you. He will prepare people for your coming.'

²⁸ I tell you that of all the people who ever lived, there is no one greater than John. Yet the most insignificant people who will live with God where he dwells will be greater than John."

²⁹ When all the people who had been baptized by John heard what Jesus said—including the tax collectors—they agreed that God was just. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and the experts in the Jewish laws had not been baptized by John and they rejected God's will for them.

³¹ Then Jesus also said, "What are you peo-

ple living in this time period like? I will tell you: ³² You are like children playing games in an open area. They call out to each other, saying, "We played happy music for you on the flute, but you did not dance! Then we sang sad funeral songs for you, but you did not cry!" ³³ Similarly, when John came to you and did not eat ordinary food or drink wine, you rejected him and said, 'A demon is controlling him!' ³⁴ But when the Son of Man came to you and he ate ordinary food and drank wine as others do, then you rejected him and said, 'Look! This man eats too much food and drinks too much wine, and he associates with tax collectors and other sinners!' ³⁵ But God's wisdom is proved right by those who follow it.

³⁶ One day a certain Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went to the man's house and reclined at a table to eat. ³⁷ There was also a woman in that city whom many people knew had been a prostitute. When she heard that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee's house, she went there, taking a stone jar that contained perfume. ³⁸ As Jesus was reclining to eat, the woman stood behind him at his feet. She was crying, and her tears fell on Jesus' feet. She continually wiped his feet with her hair, and kept kissing them and anointing them with the perfume. ³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what the woman was doing, he thought, "If this man were really a prophet, he would have known who this woman is who is touching him, and what kind of person she is, that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ In response, Jesus said to him, "Simon, there is something I want to tell you." He replied, "Teacher, what is it?" ⁴¹ Jesus told him this story: "Two people owed money to a man who had a business lending money to people. One of these people owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other one owed

him fifty silver coins. ⁴² Neither of them was able to pay back what he owed, so the man very kindly said that they did not have to pay back anything. So, which of those two men will love that man more?" ⁴³ Simon replied, "I assume that the one who had owed him the most money will love him more." Jesus said to him, "You are correct." ⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Think about what this woman has done! When I entered your house, you did not do what hosts usually do to welcome their guests. You did not give me any water to wash my feet, but this woman has washed my feet with her tears and then wiped them with her hair! ⁴⁵ You did not greet me with a kiss, but from the moment I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet! ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with fragrant perfume. ⁴⁷ So I tell you that she has been forgiven for her many sins and that is why she loves me very much. But a person who thinks he has only a few sins, and has been forgiven, will love me only a little bit." ⁴⁸ Then he said to the woman, "You have been forgiven for your sins." ⁴⁹ Then those who were eating with him said among themselves, "Who is this man who says that he can forgive sins?" ⁵⁰ But Jesus said to the woman, "Because you have believed in me, God has saved you. May God give you peace as you go!"

Chapter 8

¹ After that, Jesus and his twelve disciples traveled around through various cities and villages. As they went, Jesus preached to people, proclaiming the good news that God would soon reveal himself as king.
² Also traveling with them were several women whom he had healed from evil spirits and sicknesses. These included

Mary from the village of Magdala, out of whom he had forced seven evil spirits; ³ Joanna the wife of Chuza, who was one of King Herod Antipas' managers; Susanna; and many others. They were providing some of their own funds to support Jesus and his disciples.

⁴ One day a very large crowd was gathering, because people were traveling to see Jesus from many different towns. Then he told them this story: ⁵ "A man went out to his field to plant some grain seeds. As he was scattering them over the soil, some of the seeds fell on the hard pathway. Then people walked on those seeds, and birds ate them. ⁶ Some of the seeds fell on rocky ground which had very little soil. Therefore, as soon as the seeds grew, the plants dried up because there was no moisture. ⁷ Some of the seeds fell on ground that contained seeds of thorn plants. The thorn plants grew up together with the young grain plants and crowded them out so that they could not grow. ⁸ But some of the grain seeds fell on fertile soil, and grew so well that they produced a crop that had a hundred times as many seeds." After saying these things, Jesus called out to them, "All of you should think carefully about what you just heard me say!"

⁹ Then Jesus' disciples asked him to tell them the meaning of the story. ¹⁰ And he said, "To you has been granted the privilege of knowing the hidden things about how God will rule as king. But I speak to everyone else only in parables, so that,

'Although they see, they may not perceive, and although they hear, they may not understand.'

¹¹ Now, this is what the story means: The seeds represent God's word. ¹² The seeds that fell on the pathway show what happens when people hear God's word, but afterwards the devil comes and takes that word away from their minds and hearts.

As a result, they do not believe it and are not saved. ¹³ The seeds that fell on the rocky ground show what happens when people hear God's word and receive it joyfully, but they do not have deep roots. As a result, they only believe for a short time. As soon as difficult things happen to them, they stop believing God's word. ¹⁴ The seeds that fell among the thorny plants show what happens when people hear God's word, but then as they go on in life they allow such things as the worries, riches and pleasures of this life to crowd out God's word from their life. As a result, they do not become spiritually mature. ¹⁵ But the seeds that fell on the fertile ground show what happens when people hear God's word and receive it with an honorable and upright heart. They persevere in believing and obeying the word, and so they produce good spiritual fruit.

¹⁶ After lighting a lamp, people do not cover it with a basket or put it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a lampstand, so that everyone who enters the room can see by its light. ¹⁷ This illustrates that everything that is hidden now will someday be made visible. And everything that is secret now will someday be brought out into the open. ¹⁸ So make sure that you are listening carefully to what I tell you, because God will enable those who believe his truth to understand even more. But God will cause those who do not believe his truth to not understand even the little that they think they have understood."

¹⁹ One day Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they could not get near to him because there was such a large crowd around him in the house where he was. ²⁰ Then someone told him, "Your mother and your brothers have been standing outside, wanting to see you." ²¹ But he replied to them, "Those who hear God's word and obey it are as

dear to me as my mother and my brothers."

²² On another day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples. He said to them, "I would like us to go across to the other side of the lake." So they started to sail across the lake. ²³ But as they were sailing, Jesus fell asleep. Then a powerful windstorm came down on the lake. Soon the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. ²⁴ So Jesus' disciples came to him and woke him up. They said to him, "Master! Master! We are going to die!" He then woke up and commanded the wind and the violent waves to be still and they became still. Everything became calm. ²⁵ Then he said to them, "Why is your faith so weak?" The disciples were alarmed and amazed because of what had just happened. They kept saying to one another, "Who is this, that he is able to command even the winds and the water, and they obey him?"

²⁶ Jesus and his disciples continued sailing and came to the region where the Gerasene people lived, on the opposite side of the lake from the district of Galilee.

²⁷ After Jesus stepped out of the boat onto the land, he was met by a certain man from the town in that area. This man had demons in him. For a long time this man had not worn clothes and did not live in a house. Instead, he lived in the burial caves.

²⁸ When he saw Jesus, the man cried out, lay facedown before him, and said with a loud voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me!" ²⁹ The man said this because Jesus had just commanded the evil spirit to come out of him. Although the man had been bound with chains on his wrists and ankles while people guarded him, many times the evil spirit would suddenly seize him by force.

Then the man would break the chains and the demon would make him go out into deserted places. ³⁰ Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Thousands." He said that because many demons had entered that man. ³¹ The demons kept begging Jesus not to command them to go into the deep pit where God punishes demons. ³² There was a large herd of pigs grazing on the hillside nearby. The demons begged Jesus to allow them to enter the pigs, and he allowed them. ³³ So the demons left the man and entered the pigs, and the herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

³⁴ When the men who were taking care of the pigs saw what happened, they ran away! They reported what they had seen to people in the town and in the countryside. ³⁵ Then the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to where Jesus was, they saw that the man from whom the demons had gone out was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him. They saw that he had clothes on, and that his mind was normal again, and they became afraid. ³⁶ The men who had seen what had happened told the people who had just arrived how Jesus had healed the man who had been controlled by demons. ³⁷ Then many people from the surrounding region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave their area because they were very afraid. So Jesus and the disciples got into the boat to go back across the lake. ³⁸ Before they left, the man from whom the demons had gone out begged Jesus saying, "Please, let me go with you!" But instead, Jesus sent him away by saying to him, ³⁹ "No, go back to your house and tell people how much God has done for you!" So the man went away and told people throughout the town how much Jesus had done for him.

⁴⁰ Then Jesus and the disciples went back across the lake to Capernaum. A crowd of people was waiting for him there, and they welcomed him. ⁴¹ Just then a man named Jairus, who was one of the leaders of the synagogue there, came near to Jesus and he lay facedown before him. He pleaded with Jesus to come to his house ⁴² because his only daughter, who was about twelve years old, was dying and he wanted Jesus to heal her.

But as Jesus went, many people were crowding around him. ⁴³ Now in the crowd there was a woman who had been suffering for twelve years from a disease that caused continual bleeding. She had spent all her money to pay doctors to help her, but none of them was able to heal her. ⁴⁴ She came behind Jesus and touched the edge of his robe. At once her bleeding stopped. ⁴⁵ Jesus said, "Who touched me?" As everyone around Jesus was saying they had not touched him, Peter said, "Master, there are many people crowding around you and pressing up against you, so any one of them might have touched you!" ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "I know that someone deliberately touched me, because power has gone out of me to heal that person." ⁴⁷ And when the woman realized that she could not hide, she came trembling to him and she lay facedown on the ground before him. As the other people were listening, she told Jesus why she had touched him and that she had been healed immediately. ⁴⁸ And Jesus said to her, "My dear woman, because you believed that I could heal you, you are now well. Now go on your way, and may God's peace be with you."

⁴⁹ While he was still speaking to her, a man from Jairus' house came and said to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. So do not bother the teacher anymore!" ⁵⁰ But when Jesus heard that, he said to Jairus, "Do not

be afraid. Just believe in me and she will live again." ⁵¹ When he arrived outside the house, Jesus did not allow anyone to go in the house with him, except for Peter, John and James, and the girl's mother and father. ⁵² And all the people there were crying loudly to show that they were very sad because the girl had died. But Jesus said to them, "Stop crying! She is not dead! She is just sleeping!" ⁵³ And the people laughed at him, because they knew that the girl was dead. ⁵⁴ But Jesus took hold of her hand and called to her, saying, "Child, get up!" ⁵⁵ And immediately her spirit returned to her body and she got up. Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶ And her parents were amazed, but Jesus told them not to tell anyone else yet what had happened.

Chapter 9

¹ Then Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them the right and power to drive out all kinds of demons and to heal people's diseases. ² He sent them out to heal people and to teach them about how God was going to show himself as king. ³ Before they left, he said to them, "Do not take anything with you for your journey. Do not take a walking stick or a traveler's bag or food or money. Do not even take an extra tunic. ⁴ Whatever house you enter, stay in that house until you leave that area. ⁵ In any town where the people do not welcome you, you should not continue to stay there. As you leave that town, shake off the dust from your feet. Do that as a warning against them for rejecting you." ⁶ Then Jesus' disciples left and traveled through many villages. Everywhere they went, they talked to people about the good news from God and healed sick people.

⁷ Herod, the ruler over the district of

Galilee, heard about everything that was happening. He was perplexed, because some people were saying that John the Baptizer had become alive again.⁸ Other people were saying that the prophet Elijah had appeared again, and still others were saying that one of the other prophets from long ago had become alive again.⁹ But Herod said, "It cannot be John because I had his head cut off. So who is this man that I am hearing these things about?" And he kept looking for a way to see Jesus.

¹⁰ When the apostles returned from their trip, they told Jesus everything that they had done. Then he took them aside to go by themselves with him to the town of Bethsaida. ¹¹ But when the crowds heard about where Jesus had gone, they followed him there. He welcomed them and spoke to them about how God was soon going to show himself as king, and he healed those who needed to be healed.

¹² Now it was getting late in the day, so the twelve disciples came to him and said, "Please send this large crowd of people away so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms to get some food and find places to stay, since we are out here in this isolated place."¹³ But he said to them, "You must give them something to eat!" They replied, "All we have are five small loaves of bread and two small fish. We could never go buy enough food for all these people!" ¹⁴ They said this because there were about five thousand men there. Then Jesus said to the disciples, "Tell the people to sit down in groups, with about fifty people in each group."¹⁵ So the disciples did that and the people all sat down. ¹⁶ Then he took the five bread loaves and the two fish. He looked up toward heaven and praised God for them. Then he tore them into pieces and gave them to the disciples for them to distribute to the people.

¹⁷ They all ate and everyone had enough to eat. Then the disciples collected the leftover pieces of food, which filled twelve baskets!

¹⁸ One day while Jesus was praying in private, his disciples came to him and he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" ¹⁹ They replied, "Some people say that you are John the Baptizer, but others say that you are the prophet Elijah, and still others say that you are one of the other prophets from long ago who has come back to life again."²⁰ He asked them, "What about you? Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah, who has come from God."²¹ Then Jesus warned them strongly to not tell that to anyone yet.²² Then he said, "I, the Son of Man, must suffer many things: I will be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the Jewish laws and then I will be killed. Then, on the third day after that, I will come back to life again."

²³ Then he said to them all, "If any one of you wants to follow me as my disciple, you must not do only what you desire to do. Rather, every day you must be willing to suffer, even to the point of giving up your life.²⁴ You must do that, because those who try to save their own lives for themselves will lose them eternally, but those who give up their lives because of being my disciples will save their lives eternally.

²⁵ How does it benefit you if you gain everything in this world but then end up losing, or even giving up, your own self?

²⁶ As for people who reject my message and refuse to say that they belong to me, I, the Son of Man will also refuse to say that they belong to me when I come back in my glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.²⁷ But I tell you this fact: Some of you standing here now will not die until you see God show himself as king!"

²⁸ About eight days after Jesus said those words, he took with him Peter, John and James, and went up onto a mountain to pray there. ²⁹ While he was praying, the appearance of his face became very different and his clothes became dazzling white and began to shine brightly. ³⁰ Suddenly, two prophets from long ago were there talking with Jesus; they were Moses and Elijah. ³¹ They appeared surrounded in glory, and spoke with Jesus about his departure, which would soon be accomplished in Jerusalem. ³² Peter and the other disciples who were with him were very sleepy. When they woke up, they saw Jesus' glory; they also saw the two men standing with him. ³³ As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here! We should make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!" But he really did not realize what he was saying. ³⁴ As he was saying these things, a cloud formed and covered them. The disciples were afraid as the cloud surrounded them. ³⁵ God's voice spoke to them from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him!" ³⁶ When the voice had finished speaking, the three disciples saw that only Jesus was there. They were silent and for a long time they did not tell anyone what they had seen.

³⁷ The next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a large crowd of people met Jesus. ³⁸ Suddenly a man from the crowd called out, "Teacher, I plead with you, do something to help my son! He is my only child." ³⁹ An evil spirit suddenly seizes him and causes him to scream. It shakes him violently and causes him to foam at the mouth. It hardly ever leaves my child and when it does, it injures him severely. ⁴⁰ I pleaded with your disciples to command the evil spirit to come out of him, but they were not able

to do it!" ⁴¹ In response, Jesus said, "This generation of people does not believe and so your thinking is corrupt! How much longer must I be with you before you believe?" Then he said to the boy's father, "Bring your son here to me!" ⁴² While they were bringing the boy to him, the demon threw the boy down to the ground, and shook him severely. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit and healed the boy. Then he returned him to his father. ⁴³ Then all the people there were completely amazed at the great power of God.

While they were all still in wonderment at all the miracles Jesus was doing, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴ "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: I, the Son of Man, will soon be handed over to my enemies." ⁴⁵ But the disciples did not understand what he meant by this. God prevented them from understanding it, so that they would not know yet what he meant, and they were afraid to ask him about what he had said.

⁴⁶ Some time later, the disciples began to argue among themselves about which one of them would be the most important. ⁴⁷ But Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he brought a young child to stand beside him. ⁴⁸ He said to them, "If someone welcomes a little child like this because of me, it is the same as welcoming me. And if someone welcomes me, it is the same as welcoming God, who sent me. Remember that those among you who seem to be the least important are the ones whom God considers to be most important."

⁴⁹ John replied to Jesus, "Master, we saw a man who was using your name to command demons to come out of people. So we told him to stop doing that, because he is not following you as part of our group."

⁵⁰ But Jesus said, "Do not stop him from doing that! If someone is not doing something that is harmful to you, then what he

is doing is helpful to you!"

⁵¹ When it was getting close to the day when God would take him back up to heaven, Jesus firmly resolved to go to Jerusalem. ⁵² He sent some messengers to go ahead of him, and they entered a village in the region of Samaria to prepare for him to go there. ⁵³ But the Samaritans would not let Jesus come to their village because he was on his way to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When two of his disciples, James and John, heard that, they said, "Lord, do you want us to ask God to send fire down from heaven to destroy those people?" ⁵⁵ But Jesus turned to them and sternly told them they were wrong to say that. ⁵⁶ So they went to a different village.

⁵⁷ As Jesus and the disciples were walking along the road, someone said to him, "I will go with you wherever you go!" ⁵⁸ Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes in the ground to live in, and birds have nests, but I, the Son of Man, do not have a home to sleep in!" ⁵⁹ Jesus told a different person, "Follow me!" But that person said, "Lord, let me first go home and bury my father after he dies." ⁶⁰ But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but you go and tell people everywhere that God will soon show himself as king!" ⁶¹ Someone else said, "Lord, I will come with you and be your disciple, but first let me go home to say goodbye to my people." ⁶² Jesus said to him, "Anyone who starts plowing his field and then looks behind him is not able to serve God when he rules everything as king."

Chapter 10

¹ After that, the Lord Jesus appointed seventy other people to go preach. He prepared to send them out in pairs to go ahead of him to every town and village

where he intended to go. ² He said to them, "The harvest is certainly plentiful, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord of the harvest and plead with him to send more workers to reap his harvest. ³ Go now, but remember that I am sending you out to tell my message to people who will try to get rid of you. You will be like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take along any money. Do not take a traveler's bag. Do not take extra shoes. Do not stop to greet people along the way. ⁵ Whenever you enter a house, first say to those people, 'May God give peace to you who are in this house!' ⁶ If the people who live there are desiring to have God's peace, they will experience the peace that you are offering them. If the people who live there are not desiring to have God's peace, the peace you have offered will return to you. ⁷ Stay in that same house until you leave that village. Do not move around from one house to another. Eat and drink whatever they provide for you, because a worker deserves to receive payment for his work. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and the people there welcome you, eat whatever food they provide for you. ⁹ Heal the people there who are sick. Tell them, 'God will soon rule everywhere as king.' ¹⁰ But if you enter a town whose people do not welcome you, go into its main streets and say, ¹¹ 'As a warning against you, we will wipe off even the dust that sticks to our feet as we are leaving your town. Yet be sure of this; God will soon rule everything as king.' ¹² I tell you that on the final day when God judges everyone, the people of that town will be punished even more severely than the wicked people who lived long ago in the city of Sodom!

¹³ How terrible it will be for you people who live in the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, because you refuse to repent! If the miracles that I performed for you had

been done in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon, the wicked people who lived there would long ago have shown that they were sorry for their sins by sitting on the ground wearing coarse cloth and putting ashes on their heads.¹⁴ So on the final day when God judges everyone, he will punish you more severely than the wicked people who lived in Tyre and Sidon because you did not repent and believe in me even though you saw me do miracles!¹⁵ I also have something to say to you people who live in the town of Capernaum. Do you think you will be honored up in heaven? On the contrary, you will be brought down to the place of the dead!"

¹⁶ Jesus also said to the disciples, "Whoever listens to your message is listening to me, and whoever rejects your message is rejecting me. And whoever rejects me is rejecting God, the one who sent me."

¹⁷ The seventy people whom Jesus appointed went and did as he told them to. When they returned, they were very joyful. They said, "Lord, even the demons obeyed us when by your authority we commanded them to leave people!"¹⁸ He replied, "While you were away doing that, I saw Satan fall from heaven as suddenly and quickly as lightning strikes!¹⁹ Listen! I have given you the right to attack evil spirits. They will not hurt you. I have given you the right to be stronger than our enemy, Satan. Nothing will hurt you at all.²⁰ But as you rejoice that evil spirits obey you, you should rejoice even more that your names have been written in heaven."

²¹ Right then, Jesus was filled with great joy from the Holy Spirit. He said, "Father, you are Lord over everything in heaven and on earth. Some people think that they are wise because they are well educated. But I praise you that you have prevented

them from knowing these things. Instead, you have revealed them to people who accept your truth as readily as little children do. Yes, Father, you have done that because it pleased you to do so."²² Jesus also said to the disciples, "God, my Father, has given everything to me. Only my Father really knows me, his Son. Furthermore, only I, the Son, really know who the Father is—that is, only I and those people to whom I choose to reveal him really know him."

²³ Then when his disciples were alone with him, he turned toward them and said, "God has given you a great gift by letting you see the things that I have done!²⁴ I want you to know that many prophets and kings who lived long ago desired to see the things that you are seeing me do, but they could not, because those things did not happen then. They longed to hear the things that you have been hearing me say, but I had not yet revealed those things at that time."

²⁵ One day as Jesus was teaching people, a certain teacher of Jewish laws was there. He wanted to test Jesus by asking him a difficult question. So he stood up and asked, "Teacher, what must I do in order to live with God forever?"²⁶ Jesus said to him, "You have read what Moses has written in the laws that God gave him. What do the laws say?"²⁷ The man replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as much as you love yourself."²⁸ Jesus replied, "You have answered correctly. If you do all that, you will live with God forever."

²⁹ But the man wanted to find a reason to justify the way he treated other people. So he said to Jesus, "Which people are my neighbors that I should love?"³⁰ Jesus replied, "One day, a Jewish man was

traveling along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. As he was traveling, some bandits attacked him. They took away most of the man's clothes and everything else that he had, and they beat him until he was almost dead. Then they left him. ³¹ It happened that a Jewish priest was going along that road. When he saw that man, instead of helping him, he passed by on the other side of the road. ³² Similarly, a Levite, who worked in God's temple, came to that place and saw the man. But he also passed by on the other side of the road. ³³ Then a man from the region of Samaria came along that road to where the man was lying. When he saw that man, he pitied him. ³⁴ He went close to him and put some olive oil and wine on the wounds to help heal them. He wrapped strips of cloth around the wounds. Then he placed the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next morning he gave two silver coins to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of this man. If you spend more than this amount to care for him, I will pay you back when I return.'"

³⁶ Then Jesus said, "Three people saw the man whom bandits attacked. Which one of them showed he was a true neighbor to the man?" ³⁷ The teacher of the law replied, "The one who acted mercifully toward him." Jesus said to him, "Yes, so now you should go and act like that toward everyone whom you can help!"

³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples continued to travel, they entered a village near Jerusalem. A woman whose name was Martha invited them to come to her house. ³⁹ Her younger sister, whose name was Mary, was sitting near Jesus' feet. She was listening to what he was teaching. ⁴⁰ But Martha was very much concerned about preparing the meal. She went to Jesus and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to prepare everything by myself? Please tell her that she should

help me!" ⁴¹ But the Lord replied, "Martha, Martha, you are very worried about many things. ⁴² But the only thing that is truly necessary is to listen to what I am teaching. Mary has made the best choice. The blessing that she is receiving from doing that will not be taken away from her."

Chapter 11

¹ One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished praying, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us what to say when we pray, as John taught his disciples!" ² He said to them, "When you pray, say things like this: 'Father, may all people honor your name as holy. May you soon rule all people everywhere. ³ Please give us each day the food that we need. ⁴ Please forgive us for the wrong things that we have done, just as we ourselves forgive people for the wrong things that they do to us. Help us to not sin when we are tempted.'"

⁵ Then he said to them, "Suppose that one of you goes to the house of a friend at midnight. Suppose that you stand outside and call out to him, 'My friend, please lend me three loaves of bread! ⁶ Another friend of mine who is traveling has just arrived at my house, but I have no food ready to give to him!' ⁷ Suppose that he answers you from inside the house, 'Do not bother me! The door has been locked and all my family are in bed. So I cannot get up and give you anything!' ⁸ I tell you, he may not want to get up and give you any food even though you are his friend. But because you keep persisting in asking him, he will certainly get up and give you whatever you need. ⁹ So I tell you this: Keep asking God for what you need, and he will give it to you. Keep seeking his will and he will show it to you. Keep on praying urgently to God, like someone knocking on

a door, and he will open the way for you to receive what you pray for. ¹⁰ Remember that anyone who asks will receive and anyone who seeks will find, and anyone who knocks will have the door opened for him. ¹¹ If one of you had a son who asked you for a fish to eat, you certainly would not give him a poisonous snake instead, would you? ¹² And if he asked you for an egg, you certainly would not give him a scorpion instead, would you? ¹³ Even though you people are sinful, you know how to give good things to your children. So it is even more certain that your Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to you if you ask him to do that."

¹⁴ One day a man came to Jesus who was not able to speak because a demon controlled him. After Jesus forced out the demon, the man began to talk, and crowds of people were amazed. ¹⁵ But some of them said, "It is Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons, who enables this man to force out demons!" ¹⁶ Other people there asked him to perform a miracle to prove he was from God. ¹⁷ But he knew what they were thinking. So he said to them, "If the people in one nation fight against each other, their nation will be destroyed. If the people in one household oppose each other, their family will fall apart. ¹⁸ Similarly, if Satan and his demons were fighting against each other, his rule over them would certainly not last! I say this because you are saying that I force out demons by the power of the ruler of demons! ¹⁹ Now, if it is really true that Satan is enabling me to force out demons, is it also true that your disciples who force out demons do so by Satan's power? Of course not! So they prove that you are wrong. ²⁰ But since it is actually by the power of God that I force out demons, I am showing you that God has begun to rule over you."

²¹ Jesus continued, "When a strong man

who has many weapons guards his own house, no one can steal the things in his house. ²² But when someone else who is stronger attacks that man and subdues him, he is able to take away the weapons in which the man trusted. Then he can take from that man's house anything he wants to. ²³ Anyone who is not supporting me is opposing me, and anyone who does not bring people to me causes them to go away from me."

²⁴ Then Jesus said this: "Sometimes when an evil spirit leaves someone, it wanders around in desolate areas seeking relief. If it does not find any, it says to itself, 'I will return to the person in whom I used to live!' ²⁵ So it goes back and finds that the person is like a house that has been swept clean and put in order, but is still empty. ²⁶ Then this evil spirit goes and gets seven other spirits that are even more evil than it is. They all enter that person and begin living there. So, although that person's condition was bad before, it became much worse."

²⁷ When Jesus said that, a woman who was listening called out to him loudly, "How greatly blessed by God is the woman who gave birth to you and who nursed you at her breasts!" ²⁸ Then he replied, "Even more blessed by God are those who hear his message and obey it!"

²⁹ As more and more people were coming to join the crowd around Jesus, he said, "The people living at this time are evil people. Many of you want me to perform a miracle as proof that I have come from God. But the only proof that you will receive is a miracle like what happened to Jonah. ³⁰ Just as the miracle that God did for Jonah long ago was a testimony to the people from the city of Nineveh, so God will do a similar miracle for the Son of Man that will be a testimony to you people living now. ³¹ Long ago the Queen

of Sheba traveled a very long distance to hear Solomon speak wise things. And now someone who is much greater than Solomon is here, but you have not really listened to what I say. Therefore, at the time when God will judge all people, this queen will stand there and condemn the people alive now. ³² The men who lived in the ancient city of Nineveh turned from their sinful ways when Jonah preached to them. And now I, who am greater than Jonah, have come and preached to you, but you have not turned from your sinful ways. Therefore, at the time when God judges all people, the men who lived in Nineveh long ago will stand there and condemn the people alive now."

³³ "People who light a lamp do not then hide it or put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so that those who enter the room or house can see the light. ³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, then your whole body is full of light. If, on the other hand, it is unhealthy, then your body will be full of darkness. ³⁵ Therefore, be careful that the light in you is not darkness. ³⁶ If your whole body is full of light and no part of it is darkened, all of your body will be full of light like the light of a lamp that enables you to see everything clearly."

³⁷ After Jesus finished saying those things, a Pharisee invited him to eat a meal with him. So Jesus went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table to eat.

³⁸ The Pharisee was surprised when he saw that Jesus did not ritually wash his hands before eating. ³⁹ The Lord Jesus said to Him, "You Pharisees wash the outside of cups and dishes before you eat, but within yourselves you are very greedy and wicked. ⁴⁰ You foolish people! Surely you know that God not only made the outside, but he also made the inside! ⁴¹ Instead of worrying about dishes being ritu-

ally clean, be merciful and give whatever is inside the dishes to those in need, and then both the inside and outside of you will be clean.

⁴² But how terrible it will be for you Pharisees! You carefully give to God a tenth of all you have, including even the herbs that you grow in your gardens. But then you do not love God or act justly toward others. You should make sure that you love God and act justly toward others in addition to giving to God. ⁴³ How terrible it will be for you Pharisees, because you like to sit in the most important seats in the synagogues, and you like people to greet you with special honor in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴ How terrible it will be for you, because you are like unmarked graves that cannot be seen, which people walk over without realizing it and become ceremonially unclean."

⁴⁵ One of those who were teachers of the Jewish laws replied, "Teacher, by saying this you are criticizing us also!" ⁴⁶ Jesus said, "How terrible it will be for you who are teachers of the Jewish laws! You weigh people down with very heavy burdens, yet you will not do even the smallest thing to help people bear those burdens! ⁴⁷ How terrible it will be for you, because you construct buildings to mark the graves of the prophets, but your ancestors are the ones who killed them! ⁴⁸ So when you build these buildings, you are declaring that you approve of what your ancestors did when they killed the prophets. ⁴⁹ So God, who is very wise, said, 'I will send prophets and apostles to guide my people. But they will cause them to suffer greatly and will even kill some of them.' ⁵⁰ As a result, many of the people living now at this time will be considered guilty of the murder of all God's prophets from the time the world was created, ⁵¹ starting from when Abel was killed by his brother and con-

tinuing until the prophet Zechariah was killed in the temple between the altar and the holy place. Yes, the people living at this time will be considered guilty for all those murders of the prophets! ⁵² How terrible it will be for you men who teach the Jewish laws. Because of you, people cannot know how to have God rule over them! You do not let God rule over you, and you even get in the way of people who want to have God rule over them.”

⁵³ After Jesus finished saying those things, he left there. Then the men who taught the Jewish laws and the Pharisees began to act in a very hostile way toward him. They intensely questioned him about many things. ⁵⁴ They kept waiting for him to say something wrong for which they could accuse him.

Chapter 12

¹ Meanwhile, many thousands of people gathered around Jesus. There were so many that they were stepping on each other. But first he said to his disciples, “Be careful that you do not become like the Pharisees, who act religious in public, but do evil things in secret. Just like yeast causes a lump of dough to rise, their evil behavior causes others to be hypocrites like they are. ² People cannot cover up their sins. Someday God will let everyone know everything people are trying to hide. ³ Everything you say in the dark, someday people will hear in the daylight. Whatever you whisper in your room will someday be as public as if it were shouted from the rooftops.”

⁴ “My friends, listen carefully! Do not be afraid of people; they can kill you, but they cannot do anything more to you after that! ⁵ But I will warn you about the one that you should truly be afraid of. You

should be afraid of God, because he not only has the right to cause people to die, he also has the right to throw them into hell afterward! Yes, he is truly the one that you should be afraid of! ⁶ Think about the sparrows. They have so little value that you can buy five of them for only two small coins and yet God never forgets any of them! ⁷ God even knows how many hairs there are on your head. Do not be afraid, because you are more valuable to God than many sparrows.

⁸ I tell you also, that if people tell others that they are my disciples, then I, the Son of Man, will say that they are my disciples to God’s angels. ⁹ But if they tell others that they are not my disciples, then I will say to God’s angels that they are not my disciples. ¹⁰ I also tell you that if people say evil things about me, the Son of Man, God will forgive them for that. But if people say evil things about the Holy Spirit, God will not forgive them for that. ¹¹ So when people bring you into the synagogues to question you before the religious leaders and other people who have power in the country, do not worry about how you will answer them or about what you should say, ¹² because the Holy Spirit will tell you at that very time what you should say.”

¹³ Then one of the people in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide my father’s property with me!” ¹⁴ But Jesus replied to him, “Man, no one made me a judge to settle arguments that people have about property!” ¹⁵ Then he said to the whole crowd, “Be careful not to be greedy in any way! The value of a man’s life is not determined by how many things he owns.”

¹⁶ Then he told them this illustration: “The fields of a certain rich man produced abundant crops. ¹⁷ So he thought to himself, ‘I do not know what to do, because I do not have any place big enough to store

all my crops!' ¹⁸ Then he thought to himself, 'I know what I will do! I will tear down my grain bins and build larger ones! Then I will store all my grain and other things in the big new bins. ¹⁹ Then I will say to myself, "Now I have enough things stored up to last many years. So now I will take life easy. I will eat and drink and be happy!"' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'You foolish man! Tonight you will die! Then all the things you have saved up for yourself will belong to someone else, not to you!"'

²¹ Then Jesus ended this illustration by saying, "That is what will happen to those who store up things just for themselves, but who do not value the things that God considers valuable."

²² Then Jesus said to his disciples, "So I want to tell you this: Do not worry about things you need in order to live. Do not worry about whether you will have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. ²³ Your life is more important than the food you eat and your body is more important than the clothes you put on it. ²⁴ Think about the birds: They do not plant seeds, and they do not harvest crops. They do not have rooms or buildings in which to store crops. But God provides food for them. You are certainly much more valuable than birds. ²⁵ None of you can add even a minute to his life by worrying about it! ²⁶ So since you cannot even do that small thing, you certainly should not worry about anything else. ²⁷ Think about the way that flowers grow. They do not work to earn money and they do not make their own clothes. But I tell you that even though King Solomon, who lived long ago, wore very beautiful clothes, he was never as well dressed as one of those flowers. ²⁸ God makes the plants beautiful even though they grow for only a short time. Then they are cut and thrown into the fire. But you are very precious to God,

and he will care for you much more than he cares for the plants. Why do you trust him so little? ²⁹ Do not wonder about what you will eat and drink, and do not keep worrying about those things. ³⁰ The people who do not know God are always worried about such things. But your Father in heaven knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, make it the most important thing in your life to accept God when he rules over you. Then he will also give you everything you need.

³² So you should not be afraid, little flock. Your Father in heaven wants to give you all the benefits he plans to when he rules everything completely. ³³ So now sell the things that you own. Give the money to those who do not have the food and clothing they need or a place to live. Get yourselves wallets that do not wear out, and you will store up treasure in heaven where it will always be safe. There, no thief can come near to steal it, and no moths can destroy your clothing. ³⁴ Whatever it is that you treasure, that is what you will think about and spend your time on.

³⁵ Always be ready for doing God's work, like people who have put on their work clothes and keep their lamps burning all night. ³⁶ Be ready for me to return, like servants who are waiting for their master to return after being at a wedding feast. They are waiting to open the door for him as soon as he arrives and knocks at the door. ³⁷ If those servants are awake when he returns, he will reward them. I will tell you this: He will get dressed to serve, tell them to sit down, and he will serve them a meal. ³⁸ Even if he comes between midnight and sunrise, if he finds that his servants are awake and ready for him, he will be very pleased with them. ³⁹ But you must also remember this: If the owner of a house knew what time the thief was

coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed the thief to break into his house.⁴⁰ So be ready, because I, the Son of Man, will come again at a time when you do not expect me.”

⁴¹ Peter asked, “Lord, are you giving this illustration only for us or for everyone else also?”⁴² The Lord replied, “I am saying it for everyone who is like a faithful and wise servant who is a manager in his master’s house. His master puts him in charge of making sure the other servants get their food at the proper time.⁴³ If the servant is doing that work when his master returns, his master will reward him.⁴⁴ I tell you this: The master will put that servant in charge of all he owns.⁴⁵ But if that servant manager says to himself, ‘My master has been away for a long time,’ then he might start to beat the other servants, both male and female ones. He might also start to eat a lot of food and get drunk.⁴⁶ If he does that, his master might return at a time when the servant does not expect him. Then his master will punish him severely and assign him a place with those who do not serve him faithfully.⁴⁷ The servant who knew what his master wanted but did not get ready and do it will be severely punished.⁴⁸ But every servant who did not know what his master wanted him to do, and then did something wrong, will only get a mild punishment. A lot is expected from those people who have been given a lot. Even more is expected from those who have been entrusted with a lot.”

⁴⁹ “I came to set the earth on fire. I wish that it were already on fire.⁵⁰ Soon I must go through a baptism of terrible suffering. I will continue to be distressed until my suffering is finished.⁵¹ Do you think that as a result of my coming to earth people will live together peacefully? No! I must tell you, instead, people will be divided.⁵²

Because some people in one house will believe in me and some will not, they will be divided. Three people in one house who do not believe in me will oppose two who do believe.⁵³ A man will oppose his son, or a son will oppose his father. A woman will oppose her daughter, or a woman will oppose her mother. A woman will oppose her daughter-in-law, or a woman will oppose her mother-in-law.”

⁵⁴ He also said to the crowds, “When you see a dark cloud forming in the west, you immediately say ‘It is going to rain!’ and that is what happens.⁵⁵ When the wind blows from the south, you say, ‘It is going to be a very hot day!’ and you are right.⁵⁶ You hypocrites! By observing the clouds and the wind, you are able to discern what is happening regarding the weather. Why are you not able to discern what God is doing at this present time?

⁵⁷ Each of you ought to decide what is the right thing for you to do while you still have time to do that!⁵⁸ You should try to settle things with someone who has accused you while you are still on the way to the court. If he forces you to go to the judge, the judge could decide that you are guilty and turn you over to the court officer. Then that officer will put you in prison.⁵⁹ I tell you that if you go to prison, you will never get out until you are able to pay every bit of what the judge says you owe.”

Chapter 13

¹ At that time, some people told Jesus about some Galileans whom soldiers had recently killed in Jerusalem. Pilate, the Roman governor, had ordered soldiers to kill them while they were offering sacrifices in the temple.² Jesus replied to them, “Do you think that this happened to those peo-

ple from Galilee because they were more sinful than all the other Galileans? ³ I assure you, that was not the reason! But you need to remember that God will similarly punish you if you do not turn from your sinful behavior. ⁴ Or what about the eighteen people who died when the tower at Siloam outside Jerusalem fell on them? Do you think that this happened to them because they were worse sinners than everyone else in Jerusalem? ⁵ I assure you, that was not the reason! But instead, you need to realize that God will similarly punish you if you do not turn from your sinful behavior!"

⁶ Then Jesus told them this story: "A man planted a fig tree in his garden. Each year he came to pick the figs, but there were never any on it. ⁷ Then he said to the gardener, 'Look at this tree! I have been looking for fruit on it every year for the past three years, but there have been no figs. Cut it down! It is just using up the nutrients in the soil for nothing!' ⁸ But the gardener replied, 'Sir, leave it here for another year. I will dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ If it has figs on it next year, we can allow it to keep growing! But if it does not bear any fruit by then, you can cut it down.'"

¹⁰ On one Jewish day of rest, Jesus was teaching people in one of the synagogues.

¹¹ There was a woman there whom an evil spirit had crippled for eighteen years. She was always bent over; she could not stand up straight. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over to him. He said to her, "Woman, I have healed you of this illness!"

¹³ He put his hands on her. Immediately she stood up straight and began praising God! ¹⁴ But the leader of the synagogue was angry because Jesus had healed her on the Jewish rest day. So he said to the people, "There are six days each week in which our laws permit people to work. If

you need healing, those are the days to come to the synagogue and be healed." Do not come on our day of rest!" ¹⁵ Then the Lord replied to him, "You and your fellow religious leaders are hypocrites! Each of you also works on the day of rest sometimes! Would you not untie your ox or donkey to lead it from the food trough to where it can drink water? ¹⁶ This woman is a Jew, descended from Abraham! But Satan has kept her crippled for eighteen years, as though he had tied her up! Certainly you would agree that it is right that I free her from Satan, even if I do it on a day of rest! ¹⁷ After he said that, his enemies were ashamed of themselves. But all the other people were happy about all the wonderful things he was doing.

¹⁸ Then he said, "How can I explain what it will be like when God shows himself as king? I will tell you what it will be like. ¹⁹ It is like a tiny mustard seed that a man planted in his field. It grew until it became big, like a tree. It was so big that birds built nests in its branches."

²⁰ Then again he said, "I will tell you in another way what it will be like when God shows himself as king. ²¹ It is like a little bit of yeast that a woman mixed with about twenty-five kilograms of flour. That small amount of yeast made the whole batch of dough swell up."

²² Jesus continued traveling toward Jerusalem. He stopped in all the towns and villages along the way and taught the people. ²³ Someone asked him, "Lord, will God only save a few people?" Jesus replied, ²⁴ "You need to try hard to enter the narrow doorway. I tell you that many people will try some other way, but they will not be able to get in. ²⁵ After the owner of the house gets up and locks the door, you will stand outside and you will knock on the door. And you will beg the owner and say to him, 'Lord, open the

door for us!' But he will reply, 'No, I will not open it, because I do not know you, and I do not know where you are from!'

²⁶ Then you will say, 'You must have forgotten that we ate meals with you, and you taught us in the streets of our towns!'

²⁷ But he will say, 'I tell you again, I do not know you, and I do not know where you are from. You are wicked people! Get away from here!'" ²⁸ Then Jesus continued by saying, "You will see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the distance. All the prophets who lived long ago will also be there, where God will rule everything as king. But you will be outside, crying and grinding your teeth in pain!" ²⁹ Furthermore, many non-Jewish people will be inside. There will be ones who have come from lands to the north, east, south, and west. They will be feasting to celebrate that God is ruling everything. ³⁰ Think about this: Some people who seem the least important now will be the most important then, and others who seem important now will be the least important then."

³¹ That same day, some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, "Leave this area, because the ruler Herod Antipas wants to kill you!" ³² He replied to them, "Tell that fox Herod this message from me: 'Listen! I am expelling demons and performing miracles today, and I will continue doing it for a short time. After that, I will finish my work.' ³³ But I must continue my trip to Jerusalem during the coming days, since it is not appropriate to kill a prophet in a place other than Jerusalem.

³⁴ Oh, people of Jerusalem! You killed the prophets who lived long ago and you killed others whom God sent to you, by throwing stones at them. Many times I wanted to gather you together to protect you like a hen gathers her young chicks under her wings. But you did not want

me to do that. ³⁵ Now look! God will no longer protect you, people of Jerusalem. I will also tell you this: I will enter your city only once more. After that, you will not see me until the time when I return, when you will say about me, 'May God bless this man who comes with God's authority!'"

Chapter 14

¹ One day, which was a day of rest, Jesus went to eat at the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees, and they were watching him carefully. ² Right there in front of Jesus was a man who had a disease that caused his arms and legs to be very swollen. ³ Jesus asked the experts in Jewish law and the Pharisees who were present, "Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the day of rest, or not?" ⁴ They did not reply. So Jesus put his hands on the man and healed him. Then he told him he could go. ⁵ And he said to the others there, "If you had a son or an ox that fell into a well on the day of rest, would you not immediately pull him out?" ⁶ Again, they were not able to answer him.

⁷ Jesus noticed that the people who had been invited to the meal were choosing to sit in the places where important people usually sit. Then he gave this advice to them: ⁸ "When one of you is invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit in a place where important people sit. It may be that a man more important than you has also been invited to the feast. ⁹ When that man comes, the man who invited both of you will come say to you, 'Let this man take your seat!' Then you will have to take the least important seat, and you will be ashamed. ¹⁰ Instead, when you are invited to a feast, go and sit in the least important seat. Then when the man who invited everyone comes, he will say

to you, ‘Friend, come sit in a better seat!’ Then all the people who are eating with you will see that he is honoring you. ¹¹ For God will humble those who exalt themselves, and he will exalt those who humble themselves.”

¹² Jesus also said to the Pharisee who had invited him to the meal, “When you invite people to a midday or evening meal, do not only invite your friends, relatives or rich neighbors, since they will later repay you by inviting you for a meal. ¹³ Instead, when you give a feast, invite poor people, crippled people, lame people or blind people. ¹⁴ They will be unable to repay you. But God will bless you! He will repay you at the resurrection of the righteous.”

¹⁵ One of those who were eating with him heard him say that. He said to Jesus, “God has truly blessed everyone who will eat the feast to celebrate that God has begun to rule everywhere!” ¹⁶ Jesus replied to him, “One time a man decided to prepare a large feast. He invited many people to come. ¹⁷ When it was the day for the feast, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come now because everything is ready!’ ¹⁸ But when the servant did that, all of the people whom he had invited began to say why they could not come. The first man that the servant went to said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go there and see it. Please ask your master to forgive me for not coming!’ ¹⁹ Another person said, ‘I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I must go to examine them. Please ask your master to forgive me for not coming!’ ²⁰ Another person said, ‘I have just been married, so I cannot come.’ ²¹ So the servant returned to his master and reported what everyone had said. The owner of the house was angry and said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly to the streets and alleys of the city and find poor and crippled and blind and

lame people, and bring them here into my house!’ ²² After the servant went out and did that, he came back and said, ‘Sir, I have done what you told me to do, but there is still room for more people.’ ²³ So his master said to him, ‘Then go outside the city. Search for people along the highways. Search also along the narrow roads with hedges. Strongly urge the people in those places to come to my house. I want it to be full of people! ²⁴ Moreover I tell you this, the ones who were invited first will not get to enjoy my feast because they refused to come.”

²⁵ A large crowd of people was traveling with Jesus. He turned toward the people and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me who loves his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters more than he loves me, he cannot be my disciple. He must even love me more than he loves his own life! ²⁷ Whoever does not carry his own cross and whoever does not obey me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ If one of you desired to build a tower, would you not first sit down and determine how much it would cost? Then you would be able to determine whether you had enough money to complete it. ²⁹ Otherwise, if you laid the foundation and were not able to finish the rest of the tower, everyone who saw it would make fun of you. ³⁰ They would say, ‘This man started to build a tower, but he was not able to finish it!’ ³¹ Or, if a king decided to send his army to war against another king, he would surely first sit down with those who advised him. They would determine whether his army, which had only ten thousand soldiers, could defeat the other king’s army, which had twenty thousand soldiers. ³² If he decided his army could not defeat the other army, he would send a messenger to the other king while the other army was still far away. He would tell the messenger to say to that

king, ‘What things must I do to have peace with you?’ ³³ So, similarly, if any one of you does not first decide that you are willing to give up all that you have, you cannot be my disciple.’

³⁴ Jesus also said, “You are like salt, which is very useful. But if salt were to lose its saltiness, could it ever be made to taste salty again? ³⁵ If salt does not taste salty anymore, it is no longer any good even for the soil or manure heap. People just throw it away. Every one of you should listen carefully to what I am telling you!”

Chapter 15

¹ Now, many tax collectors and other people who were considered to be habitual sinners kept coming to Jesus to listen to him teach. ² When the Pharisees and teachers of the Jewish laws saw this, they began to grumble, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and even eats with them.” They thought Jesus was defiling himself by doing this. ³ So Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ “Suppose that one of you has a hundred sheep and you lose one of them. Certainly you will leave the ninety-nine other sheep in the wilderness and go search for the lost sheep until you have found it. ⁵ When you find it, you will joyfully put it on your shoulders to carry it home. ⁶ Then when you arrive home, you will call together your friends and neighbors and say to them: ‘Be joyful with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!’ ⁷ I tell you that, in a similar way, there will be more joy in heaven because of one sinner who repents from his sins than many people who were already right with God and do not need to repent.

⁸ Or, suppose that a woman has ten very valuable silver coins and then she loses one of them. Certainly she will light

a lamp and sweep the floor and search carefully until she finds it. ⁹ When she finds it, she will call together her friends and neighbors and say to them, “Be very happy with me, because I have found the coin that I lost!” ¹⁰ I tell you that, in a similar way, there is much joy among the angels of God because of one sinner who repents from his sins.”

¹¹ Then Jesus continued and said, “There once was a man who had two sons. ¹² One day the younger son said to his father, ‘Father, give me now the share of your property that would normally be given to me when you die.’ So the father divided his property between his two sons. ¹³ Only a few days later, the younger son gathered together all that he owned and traveled to a country far away. There in that country he spent all his money foolishly in wasteful, immoral living. ¹⁴ After he had spent all his money, there was a severe famine throughout that country. Soon he did not have anything left to live on. ¹⁵ So he went to a man who lived in that country and asked him to hire him. So the man sent him out to his fields to feed his pigs. ¹⁶ He became so hungry that he wished he could eat the bean pods that the pigs ate, yet no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ Finally he began to think clearly about how foolish he had been and he said to himself: ‘All of my father’s hired servants have more than enough food to eat, but here I am dying because I do not have anything to eat! ¹⁸ So I will leave here and go back to my father. I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against God and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; please just employ me to work for you as one of your hired servants.”’ ²⁰ So he left there and started traveling back to his father’s house. But while he was still a great distance from the house, his father saw him and felt deep compassion for him. He ran to his son and embraced him and

kissed him on the cheek. ²¹ His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against God and against you. So I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But his father said to his servants; ‘Go quickly and bring my best robe and put it on my son. Also put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet! ²³ And bring the calf that has been fattened for a special occasion and kill it, so that we can eat it and celebrate! ²⁴ We need to celebrate because this son of mine was like a dead man, but he is now alive again! He was like a lost person, but he has now been found!’ So they all began to celebrate.

²⁵ While all that was happening, the father’s older son was out working in the fields. After he finished working and was getting close to the house, he heard people playing music and dancing. ²⁶ He called for one of the servants and asked what was happening. ²⁷ The servant said to him, ‘Your brother has come home. Your father has told us to kill the fattened calf to celebrate because your brother has returned safe and healthy.’ ²⁸ But the older brother was angry and did not want to go into the house. So his father came out and pleaded with him to come in. ²⁹ But he replied to his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have worked for you as hard as a slave. I always obeyed everything you told me to do. But you never gave me even a young goat to eat so that I could give a feast with my friends. ³⁰ But now that this son of yours has come back home, after wasting all your money on prostitutes, you have told your servants to kill the fattened calf for a celebration!’ ³¹ But his father said to him, ‘My son, you are always with me, and all that I own is yours. ³² But it is right for us to rejoice and celebrate, because it is as though your brother was dead and is alive again! It is as though he was lost and has now been found!’”

Chapter 16

¹ Jesus also said to his disciples, “Once there was a rich man who had a household manager. One day the rich man was told that the manager was managing his property so badly that he was causing the rich man to lose his possessions. ² So he called the manager to come to him and said to him, ‘What you have been doing is terrible! Give me a final written report of what you have been managing, because you may no longer be my household manager!’ ³ Then the manager said to himself, ‘My master is going to dismiss me from being his manager, so I have to think of what to do. I am not strong enough to work by digging ditches, and I am ashamed to beg for money. ⁴ I know what I will do, so that people will take me into their houses and provide for me after I am dismissed from my management work!’ ⁵ So one by one he asked everyone who owed his master money to come to him. He asked the first one, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶ The man replied, ‘3,000 liters of olive oil.’ The manager said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down, and quickly change it to 1,500 liters!’ ⁷ He said to another man, ‘How much do you owe?’ The man replied, ‘A thousand baskets of wheat.’ The manager said to him, ‘Take your bill and change it to eight hundred baskets!’ ⁸ When the master heard what his manager had done, he praised the dishonest manager for being so shrewd. The truth is, the people who belong to this world are wiser than the people who belong to God in how they relate to the people around them. ⁹ I tell you, use the money you have in this world to make friends for yourself. Then when the money is gone, you will have friends who will welcome you into the eternal homes. ¹⁰ People who faithfully manage only small amounts of money can also be trusted with much more. People

who are dishonest in the way they handle unimportant duties will be dishonest in the way they handle important matters. ¹¹ So if you have not faithfully handled the money God has given you from this world, he will certainly not let you have the true riches of heaven. ¹² If you have not faithfully managed property that belongs to other people, you should not expect anyone to give you property of your own. ¹³ No servant is able to serve two different masters at the same time. If he tried to do that, he would hate one of them and love the other one, or he would be loyal to one of them and despise the other one. You cannot devote your life to serving God if you are also devoting your life to acquiring money and other material possessions."

¹⁴ When the Pharisees who were there heard Jesus say that, they made fun of him because they loved to acquire money. ¹⁵ But Jesus said to them, "You try to make other people think that you are righteous, but God knows your hearts. Keep in mind that many things that people praise as being very important, God considers to be detestable.

¹⁶ The laws that God gave Moses and what the prophets wrote were proclaimed until John the Baptizer came. Since then I have been preaching that God will soon show himself as king. Many people are accepting that message and are very eagerly asking God to rule their lives. ¹⁷ All of God's laws, even those that seem insignificant, are more permanent than heaven and earth.

¹⁸ Any man who divorces his wife and marries another woman is committing adultery, and any man who marries a woman who is divorced from her husband is also committing adultery."

¹⁹ Jesus also said, "Once there was a rich man who wore fine purple and linen

clothes. Every day he gave expensive feasts. ²⁰ And every day a poor man whose name was Lazarus was laid at the gate of the rich man's house. Lazarus' body was covered with sores. ²¹ He was so hungry that he wanted to eat the scraps of food that fell from the table where the rich man ate. While he was lying there dogs came and licked his sores. ²² Eventually the poor man died. Then he was taken by the angels to his ancestor Abraham. The rich man also died, and his body was buried. ²³ In the place of the dead, the rich man was suffering great pain. He looked up and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus sitting very close to Abraham. ²⁴ So the rich man shouted, 'Father Abraham, I am suffering very much in this fire! So please pity me, and send Lazarus here so that he can dip his finger in water and touch my tongue to cool it!' ²⁵ But Abraham replied, 'Child, remember that while you were alive on earth you enjoyed many good things. But Lazarus was miserable. Now he is happy here, and you are suffering. ²⁶ Besides that, God has placed a huge ravine between you and us. So those who want to go from here to where you are are not able to. Furthermore, no one can cross from there to where we are, either.' ²⁷ Then the rich man said, 'If that is so, Father Abraham, I ask you to send Lazarus to my father's house. ²⁸ I have five brothers who live there. Tell him to warn them so that they do not also come to this place, where we suffer great pain!' ²⁹ But Abraham replied, 'No, I will not do that, because your brothers have what Moses and the prophets wrote long ago. They should obey what they wrote!' ³⁰ But the rich man replied, 'No, Father Abraham, that will not be enough! But if someone from those who have died goes back to them and warns them, they will turn from their sinful behavior.' ³¹ Abraham said to him, 'No! If they do not listen to what Moses

and the prophets wrote, even if someone would rise from among the dead and go warn them, they would still not be convinced that they should turn from their sinful behavior.”

Chapter 17

¹ Jesus said to his disciples, “Things that tempt people to sin will certainly happen, but how terrible it will be for anyone who causes those things to happen! ² It would be better for that person if someone fastened a huge stone around his neck and threw him into the sea, than if he were to cause to sin someone who is weak in his faith. ³ Be careful how you act. If one of your brothers sins, you should rebuke him. If he says that he is sorry for having sinned and asks you to forgive him, then you should forgive him. ⁴ Even if he sins against you seven times in one day, if he comes to you each time and says, ‘I am sorry for what I did,’ you must continue forgiving him.”

⁵ Then the apostles said to the Lord, “Give us more faith!” ⁶ The Lord replied, “Even if you had faith that was no bigger than this tiny mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Pull yourself with your roots out of the ground and plant yourself in the sea’ and it would obey you!”

⁷ Jesus also said, “Suppose that one of you had a servant who was plowing your fields or taking care of your sheep. After he comes into the house from the field, you would not say, ‘Come sit down immediately and eat!’ ⁸ Instead, you would say to him, ‘Prepare a meal for me! Then put on your serving clothes and serve it to me so that I can eat and drink! Afterwards you can eat and drink.’ ⁹ You will not thank your servant for doing the work

that he had been told to do! ¹⁰ Similarly, when you have done everything that God has told you to do, you should say, ‘We are only God’s servants and do not deserve for him to thank us. We have only done the things that he told us to do.’”

¹¹ As Jesus and his disciples were walking along the road to Jerusalem, they were going through the area between the regions of Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As Jesus entered a village, ten lepers came toward him, but stood at some distance away. ¹³ They called out, “Jesus, Master, please have pity on us!” ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” So they went, and as they were going, they were healed. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God loudly. ¹⁶ He came to Jesus and he lay down on the ground with his face at Jesus’ feet, and he thanked him. This man was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said, “I healed ten lepers! Why did the other nine not come back? ¹⁸ This foreign man was the only one who returned to thank God; none of the others came back!” ¹⁹ Then he said to the man, “Get up and go on your way. God has healed you because you trusted in me.”

²⁰ One day Jesus was asked by some Pharisees, “When will God begin to rule everyone?” He replied, “That is not about signs that people can see with their own eyes.

²¹ People will not be able to say, ‘Look! He is ruling here!’ or ‘He is ruling there!’ because, contrary to what you think, God has already begun to rule within you.”

²² Jesus said to his disciples, “There will be a time when you will want to see me, the Son of Man, ruling powerfully. But you will not see that. ²³ People will say to you, ‘Look, the Messiah is over there!’ or they will say, ‘Look, he is here!’ When they say that, do not follow them. ²⁴ Because when

the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, everyone can see it. Similarly when I, the Son of Man, come back again, everyone will see me.²⁵ But before that happens, I must suffer in many ways, and I will be rejected by people.²⁶ But when I, the Son of Man, come again, people will be doing things just like people were doing at the time when Noah lived.²⁷ At that time people ate and drank as usual, and they got married as usual, up until the day when Noah and his family entered the big boat. But then the flood came and destroyed all those who were not in the boat.²⁸ Similarly, when Lot lived in the city of Sodom, people there ate and drank as usual. They bought things and they sold things. They planted crops and they built houses as usual.²⁹ But on the day that Lot left Sodom, fire and burning sulfur came down from the sky and destroyed all those who stayed in the city.³⁰ Similarly, when I, the Son of Man, return to earth, people will be unprepared.³¹ On that day, those who are outside their houses, with all the things that they own inside the houses, must not take time to go inside to take them away. Similarly, those who are working in a field must not turn back to get anything; they must flee quickly.³² Remember what happened to Lot's wife!³³ Anyone who continues in his own way of living will die. But anyone who leaves his way for my sake will live forever.³⁴ I tell you this: On the night when I return, there will be two people sleeping in one bed. The one who believes in me will be taken and the other one will be left behind.³⁵⁻³⁶ Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left behind."³⁷ His disciples said to him, "Lord, where will this happen?" He replied to them, "Wherever there is a dead body, the vultures will gather to eat it."

Chapter 18

¹ Jesus told his disciples another story to teach them that they ought to pray continually and not become discouraged if God does not immediately answer their prayers.² He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not revere God and did not care about people.³ There was a widow in that city who kept coming to that judge, saying, 'Please get justice for me from the man who is opposing me in court.'⁴ For a long time the judge refused to help her. But later, he said to himself, 'I do not revere God and I do not care about people,⁵ but this widow keeps bothering me! So I will judge her case and make sure she is treated fairly, because if I do not do that, she will exhaust me by continually coming to me!'"⁶ Then the Lord Jesus said, "Think carefully about what the unjust judge said.⁷ Even more certainly will God, who is just, bring about justice for his chosen people, who pray earnestly to him night and day! And he is always patient with them.⁸ I tell you, God will quickly do justice for his chosen ones! Nevertheless when I, the Son of Man, come back to earth, there will still be many people who do not believe in me."

⁹ Then Jesus also told the following story to some people who thought they were righteous and who looked down on other people.¹⁰ He said, "Two men went up to the temple in Jerusalem to pray. One of the men was a Pharisee. The other was someone who collected taxes from the people for the Roman government.¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself in this way, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like other people. Some steal money from others, some treat others unjustly, and some commit adultery. I do not do any of those things. And I am certainly not like this sinful tax collector who cheats

people! ¹² I fast two days every week and I give to the temple ten percent of all that I earn!' ¹³ But the tax collector stood far away from the other people in the temple courtyard. He would not even look up toward heaven. Instead, he beat on his chest and said, 'O God, please be merciful to me and forgive me, because I am a terrible sinner!' ¹⁴ Then Jesus said, "I tell you that the tax collector was forgiven as they left to go home, but not the Pharisee. This is because everyone who exalts himself will be made humble, and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted."

¹⁵ One day people were bringing even their babies to Jesus so that he would put his hands on them and bless them. When the disciples saw this, they told them not to do that. ¹⁶ But Jesus called for the children to be brought to him. He said, "Let the little children come to me! Do not stop them! It is humble and trusting people like these children over whom God will agree to rule. ¹⁷ Indeed I say to you that whoever does not accept with humility like a child for God to rule over them, God will not accept that person at all."

¹⁸ Once a Jewish leader asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do in order to have eternal life?" ¹⁹ Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? God is the only one who is truly good!"

²⁰ In answer to your question, certainly you know the commandments that God gave to Moses for us to obey: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder anyone, do not steal, do not give a false report, honor your father and mother.' ²¹ The man said, "I have obeyed all those commandments ever since I was young." ²² When Jesus heard him say that, he replied to him, "You still need to do one more thing. Sell all that you own. Then give the money to people who have very little to live on. The result will be that you will have spiri-

tual riches in heaven. Then come and be my disciple!" ²³ The man became very sad when he heard that, because he was extremely rich. ²⁴ When Jesus saw how sad the man was, he too became very sorrowful. He said, "It is very difficult for those who are wealthy to agree for God to rule over them." ²⁵ In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for rich people to let God rule their lives." ²⁶ Those who heard Jesus say that replied, "Then it seems that no one can be saved!" ²⁷ But Jesus said, "What is impossible for people is possible for God." ²⁸ Then Peter said, "Look, we have left everything we had in order to become your disciples. ²⁹ Jesus said to them, "Yes, and I also tell you that those who have left their homes, their wives, their brothers, their parents, or their children in order to submit to God's will for them ³⁰ will receive in this life many times as much as they left behind, and in the coming age they will receive eternal life."

³¹ Jesus took the twelve disciples to a place by themselves and said to them, "Listen carefully! We are now going up to Jerusalem. While we are there, everything that the prophets wrote long ago about me, the Son of Man, will be accomplished. ³² My enemies will put me into the power of the non-Jews. They will mock me, treat me with disdain, and spit on me. ³³ They will whip me and then they will kill me. But on the third day after that I will become alive again." ³⁴ But the disciples did not understand any of those things that he said. God prevented them from understanding the meaning of what he was telling them.

³⁵ As Jesus and his disciples came near to the city of Jericho, a blind man was sitting beside the road. He was begging for money. ³⁶ When he heard the crowd of people passing by, he asked someone,

“What is happening?” ³⁷ They told him, “Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, is passing by.” ³⁸ He shouted, “Jesus, you who are descended from King David, have pity on me!” ³⁹ Those who were walking at the front of the crowd scolded him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted even more loudly, “You who are descended from King David, have pity on me!” ⁴⁰ Jesus stopped walking and commanded the people to bring the man to him. When the blind man came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” He replied, “Lord, I want you to enable me to see!” ⁴² Jesus said to him, “Then see! Because you have trusted in me, I have healed you!” ⁴³ Immediately he was able to see. And he went with Jesus, praising God. And when all the people there saw this, they also praised God.

Chapter 19

¹ Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the city. ² There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was in charge of collecting taxes and was very rich. ³ He wanted to see Jesus but he could not see him over the crowd. He was a very short man and there were many people around Jesus. ⁴ So he ran further down the road. He climbed a sycamore fig tree so he could see Jesus when he came by. ⁵ When Jesus got there, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, I have to stay at your house tonight!” ⁶ So he came down quickly. He was glad to welcome Jesus into his home. ⁷ But the people who saw Jesus go there grumbled, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a real sinner!” ⁸ Then Zacchaeus stood up while they were eating and said to Jesus, “Lord, I want you to know that I am going to give half of what I own to poor people. And as for the people whom I have cheated, I

will pay them back four times the amount I have gotten from them.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Today God has saved this household, because this man has shown that he is a true descendant of Abraham. ¹⁰ Remember this: I, the Son of Man, came to find and save people like you who have gone astray from God.”

¹¹ The people were listening to everything Jesus said. Since he was getting close to Jerusalem, Jesus decided to tell them another story. He wanted to correct their idea that as soon as he got to Jerusalem he would begin to rule as king over God’s people. ¹² He said, “A prince prepared to go to a distant country in order to receive from a higher king the right to become king over the country where he lived. After he received the right of being king, he would return to rule his people. ¹³ Before he left, he summoned ten of his servants. He gave each of them an equal amount of money. He said to them, ‘Do business with this money until I return!’ Then he left.

¹⁴ But many people of his country hated him. So they sent some messengers to follow him and say to the higher king, ‘We do not want this man to be our king!’ ¹⁵ But he was made king anyway. Later he returned as the new king. Then he called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to know how much they had gained by doing business with the money he had given them. ¹⁶ The first man came to him and said, ‘Sir, with your money I have earned ten times as much!’ ¹⁷ He said to this man, ‘You are a good servant! You have done very well! Because you have faithfully taken care of a small amount of money, I will give you ten cities to rule over.’ ¹⁸ Then the second servant came and said, ‘Sir, the money you gave me is now worth five times as much!’ ¹⁹ He also said to that servant, ‘Well done! I will put you over five cities.’ ²⁰ Then another servant came. He said, ‘Sir, here is

your money. I wrapped it up in a cloth and hid it to keep it safe.²¹ I was afraid of what you would do to me if the business failed. I know you are a hard man who takes from others that which does not really belong to you. You are like a farmer who harvests grain that another man planted.'²² He said to that servant, 'You wicked servant! I will condemn you by the words you just said. You knew I was a hard man, because I take what does not belong to me and harvest what I did not plant.²³ So you should at least have given my money to money lenders! Then when I returned I could have collected that amount plus the interest it would have earned!' ²⁴ Then the king said to those who were standing near, 'Take the money from him and give it to the servant who made ten times as much!²⁵ They protested, 'But sir, he already has a lot of money!' ²⁶ But the king said, 'I tell you this: To the people who use well what they have received, I will give even more. But from the people who do not use well what they have received, I will take away even what they already have.²⁷ Now, as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to rule over them, bring them here and execute them while I am watching!"'

²⁸ After Jesus said those things, he continued on the road up to Jerusalem, going ahead of the disciples. ²⁹ When they got close to the villages of Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives,³⁰ he said to two of his disciples, "Go to the village just ahead of you. As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied up there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it to me.³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying the donkey?' say to him, 'The Lord needs it.'"³² So the two disciples went to the village and found the donkey, just as Jesus had told them.³³ As they were untying it, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying our donkey?"³⁴

They replied, "The Lord needs it."³⁵ Then the disciples brought the donkey to Jesus. They threw their cloaks on the donkey's back for him to sit on and helped Jesus get on it.³⁶ Then as he rode along, others spread their cloaks on the road in front of him to honor him.³⁷ As they came along the road that goes down from the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God loudly for all the great miracles that they had seen Jesus do.³⁸ They were saying things like, "May God bless our king who comes with God's authority! May there be peace between God in heaven and us his people, and may everyone praise God!"³⁹ Some of the Pharisees who were in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell your disciples to stop saying those things!"⁴⁰ He replied, "I tell you this: if these people were silent, the stones themselves would shout to praise me!"

⁴¹ When Jesus came near to Jerusalem and saw the city, he cried about its people.⁴² He said, "I wish that today you people knew how to have God's peace. But now you are unable to know it.⁴³ I want you to know this: Soon your enemies will come and will set up a barricade around your city. They will surround the city and attack it on all sides.⁴⁴ They will break through the walls and destroy everything. They will destroy it and you and all your children. When they finish destroying everything, there will not be one stone left on top of another. All this will happen because you did not recognize the time when God came to save you!"

⁴⁵ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courtyard. He saw in that place the people who were selling things,⁴⁶ and he began to chase them out. He said to them, "It has been written in the scriptures, 'I want my house to be a place where people pray,' but you have made it

a hideout for thieves!"

⁴⁷ Each day during that week Jesus was teaching people in the temple courtyard. The chief priests, the teachers of religious laws, and other Jewish leaders were trying to find a way to kill him. ⁴⁸ But they did not find any way to do it, because all the people were eager to hear him.

Chapter 20

¹ One day during that week Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courtyard and telling them God's good message. As he was doing that, the chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and other elders came to him. ² They said to him, "Tell us, what right do you have to do these things? And who gave you this right?" ³ He replied, "I will also ask you a question. Tell me, ⁴ about John baptizing people: Did God command him to baptize or did humans command him?" ⁵ They discussed this among themselves. They said, "If we answer, 'God commanded him,' then he will say, 'So why did you not believe him?' ⁶ But if we say, 'It was only humans who told him to baptize,' the people will stone us to death, because they all believe that John was a prophet that God sent." ⁷ So they replied that they did not know who told John to baptize. ⁸ Then Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you who sent me to do those things."

⁹ Then Jesus told the people this parable, "A man planted a vineyard. He rented the vineyard to some men to care for it. Then he went to another country and stayed there for a long time. ¹⁰ When it was time to harvest the grapes, he sent a servant to the men who were taking care of the vineyard, so they would give him his share of the grapes that the vineyard had produced. But after the servant arrived,

they beat him and sent him away without any grapes. ¹¹ Later, the owner sent another servant. But they beat and shamed him also. They sent him away without any grapes. ¹² Still later, the owner sent another servant. This third servant they wounded and threw out of the vineyard. ¹³ So the owner of the vineyard said to himself, 'What should I do now? I will send my son, whom I love very much. They will probably respect him.' ¹⁴ So he sent his son, but when the men who were caring for the vineyard saw him coming, they said to each other, 'Here comes the man who will some day inherit the vineyard! Let us kill him so that this vineyard might become ours!' ¹⁵ So they dragged him outside the vineyard and they killed him. So I will tell you what the owner of the vineyard will do to them! ¹⁶ He will come and kill those men who were taking care of the vineyard. Then he will arrange for other people to take care of it." When the people listening to Jesus heard this, they said, "May a situation like this never happen!" ¹⁷ But Jesus looked directly at them and said, "You can say that, but think about the meaning of these words that are written in the scriptures,

"The stone which the builders rejected has become the most important stone in the building.

¹⁸ Everyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

¹⁹ The chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws realized that he was accusing them when he told the story about those wicked men. So they immediately tried to find a way to arrest him, but they did not arrest him, because they were afraid of what the people would do if they did so. ²⁰ So they watched him carefully. They also sent spies who pretended to be sincere. But they really wanted to get Jesus to say

something wrong for which they could accuse him. They wanted to be able to turn him over to the governor of the province. ²¹ So one of the spies asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right. You tell the truth even if important people do not like it. You teach truthfully what God wants us to do. ²² So tell us what you think about this matter: Is it right that we pay taxes to the Roman government, or not?" ²³ But he knew that they were trying to trick him to get him into trouble, either with the Jews, who hated to pay those taxes, or with the Roman government. So he said to them, ²⁴ "Show me a Roman coin. Then tell me whose picture is on it. And tell me whose name is on it." So they showed him a coin and said, "It has the picture and name of Caesar, the head of the Roman government." ²⁵ He said to them, "In that case, give to the government what belongs to them, and give to God what belongs to him." ²⁶ The spies were amazed at his answer, so much that they could not answer him. There was nothing that Jesus said before the people standing around him that the spies could find anything wrong with.

²⁷ After that, some Sadducees came to Jesus. They were a group of Jews who said that no one will rise from the dead. ²⁸ They also wanted to ask Jesus a question. One of them said to him, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us Jews that if a man who has a wife but no children dies, his brother should marry the widow so that she can have a child by him. In this way, people will consider that the child is the descendant of the man who died. ²⁹ Well, there were seven brothers in one family. The oldest one married a woman but she did not have any children. Later he died, leaving her to be a widow. ³⁰ The second brother followed this law and married the widow, but the same thing happened to him. ³¹ Then the third brother married

her, but the same thing happened again. All seven brothers, one by one, married that woman, but they had no children, and one by one they died. ³² Afterwards, the woman died, too. ³³ Therefore, if it is true that there will be a time when people who have died will become alive again, whose wife do you think that woman will be then? Keep in mind that she was married to all seven brothers!" ³⁴ Jesus replied to them, "In this world, men take wives, and people give their daughters in marriage to men. ³⁵ But the people whom God considers worthy of being in heaven after they rise from the dead will not marry. ³⁶ Also, they cannot die anymore, because they are like the angels of God who live forever. They are God's children, since they are children whom God raised to new life. ³⁷ But in the account of the bush, even Moses wrote about how God raises the dead to life. In the place where he wrote, he calls the Lord, 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Moses showed us that the leaders of God's people, when they die, still worship and honor God, because they still live before God. That proves that God makes people who die, alive again. ³⁸ Now he is the God of those who are alive. He is not the God of people who are dead! But all of us are given life so we can be with God, and when we are with him, we can honor him!"

³⁹ Some of the teachers of the Jewish law replied, "Teacher, you have answered very well!" ⁴⁰ After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions like that to trap him.

⁴¹ Later Jesus said to them, "I will show you that when people say that the Messiah is only a descendant of King David, they are wrong! ⁴² David himself wrote in the Book of Psalms about the Messiah,

God said to my Lord,

¹ Sit here beside me at my right, where I will highly honor you.

⁴³ Sit here while I completely defeat your enemies.'

⁴⁴ King David calls the Messiah 'my Lord'! So the Messiah cannot be just someone descended from King David! What I just said proves that he is much greater than David, right?"

⁴⁵ While all the other people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, ⁴⁶ "Beware that you do not act like the men who teach our Jewish laws. They like to put on long robes and walk around to make people think that they are very important. They also like people to greet them respectfully in the marketplaces. They like to sit in the most important places in the synagogues. At dinner parties they like to sit in the seats where the most honored people sit. ⁴⁷ They also steal all the property of widows. Then they pray for a long time in public. God will certainly punish them very severely."

Chapter 21

¹ Jesus looked up from where he was sitting and saw rich people putting their gifts into the temple offering box. ² He also saw a poor widow put in two small coins of very little value. ³ And he said to his disciples, "The truth is that this poor widow has put into the offering box more money than all these rich people. ⁴ For they all have a lot of money, but they gave only a small part of it. But this widow, who is very poor, has given all the money that she had to buy what she needed."

⁵ Some of Jesus' disciples were talking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and decorations that people had given. But Jesus said, ⁶ "These

things you are looking at will be destroyed completely. Yes, the time is coming when not one of these stones will be left on top of another."

⁷ Then they asked him, "Teacher, when will these things happen? And what will happen to show that these things are about to take place?" ⁸ Jesus replied, "Be careful that no one deceives you. For many people will come and each will claim to be me. Each will say about himself, 'I am the Messiah!' They will also say, 'The time is almost here, when God will rule as king!' Do not follow after them to become their disciples! ⁹ Also, whenever you hear about wars and people fighting each other, do not be terrified. For these things must happen before the end of the world comes."

¹⁰ "Various people groups will attack each other, and various kings will fight each other. ¹¹ And in various places there will be great earthquakes, as well as famines and terrible diseases. Many things will happen that will cause people to be very afraid, and people will see strange things in the sky that will show that something very important is going to happen. ¹² But before all these things happen, they will arrest you, treat you badly and hand you over to the synagogues for trial and hand you over to the prisons. They will put you on trial in the presence of kings and high government authorities because you follow me. ¹³ That will be a time for you to tell them the truth about me. ¹⁴ So be determined not to worry ahead of time about what you will say to defend yourselves, ¹⁵ because I will give you the right words and wisdom so that you will know what to say. As a result, none of the people accusing you will be able to say you are wrong. ¹⁶ And even your parents and brothers and other relatives and friends will betray you, and they will kill

some of you.¹⁷ In general, everybody will hate you because you believe in me.¹⁸ But not even one hair from your head shall be destroyed.¹⁹ If you go through difficult times and prove your trust in God, you will save yourselves."

²⁰ "When you see armies surround Jerusalem, then you will know that they will soon destroy this city.²¹ At that time those of you who are in the region of Judea must flee to the mountains. And those of you who are in this city must leave. Those of you who are in the nearby countryside must not come into the city.²² For this will be the time when God will punish this city; when he does, the words in the scriptures will come true.²³ How terrible it will be for the pregnant women and those nursing their babies in those days, because there will be great suffering in the land, and its people will suffer enormously because God will be angry with them.²⁴ Many of them will die because soldiers will attack them with weapons. Others will become prisoners and they will be sent to many places around the world. The Gentiles will keep marching their troops through the streets of Jerusalem for as long as God allows."

²⁵ "At this time, strange things will happen to the sun, the moon, and the stars. And on earth, people groups will become very frightened, and they will become confused because of the roaring ocean and its huge waves.²⁶ People will be so afraid that they will faint, because they are waiting for what will happen next in the world. The stars in the sky will have to leave from their usual places.²⁷ Then all people will see me, the Son of Man, coming in the clouds with power and brilliant light.²⁸ So when those terrible things begin to happen, stand up straight and look upward, because God will soon rescue you."

²⁹ Then Jesus told them a parable: "Think

about the fig trees, and even all the trees.³⁰ Whenever you see that their leaves are sprouting, you know that summer is near.³¹ In the same way, when you see these things that I have just described happening, you will know then that God will soon show himself as king.³² I am telling you the truth: This generation of people will not come to an end before all these things that I have just now described happen.³³ The sky and the earth will come to an end, but what I tell you will never come to an end.

³⁴ "Be very careful to control yourselves. Do not go to parties where people are acting immorally or getting drunk. And do not carry the cares of this life with you. If you live this way, you will stop waiting for me to return. And then, at that moment, I will surprise you when I come. I will come so suddenly it will be like when a animal trap springs closed without warning.³⁵ Indeed, I will return without warning, and that day will come when you are not ready to see me.³⁶ So you must be always ready for my coming. And always pray that you may be able to go through all these hard things in safety, and that I, the Son of Man, declare you innocent when I come to judge the world."

³⁷ Each day Jesus was teaching people in the temple. But every evening he went out of the city and stayed all night on the Mount of Olives.³⁸ And early every morning all the people came to the temple to listen to him.

Chapter 22

¹ It was now almost time for the Celebration of Unleavened Bread, which people also call the Passover. ² Now the chief priests and the teachers of the Jewish laws were looking for a way to kill Je-

sus because they feared the people who followed him.

³ Then Satan entered into Judas, the one called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples. ⁴ He went and talked with the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard about how he might turn Jesus over to them. ⁵ They were very pleased that he wanted to do that. They offered to pay him money for doing this. ⁶ So Judas agreed, and then he started looking for a way to help them arrest Jesus when there was no crowd around him.

⁷ Then the Day of Unleavened Bread came, the day when the lambs for the Passover Celebration had to be killed. ⁸ So Jesus said to Peter and John, “Go and prepare the meal for the Passover Celebration for us so we can eat it together.” ⁹ They replied to him, “Where do you want us to prepare to eat it?” ¹⁰ He answered, “Listen carefully. When you go into the city, a man carrying a large jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house that he enters. ¹¹ Say to the owner of the house, ‘Our teacher says to show us the room where he can eat the Passover meal together with us, his disciples.’ ¹² He will show you a large room that is on the upper floor of the house. It will be all set up, with everything ready for guests. Prepare the meal for us there.” ¹³ So the two disciples went into the city. They found everything to be just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the meal for the Passover Celebration there.

¹⁴ When it was time to eat the meal, Jesus came and sat down with the apostles.

¹⁵ He said to them, “I have wanted very much to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer and die. ¹⁶ I tell you, I will not eat it again until I do so when God rules everyone everywhere, when he finishes what he started to do in the Passover.” ¹⁷ Then he took a cup of wine

and thanked God for it. He said, “Take this, and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that I will not drink any of this wine again until God rules everyone everywhere.” ¹⁹ Then he took some bread and thanked God for it. He broke it into pieces and gave it to them to eat. As he did so, he said, “This bread is my body, which I am about to sacrifice for you. Do this later to honor me.” ²⁰ In the same way, after they had eaten the meal, he took the cup of wine and said, “This is the new covenant I will make using my own blood, which will pour out for you. ²¹ But, look! The person who will hand me over to my enemies is here eating with me. ²² Indeed, I, the Son of Man, will die, because that is what God has planned. But how terrible it will be for the man who hands me over to my enemies!” ²³ Then the apostles began to ask one another, “Which one of us is planning to do this thing?”

²⁴ After that, the apostles began to argue among themselves; they said, “Which one of us will have the most honor when Jesus becomes king?” ²⁵ Jesus answered them, “The kings of the Gentile nations like to show people that they are powerful. Yet they give themselves the title, ‘ones who help the people.’ ²⁶ But you should not be like those rulers! Instead, the most honored persons among you should act as if they were the youngest, and the one who leads must act like a servant. ²⁷ For you know that the important person is the one who eats at the table, not the servant who brings the food. But I am your servant.

²⁸ You are the persons who have stayed with me during all the hard things I have suffered. ²⁹ So now, I will make you powerful officials when God rules everyone, just as my Father appointed me to rule as a king. ³⁰ You will sit and eat and drink with me when I become king. In fact, you will sit on thrones to judge the people of

the twelve tribes of Israel."

³¹ "Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has asked God to let him test you, like someone shakes grain in a sieve, and God has permitted him to do it. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that you will not completely stop believing in me. So when you come back to me, give courage again to these men, your brothers." ³³ Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison; I am willing to die with you!" ³⁴ Jesus replied, "Peter, I want you to know that this night, before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me!"

³⁵ Then Jesus asked the disciples, "When I sent you out to the villages, and you went without any money, food, or sandals, was there anything you needed but could not get?" They replied, "Nothing!" ³⁶ And he said, "But, now, if anyone among you has some money, he should take it with him. Also, whoever has food should take it with him, and whoever does not have a sword should sell his coat and buy one!" ³⁷ I tell you this because what a prophet wrote about me in the scriptures must happen: 'People considered him to be a criminal.' Everything that is written about me in the scriptures is happening. ³⁸ The disciples said, "Lord, look! We have two swords!" He replied, "Enough. Do not talk like this any longer."

³⁹ Jesus left the city and went to the Mount of Olives, as he usually did; his disciples went with him. ⁴⁰ When he came to the place where he wanted to go, he said to them, "Pray that God will help you not to be tempted to sin." ⁴¹ Then he went about thirty meters from them, knelt down and prayed. He said, ⁴² "Father, the terrible things that are about to happen to me: If you are willing to keep from happening, do it. But do not do what I want, but what you want." ⁴³ Then an angel from

heaven came and gave him courage. ⁴⁴ He was suffering greatly. So he prayed more intensely. His sweat was falling to the ground like large drops of blood. ⁴⁵ When he got up from praying, he returned to his disciples. He found that they were so tired out because of their sorrow that they were sleeping. ⁴⁶ He woke them up and said to them, "You should not be sleeping! Get up! Pray that God will help you so that nothing will persuade you to sin."

⁴⁷ While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd of people came to him. Judas, one of the twelve disciples, was leading them. He came up to Jesus to kiss him. ⁴⁸ But Jesus said to him, "Judas, will you really kiss me, the Son of Man, in order to hand me over to my enemies?" ⁴⁹ When the disciples realized what was happening, they said, "Lord, shall we strike them with our swords?" ⁵⁰ One of them struck the servant of the high priest, but only cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus said, "Do not do any more of that." Then he touched the servant's ear and healed him. ⁵²⁻⁵³ Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guards, and the Jewish elders who had come to arrest him, "It is surprising that you have come here with swords and clubs to arrest me, as if I were a robber. For many days I was with you in the temple, but you did not try to arrest me at all! But this is the time you are doing what you want. It is also the time when Satan is doing the evil things as he wants to do."

⁵⁴ They seized Jesus and led him away. They brought him to the high priest's house. Peter followed them far behind. ⁵⁵ The people lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together. Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶ A female servant saw Peter sitting there as the fire shone upon him. She looked at him carefully and said, "This man was also with the one whom they have arrested!" ⁵⁷ But he de-

nied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him!" ⁵⁸ A little later someone else saw Peter and said, "You also are one of those who were with the man they arrested!" But Peter said, "Man, I am not one of them!" ⁵⁹ About an hour later someone else said loudly, "The way that this man speaks shows that he is from the region of Galilee. Certainly this man was also with the man whom they arrested!" ⁶⁰ But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" Immediately a rooster crowed, while he was still speaking. ⁶¹ The Lord Jesus turned around and looked right at Peter. Then Peter remembered what the Lord had said to him, "This night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you know me." ⁶² And he went out of the courtyard and cried with great sorrow.

⁶³ The men who were guarding Jesus made fun of him and beat him. ⁶⁴ They put a blindfold on him and said to him, "Show us that you are a prophet! Tell us who it was that struck you!" ⁶⁵ They said many other evil things about him, insulting him.

⁶⁶ At dawn the next morning, many of the Jewish leaders gathered together. In this group were the chief priests and the men who taught the Jewish laws. They took Jesus to the Jewish council chamber. There they said to him, ⁶⁷ "If you are the Messiah, tell us!" But he replied, "If I say that I am he, you will not believe me. ⁶⁸ If I ask you what you think about the Messiah, you will not answer me. ⁶⁹ But from now on, I, the Son of Man, will be sitting next to almighty God and ruling!" ⁷⁰ Then they all asked, "If that is so, are you saying that you are the Son of God?" He answered, "Yes, it is just like you say." ⁷¹ Then they said to each other, "We certainly do not need any more people to testify against him! We ourselves have heard him say

that he is equal to God!"

Chapter 23

¹ Then the whole group got up and took him to Pilate, the Roman governor. ² They accused him in front of Pilate: "We have seen this fellow causing trouble by telling lies to our people. He has been telling them to not pay taxes to Caesar, the Roman emperor. Also, he has been saying that he is the Messiah, a king!" ³ Pilate then asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is just as you have asked me." ⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and to the crowd, "This man is not guilty of any crime." ⁵ But they kept on accusing Jesus; they said, "He is trying to get the people to riot! He has been teaching his ideas throughout all of the region of Judea. He started doing this in the region of Galilee and now he is doing it here, also!"

⁶ When Pilate heard their words, he asked, "Does this man come from the district of Galilee?" ⁷ Because Pilate learned that Jesus was from Galilee, where Herod Antipas ruled, he sent Jesus to him, because Herod was in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad. He had been wanting for a long time to see Jesus, because he was hearing many things about him and wanted to see him perform a miracle. ⁹ So he asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus did not reply to any of them. ¹⁰ And the chief priests and some experts in the Jewish laws stood near him, accusing him very of all kinds of crimes. ¹¹ Then Herod and his soldiers made fun of Jesus. They put expensive clothes on him to pretend that he was a king. Then Herod sent him back to Pilate. ¹² Until that time Herod and Pilate had been very hostile to each other, but that very day they became friends.

¹³ Pilate then gathered together the chief priests and other Jewish leaders and the crowd that was still there. ¹⁴ He said to them, "You brought this man to me, saying that he has been leading the people to revolt. But I want you to know that after having examined him while you were listening, I do not think that he is guilty of any of the things you have told me about. ¹⁵ Even Herod does not think he is guilty. I know this, because he sent him back to us without punishing him. So it is clear that this man does not deserve to die. ¹⁶ So I will tell my soldiers to whip him and then set him free." ¹⁷ (Pilate said this because he had to set free one prisoner at the Passover Celebration.) ¹⁸ But the whole crowd shouted together saying, "Put this man to death! Set Barabbas free for us!" ¹⁹ Now Barabbas was a man who had led some people in the city to rebel against the Roman government. He was also a murderer. He was in prison because of these crimes, and he was waiting for them to put him to death. ²⁰ But Pilate wanted very much to set Jesus free, so he tried to speak to the crowd again. ²¹ But they kept on shouting, saying, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" ²² Pilate spoke to them a third time and asked them, "Why? What crime has he committed? He has done nothing for which he deserves to die. So I will have my soldiers whip him and then set him free." ²³ But they kept insisting with loud voices that Jesus should be die on a cross. Finally, because they continued to shout so loudly, they persuaded Pilate ²⁴ to do what they requested. ²⁵ So he set free the man who was in prison because he had fought against the government and murdered people! He then commanded the soldiers to take Jesus and do what the crowd wanted.

²⁶ Now there was a man named Simon, who was from the city of Cyrene in Africa. He was coming into Jerusalem from the

countryside. As the soldiers were leading Jesus away, they grabbed hold of Simon. They took from Jesus the cross that they had made him carry, and they put it on Simon's shoulders. They told him to carry it and follow behind Jesus. ²⁷ Now a large crowd was following Jesus. It had many women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸ Jesus turned to them and said, "You women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me! Instead, weep because of what is going to happen to yourselves and your children! ²⁹ For I want you to know that there will soon be a time when people will say, 'How fortunate are the women who have never given birth to children or nursed babies!' ³⁰ Then the people in this city will say, 'We wish that the mountains would fall on top of us and that the hills would cover us up!' ³¹ If I have to die, even though I have nothing wrong, terrible things will certainly happen to people who deserve to die.

³² Two other men who were criminals were also walking to the place where they would die with Jesus. ³³ When they came to the place named 'The Skull', there they crucified Jesus by nailing him to a cross. They did the same thing to the two criminals. They put one at the right side of Jesus and one at his left side. ³⁴ But Jesus said, "Father, forgive these people who did this, because they do not really know whom they are doing this to." Then the soldiers divided his clothes by gambling with something like dice, to decide which piece of clothing each one would get. ³⁵ Many people stood nearby, watching. Even the Jewish leaders were mocking Jesus: "He saved other people! If God has really chosen him to be the Messiah, he should save himself!" ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him and offered him some sour wine. ³⁷ They kept saying to him, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸ They also fastened on

the cross above his head a sign that stated, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

³⁹ One of the criminals who was hanging on a cross also insulted Jesus; he said, "You are the Messiah, are you not? So save yourself, and save us too!" ⁴⁰ But the other criminal stopped him from speaking; he said, "You should be afraid of God punishing you! They are punishing him and us in the same way." ⁴¹ We two deserve to die. They are punishing us as we deserve for the evil things that we did. But this man has done nothing wrong!" ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, "Jesus, please remember to save me when you begin to rule as king!" ⁴³ Jesus replied, "I want you to know that today you will be with me in paradise!"

⁴⁴ Then it was about noontime. But it became dark over all the land until three o'clock in the afternoon. ⁴⁵ There was no light from the sun. And the thick curtain that closed off the most holy place in the temple split into two pieces. ⁴⁶ When that happened, Jesus shouted loudly, "Father, I put my spirit into your care!" After he said that, he stopped breathing and died.

⁴⁷ When the centurion who was over the soldiers saw what happened, he said, "Indeed, this man has done nothing wrong!" What he said honored God. ⁴⁸ When the crowd of people who had gathered to see these men die saw what actually happened, they returned to their homes, hitting their own chests to show that they were sorrowful. ⁴⁹ All of Jesus' acquaintances, including the women who had come with him from the region of Galilee, stood at a little distance away and watched everything happen.

⁵⁰⁻⁵¹ Now there was a man named Joseph from Arimathea, a Jewish town. He was a good and a righteous man, and he was a member of the Jewish council. He saw everything happen, but he had not agreed with the other Council members when

they decided to kill Jesus and when they did it. He was waiting eagerly for the time when God would send his king to begin to rule. ⁵² Joseph went to Pilate and asked Pilate to permit him to take Jesus' body to bury it. Pilate gave him permission, ⁵³ so he took Jesus' body down from the cross. He wrapped it in a linen cloth. Then he put his body in a burial chamber that someone had cut in a rock cliff. No one had ever put a body in it before. ⁵⁴ It was the day when people got ready for the Jewish day of rest called the Sabbath. It was soon going to be sunset, the start of the Sabbath. ⁵⁵ The women who had come with Jesus from the district of Galilee followed Joseph and the men who were with him. They saw the burial chamber, and they saw how the men laid Jesus' body inside it. ⁵⁶ Then the women went back to where they were staying in order to get spices and ointments to put on Jesus' body. However, they did no work on the Sabbath, just as the Jewish law required.

Chapter 24

¹ Before dawn on Sunday those women went to the burial chamber. They took with them the spices that they had prepared to put on the body of Jesus. ² When they arrived, they discovered that somebody had rolled the stone away from the entrance to the burial chamber. ³ They went into the burial chamber, but the body of the Lord Jesus was not there! ⁴ They did not know what to think about that. Then suddenly two men stood by them wearing bright, shining clothes! ⁵ The women were frightened. As they bowed down low to the ground, the two men said to them, "You should not be looking for someone who is alive in a place where they bury dead people! ⁶ He is not here; he has been made alive again! Re-

member that while he was still with you in Galilee, he said to you,⁷ ‘They will have to hand me, the Son of Man, over to sinful men. They will kill me by nailing me to a cross. But on the third day after that, I will become alive again.’”⁸ The women remembered what Jesus had said to them.⁹ So they left the burial chamber and went to the eleven apostles and his other disciples and told them what happened.¹⁰ The women who told these things to the apostles were Mary from Magdala village, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women who were with them.¹¹ But the apostles dismissed their words as nonsense.¹² However, Peter got up and ran to the burial chamber anyway. He stooped down and looked inside. He saw the linen cloths in which Jesus’ body had been wrapped, but Jesus was not there. So, wondering what had happened, he went home.

¹³ That same day two of Jesus’ disciples were walking to a village named Emmaus. It was ten kilometers from Jerusalem.¹⁴ They were talking with each other about all the things that had happened to Jesus.¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing those things, Jesus himself approached them and started walking with them.¹⁶ But God did not allow them to recognize him.¹⁷ Jesus said to them, “What have you two been talking about while you were walking?” They stopped, and their faces looked very sad.¹⁸ One of them, whose name was Cleopas, said, “You must be the only person who is visiting Jerusalem who does not know the events that have happened there in recent days!”¹⁹ He said to them, “What events?” They replied, “The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth, who was a prophet. ’God enabled him to perform great miracles and to teach wonderful messages. The people thought he was wonderful.”²⁰ But our chief priests and

leaders handed him over to the Roman authorities. The authorities sentenced him to die, and they killed him by nailing him to a cross.²¹ We were hoping that he was the one who would free us Israelites from our enemies! But this does not seem possible now, because three days have already passed since he was killed.²² In spite of this, some women from our group amazed us. Early this morning they went to the burial chamber,²³ but the body of Jesus was not there! They came back and said that they had seen some angels in a vision. The angels said that he was alive!²⁴ Then some of those who were with us went to the burial chamber. They saw that things were exactly as the women had reported. But they did not see Jesus.”²⁵ He said to them, “You two foolish men! You are so slow to believe all that the prophets have written about the Messiah!²⁶ You should certainly have known that it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer all those things and die, and then enter his glorious home in heaven!”²⁷ Then he explained to them all the things that the prophets had written in the scriptures about himself. He started with what Moses wrote and then explained to them what all the other prophets wrote.

²⁸ They came near to the village to which the two men were going. He indicated that he would go further,²⁹ but they urged him not to do that. They said, “Stay with us tonight, because it is late in the afternoon and it will soon be dark.” So he went in the house to stay with them.³⁰ When they sat down to eat, he took some bread and thanked God for it. He broke it and gave some pieces to them.³¹ And then God enabled them to recognize him. But immediately he disappeared!³² They said to each other, “While we were walking along the road and he talked with us and enabled us to understand the scriptures, we started thinking that something very, very good

was going to happen, although we did not know what. We should not stay here; we should go tell others what happened!"³³ So they left immediately and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven apostles and others who had gathered together with them.³⁴ They told those two men, "It is true that the Lord has become alive again, and he has appeared to Simon!"³⁵ Then those two men told the others what had happened as they were walking along the road. They also told them how they both recognized him as he broke some bread for them.

³⁶ As they were saying that, Jesus himself suddenly appeared among them. He said to them, "May God give you peace!"

³⁷ They were startled and afraid, because they thought that they were seeing a ghost!³⁸ He said to them, "You should not be alarmed! And you should not doubt that I am alive.³⁹ Look at the wounds in my hands and my feet! You can touch me and see my body. Then you can see that it is really I myself. You can tell that I am really alive because ghosts do not have bodies, as you see that I have!"⁴⁰ After he said that, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his feet.⁴¹ They were joyful and amazed, but they still could hardly believe that he was really alive. So he said to them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"⁴² So they gave him a piece of broiled fish.⁴³ While they were watching, he took it and ate it.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "I will repeat what I told you while I was with you: Everything that was written about me in the Law of Moses, the writings of the Prophets, and in the Psalms, all must be fulfilled!"⁴⁵ Then he enabled them to understand the things that had been written about him in the scriptures.⁴⁶ He said to them, "This is what you can read in the scriptures: That the Messiah would

suffer and die, but on the third day after that he would become alive again.⁴⁷ They also wrote that those who believe in him must preach everywhere that people should turn away from committing sin and turn to God, so that he would forgive their sins. The followers of the Messiah should preach that message because God sent them to do so. They wrote that they should start preaching it in Jerusalem and then go and preach it to all people groups.⁴⁸ You must tell people that you know that those things that happened to me are true.⁴⁹ And I want you to know that I will send the Holy Spirit to you, as my Father promised that he would do. But you must stay in this city until God fills you with the power of the Holy Spirit."

⁵⁰ Then Jesus led them outside the city until they came near the village of Bethany. There he lifted up his hands and blessed them.⁵¹ As he was doing that, he left them and went up to heaven.⁵² After they worshiped him, they returned to Jerusalem very joyfully.⁵³ Each day they went into the temple courtyard, and spent a lot of time praising God.

JOHN

Chapter 1

¹ In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God before he began to create anything. ³ He is the one who carried out God's command to create everything—yes, absolutely everything that was made! ⁴ All life is in the Word, so he could give life to everything and everyone. The Word was God's light that shone on everyone, everywhere. ⁵ This light shone in the darkness, and the darkness tried to put it out, but it could not.

⁶ God sent a man named John. ⁷ He came to testify to the people about the light. What he said was true, and he proclaimed that message so that everyone might believe. ⁸ John himself was not the light, but he came to tell people about the light. ⁹ This was the true light that shines upon everyone, and that light was coming into the world.

¹⁰ The Word was in the world and, although he had made the world, none of its people knew who he was. ¹¹ Although he came to the world he owned, and even to his own people, the Jews, they rejected him. ¹² But all who took him into their lives and trusted in him, to them he gave the right to become God's children. ¹³ These are children born from God. They were not born by means of a normal human birth nor out of a human desire or choice nor because of a husband's desire to become a father.

¹⁴ Now the Word became a real human being and lived here where we live for a while. We have seen him display his splendid and amazing nature, the nature of the

one and only Son of the Father, who shows us that God loves us faithfully and teaches us about his truth.

¹⁵ One day John the Baptizer was telling people about the Word, and Jesus came to him. John shouted to the crowd around him, "I told you someone would come after me, someone who is much more important than I am. He existed long before me, eternal ages before I was born. This man here! This is that man I was talking about!" ¹⁶ We have all benefited very much from what he has done. Again and again, he has acted very kindly toward us. ¹⁷ Moses proclaimed God's laws to the Jewish people. Jesus the Messiah was kind to us far beyond what we deserved and he taught us true things about God. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. But, Jesus the Messiah, who himself is God, is always close to the Father, and he has made us know him.

¹⁹ This is what John gave as his testimony: The Jews sent priests and the Levites from Jerusalem; they came to ask John, "Who are you?" ²⁰ So John testified to them and said, "I am not the Messiah!" ²¹ Then they asked him, "What do you say about yourself? Are you Elijah?" He said, "No." They asked again, "Are you the Prophet whom the prophets say will come?" John answered, "No." ²² So they asked him once more, "Then who do you claim to be? Tell us so that we can go back and report to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³ He answered as Isaiah the prophet had written, "I am the one shouting in the wilderness, 'Make the road good for the Lord to come to us.'"

²⁴ Some of these people came to John from the Pharisees. ²⁵ They asked him, "Since you say you are not the Messiah nor Elijah nor the Prophet, then why are you baptizing?" ²⁶ John replied, "I am baptizing people with water, but there is now someone standing among you whom you do not

know. ²⁷ He follows after me, but I am not important enough even to untie his sandals.”

²⁸ These things happened at the village of Bethany over on the east side of the Jordan River. That is the place where John was baptizing.

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. He said to the people, “Look! The Lamb of God, who will give his life as a sacrifice to take away the sins of the world.

³⁰ He is the one of whom I said, ‘Someone will come after me who is more important than I am, because he existed long before me, eternal ages before I was born.’ ³¹ I did not know him at first, but now I know who he is. My work was to come and baptize with water those who were sorry and turned from their sins. I want the people of Israel to know who he is.”

³² It was John’s work to tell us what he saw. He spoke like this: “I saw God’s Spirit as he was descending from heaven in the form of a dove. The Spirit came down and remained on Jesus. ³³ At first, I myself did not know him, but God sent me to baptize people with water, people who said they wanted to turn from their sinful ways. God told me, ‘The man on whom you will see my Spirit descend and remain is the one who will baptize all of you with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I bear witness to you that he is the Son of God.”

³⁵ John the Baptizer was at the same place again the next day with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look! The Lamb of God, the man whom God appointed to give his life, like a lamb killed by the people of Israel as a payment for their sins!” ³⁷ The two disciples of John, when they heard John, left John and followed him. ³⁸ Jesus turned around and saw them following him, and he asked them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi

(which means ‘teacher’), tell us where you are staying.” ³⁹ He replied, “Come with me, and you will see!” So they came and saw where Jesus was staying. They stayed with him that day because it was getting late (it was about 4 pm.)

⁴⁰ One of those two disciples who followed Jesus was named Andrew; he was Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ Andrew first went off to find his brother Simon. When he came to him, he said, “We have found the Messiah (which means ‘Christ’)!” ⁴² Andrew took Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked intently at Peter, and said, “You are Simon. Your father’s name is John. You will be given the name Cephas.” Cephas is an Aramaic name that means ‘solid rock.’ (Peter means the same thing in Greek.)

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave the Jordan River valley. He went to the region around Galilee and found a man named Philip. Jesus said to him, “Come with me.” ⁴⁴ Philip, Andrew, and Peter were all from the town of Bethsaida (in Galilee). ⁴⁵ Then Philip went to search for his friend Nathaniel. When he came to him, he said, “We have found the one Moses wrote about, the Messiah. The prophets prophesied that he would come. The Messiah is Jesus. He is from the town of Nazareth. His father’s name is Joseph.” ⁴⁶ Nathaniel replied, “From Nazareth? Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip replied, “Come and you will see!” ⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathaniel approaching, he said this about him, “Look there! There is an honest and good Israelite! He never deceives anyone!” ⁴⁸

Nathaniel asked him, “How do you know what kind of man I am? You do not know me.” Jesus replied, “I saw you before Philip called you, when you were sitting by yourself under the fig tree.” ⁴⁹ Then Nathaniel declared, “Teacher, you must be the Son of God! You are the King of Is-

rael we have been waiting for!” ⁵⁰ Jesus replied to him, “Do you trust in me just because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see me do things that are much greater than that!” ⁵¹ Then Jesus said to him, “I am telling you the truth: Just like the vision your ancestor Jacob long ago saw, some day you will see heaven opened up, and you will see God’s angels going up and coming down on me, the Son of Man.”

Chapter 2

¹ Three days later, there was a wedding in Cana, a city in Galilee, and Jesus’ mother was there. ² They also invited Jesus and his disciples to the wedding. ³ They served wine to those attending the wedding and they drank all the wine they had. Jesus’ mother said to him, “They are out of wine.” ⁴ Jesus said to her, “Madam, what does that have to do with me? The chosen time to begin my most important work has not come yet.” ⁵ Jesus’ mother turned and said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” ⁶ There were six empty stone jars there. They held water so that the guests and servants could wash their hands and feet, and so that other Jewish rites of cleansing could be done. Each jar could hold 75 to 115 liters. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water!” So they filled the jars to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, “Now, draw some water out of a jar and take it to the director of the feast.” So the servants did that. ⁹ The director of the feast tasted the water, which had now become wine. He did not know where the wine had come from, although the servants knew. So he called the bridegroom to himself. ¹⁰ “Everyone serves the best wine first, and later when the guests have drunk a lot and the best is gone, then they serve the cheap wine. But you have

kept the best wine until now.” ¹¹ That was the first miracle Jesus did, one that signified truth about Jesus. He did it in the village of Cana, in the region of Galilee. There he showed that he could do amazing things. So the disciples trusted in him.

¹² After this Jesus and his mother and brothers, along with his disciples, went down to the city of Capernaum, and they stayed there a few days.

¹³ Now it was almost time for the Jewish Passover Celebration. Jesus and his disciples went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ There in the temple courtyard he saw men selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons. The animals were sold to those who were making their sacrifices at the temple. He also saw men sitting at tables selling temple money. ¹⁵ So Jesus made a whip from some leather cords and he used it to drive out the sheep and the cattle from the temple. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins on the ground.

¹⁶ He commanded those who were selling pigeons, “Take these pigeons out of here! Do not turn my Father’s house into a marketplace!” ¹⁷ This reminded his disciples about what someone had written in the scriptures long before, “I love your house so much, O God, that I will die for it.”

¹⁸ The Jewish leaders asked him, “What miracle can you do for us to prove you have permission from God to do what you are doing?” ¹⁹ Jesus replied to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it again.” ²⁰ “Are you saying that you are going to rebuild this entire temple in just three days?” they asked him. “It took forty-six years to build this temple.” ²¹ However, the temple Jesus was speaking about was his own body, not the temple building. ²² Later, after Jesus had died and God had raised him from the dead, his disciples remembered what he had said about the temple. They believed

both what the scriptures said and what Jesus himself had said.

²³ When Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many people trusted in him because they saw the miracles that signified truth about Jesus. ²⁴ Nevertheless, Jesus knew what people were like, and because he knew them so well, he did not trust them. ²⁵ He did not need anyone to tell him how evil people were. He knew everything about them.

Chapter 3

¹ There was a man named Nicodemus. He was a member of the Pharisees, a very strict group within the Jewish faith of that day. He was an important man, a member of the highest Jewish governing council. ² He went by night to see Jesus. He said to Jesus, "Teacher, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. We know this because no one could perform the miracles you are doing unless God helped him." ³ Jesus replied to what Nicodemus said, "I am telling you the truth, no one can enter God's kingdom unless he is born again." ⁴ Then Nicodemus said to him, "How can a person be born again when he is old? No one can enter his mother's womb and be born a second time!" ⁵ Jesus answered, "I guarantee that this also is true, no one can enter God's kingdom unless he is born both by water and the Spirit. ⁶ If someone is born from a human, that person is a human being. But those who are born again by the work of God's Spirit have a new spiritual nature that God makes within them. ⁷ Do not be amazed when I tell you that you must be born again. ⁸ It is like this: The wind blows wherever it wants. You hear the sound of the wind, but you do not know where it comes from or where

it goes. It is just like that with everyone who is made alive by the Spirit: The Spirit gives a new birth to whomever he desires.

⁹ Nicodemus replied to him, "How can this be true?" ¹⁰ Jesus replied to him, "You are an important teacher in Israel, and yet you do not understand what I am saying?

¹¹ I am telling you the truth, we say the things that we know to be true, and we are telling you what we have seen, yet none of you to whom we speak these things trusts what we are saying. ¹² If you do not trust what I say when I tell you about things of this earth, how will you trust what I say when I tell you about things of heaven? ¹³ I, the Son of Man, am the only one who has gone up to heaven, and I am the only one who has come down here to the earth.

¹⁴ Long ago Moses, when he was in the wilderness during the Exodus, lifted up a poisonous snake on a pole and all who looked up at it were saved. In the same way, the Son of Man must be lifted up ¹⁵ so that whoever looks up and trusts in him will have eternal life.

¹⁶ God loved the world in this way: He gave his only Son, so that anyone who trusts in him would not die, but would have everlasting life. ¹⁷ God did not send his Son into the world to pronounce sentence on it, but to save it. ¹⁸ Everyone who trusts in the Son, God will never condemn. But everyone who does not trust in him, God has already put under his condemnation, because they did not put their trust in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹

God has made his justice for sinful people plain for all to see: His light has come into the world, but the people of this world have loved their darkness and they hide from the light. They loved the darkness because what they were doing was ugly and evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does wicked deeds hates the light, and they never will come to it because the light exposes what they do and reveals how wicked they are.

²¹ But those who do what is good and true come to the light so that what they do may be seen by all and so that all might know that they were obeying God when they did these things.

²² After those things happened, Jesus and his disciples went to the region of Judea. He stayed there a while with his disciples and he baptized many people.

²³ John the Baptizer was also baptizing people near the village of Aenon near Salim in the region of Samaria. There was much water in that place, and so many people kept coming to John. ²⁴ This is before the time when John's enemies had put him in prison. ²⁵ An argument arose between some of John's disciples and one particular Jewish man about washing to make oneself acceptable to God. ²⁶ Those who were arguing came to John and said, "Teacher, there was a man who was with you when you were baptizing people on the other side of the Jordan River. You pointed him out to us and told us who he was. Well, now he is baptizing across the way in Judea and many people are going out to him." ²⁷ John replied to them, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless God gives it to him. ²⁸ You know I was telling the truth when I told you, 'I am not the Messiah, but I was sent before him to make the road good for when he came.' ²⁹ I am like the friend of the bridegroom. I am standing there waiting for the groom to come. The friend of the bridegroom is very happy when he hears the bridegroom's voice when he finally arrives. Therefore, because all this has happened, my joy is overflowing because he has come. ³⁰ Over time he will grow in status and importance, and I will become less and less important."

³¹ Jesus comes from heaven, and he is higher in position than anyone else. We have our home on earth, and we can

speak only of things that belong to the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above everyone on the earth and everything there is. ³² Now there is one here who gives his testimony to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts what he says or trusts it to be true. ³³ However, those who have trusted in what he said, they testify that God is the source of all truth, and that he alone is the measure and standard of everything that is true. ³⁴ God has sent his spokesman, and what he has said is true, for he speaks God's words. And he gives his Spirit with no concern for how much he gives. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and he puts everything under his power. ³⁶ Whoever trusts in God's Son has everlasting life. Whoever does not obey the Son of God can never have everlasting life, and the righteous fury of God for every sin which that person has done will remain upon him forever."

Chapter 4

¹ Jesus got a report about the Pharisees. They found out that Jesus was gaining more followers than John the Baptizer and that he was baptizing more people than John was. ² But Jesus himself was not personally doing the work of baptizing; his disciples were doing that. ³ So Jesus and his disciples left the region of Judea and returned once more to Galilee.

⁴ Now they had to go through the region of Samaria. ⁵ So they arrived at a town called Sychar in the region of Samaria. Sychar was near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph long ago.

⁶ Just outside the town of Sychar was Jacob's well. Jesus was very tired from his long journey, and he sat down to rest beside the well. It was about noon. ⁷ A woman from Samaria came out to the well to draw some water. Jesus said to her,

"Give me a drink." ⁸ Now his disciples had left him alone because they had gone into the town to buy food. ⁹ The woman said to him, "I am surprised that you, a Jew, are asking me, a woman from Samaria, for a drink." ¹⁰ Jesus replied to her, "If you had known the gift that God wants to give you and if you had known who is asking you for a drink, you would have asked me for a drink, and I would have given you living water." ¹¹ "Sir, you do not have a bucket or a rope with which to draw the water up out of the well, and this well is deep. Where would you get this living water?" ¹² You cannot be greater than our father Jacob. He dug this well that we use today, and he drank from it himself, as did his children and his animals." ¹³ Jesus replied to her, "Everyone who drinks water from this well will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink the water I will give them will never be thirsty again. The water I give will become a spring of water that fills them up and brings them everlasting life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will never be thirsty or have to come here to draw water again."

¹⁶ Jesus knew she did not understand what he was saying, so he said to her, "Madam, go and call your husband and bring him here." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying that you have no husband, ¹⁸ because you have had not one, but five, husbands, and the man you are living with now is not your husband. What you have said about not having a husband is true."

¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I see you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our ancestors worshiped God right here on this mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place we must worship God. Who is right?" ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Madam, believe me when

I say that a time is coming when neither here on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, will people worship the Father. ²² You people in Samaria worship what you do not know. We Jewish worshipers know whom we worship because salvation comes from the Jews. ²³ The time is coming and has now arrived when those who truly worship God will worship the Father spiritually and in truth. The Father searches for such people so that they may worship him in this way. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him spiritually, and the truth must lead them in worship." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming (the one also called "Christ"). When he comes, he will tell us everything we need to hear." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I, who am speaking to you now, I am he!"

²⁷ Just then, the disciples came back from town. They were amazed that Jesus was talking with a woman who was not a member of his family. (That was against the Jewish custom.) Nevertheless, no one was brave enough to ask him, "What were you doing talking to a woman by yourself?" or "Why are you talking with her at all?"

²⁸ The woman left her water jar there and went back into town. She said to the people of the town, ²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He could not be the Messiah, could he?" ³⁰ Many people started heading out of town, going where Jesus was.

³¹ His disciples, who had just returned with the food, urged him, "Teacher, eat something." ³² Jesus said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about!"

³³ So they were saying to one another, "No one else could have brought him something to eat, could they?" ³⁴ Jesus said, "I will tell what I am most hungry for: It is to do what my Father who sent me wants and to complete all his work." ³⁵ At this

time of the year you usually say, ‘There are four months left, and then we will harvest the crops.’ Yet look all around you! The fields are ready for harvest at this moment. The non-Jews are now wanting God to rule over them; they are like the fields that are now ready to be harvested.³⁶ The one who believes this and is ready to work in this kind of harvest is already receiving his payment and is gathering much fruit for eternal life. Those who sow the seed and those who reap the harvest will be glad together.³⁷ This statement is true: One person plants the seeds, and another person harvests the crops.³⁸ I sent you to gather the harvest from a crop you did not plant. Others have worked very hard, but you are now joining in their work.”

³⁹ Many Samaritans who lived in the town of Sychar put their trust in Jesus because of what they heard about him from all the woman told them. She said, “He told me everything I have ever done.”⁴⁰ When the Samaritans came to Jesus, they urged him to stay a longer time with them. So he stayed there two more days.⁴¹ Many more of them trusted in Jesus because of what he proclaimed to them.⁴² They told the woman, “We believe in Jesus now, not just because of what you told us about him but also because we have heard his message for ourselves. Now we know that this man truly is the Savior of the world.”

⁴³ After those two days in Samaria, Jesus and his disciples left and went to the region of Galilee.⁴⁴ (Jesus himself confirmed that a prophet receives honor in many places but never in the place where he grew up.)⁴⁵ However, when he arrived in Galilee, many of the people there welcomed him. They knew who he was because they saw all the things he had done in Jerusalem during the recent Passover Festival that was held there.⁴⁶ Jesus went back again to Cana in Galilee. (That was

where he had turned the water into wine.) There was an official of the king who lived in Capernaum just twenty-seven kilometers away, and his son was very sick.⁴⁷ When that man heard that Jesus had come back to Galilee from Judea, he went to Jesus in Cana and begged him, “Come down to Capernaum and heal my son. He is about to die!”⁴⁸ Jesus said to him, “Unless you see me do things that prove who I am and watch me do miracles, you will not trust in me!”⁴⁹ Yet the official said to him, “Sir, please come down to my home before my son dies!”⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, “Go. Your son will live.” The man trusted what Jesus said and he started on his way back home.⁵¹ As he was traveling down to his home in Capernaum, his servants met him along the road. They told him, “Your child is going to live.”⁵² He asked them, “At what time did my son begin to improve?” They said to him, “His fever ceased yesterday afternoon at one o’clock.”⁵³ Then the boy’s father realized that this was the time Jesus told him, “Your son lives.” So he trusted in Jesus, along with everyone who lived in his house.

⁵⁴ That was the second time Jesus did something to prove to people who he was. He did it during the time that he came to the region of Galilee, having traveled there from Judea.

Chapter 5

¹ Then the time came for another Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem for it.² There is in Jerusalem beside one of the gates going into the city, a place called the Sheep Gate. At that gate there is a pool called Bethesda (as it said in Aramaic). Next to the pool are five roofed porches or colonnades.³⁻⁴ There was a great number of people there who were

sick, blind, and could not walk. Many people who could not walk were lying on the porch. ⁵ One man who could not walk had been there for thirty-eight years. ⁶ Jesus saw him lying there and realized that he had been in this condition for a long time. He said to the man, "Do you want to become healthy and strong?" ⁷ The man replied to him, "Sir, I have no one here to help me get down into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get to the pool, someone else always steps down in front of me." ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Get up! Take up your bed and walk!" ⁹ At once the man was healed, and he picked up his bed and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath, the day of rest. ¹⁰ So the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath day, and you know it is against our law for you to carry your mat on this day of rest." ¹¹ The man who had been healed said to them, "But the one who healed me told me, 'Take up your bed and walk!'" ¹² They asked him, "Who was that man?" ¹³ Now although Jesus had healed the man, the man did not know his name. After healing him, Jesus had left the man and disappeared into the crowd.

¹⁴ Later, Jesus found the man in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well now. Do not sin anymore, so nothing worse will happen to you." ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that the man who had healed him was Jesus. ¹⁶ So the Jews began efforts to stop Jesus because he was doing marvelous things and was showing his power and because he often did those works on the Sabbath day. ¹⁷ Jesus gave this answer to them, "My Father is working even now, and I am also working." ¹⁸ This is why the Jews were trying more and more to put Jesus to death, not only because he was breaking the Sabbath day, but also because he even called

God his own Father, claiming that he was equal to God.

¹⁹ Jesus replied to them, "I am telling you the truth: I, the Son of Man, can do nothing on my own authority. I can do only what I see the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, that is what I, the Son, do. ²⁰ The Father loves me, the Son, and shows me everything he is doing. Even greater works than these the Father will show me, so that you may see what I can do and be amazed. ²¹ As the Father raises up those who have died and gives them life again, so I, the Son, give life to anyone I want. ²² The Father judges no one, but has given over all judgment to me, ²³ so that all people may honor me, the Son, in the same way that they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor me cannot honor the Father. ²⁴ I am telling you the truth: Anyone who hears my message and trusts that God sent me has eternal life and will not come into God's judgment. Instead, he has gone from being dead to being alive.

²⁵ I am telling you the truth: A time is coming when those who have died will hear my voice, that of me, the Son of God, and those who hear me will live. ²⁶ For as the Father is able to cause people to live, in the same way he has given power to me, the Son, to cause them to live. ²⁷ The Father has given me authority to do whatever he knows is just, because I am the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not be surprised at this because there will be a time when all people who have died will hear me call, ²⁹ and they will come out of their graves. God will raise to everlasting life those who have done good. But those who have done evil—God will raise them up, but only to condemn them and punish them forever. ³⁰ I can do nothing on my own. Whatever I hear from the Father, that is how I judge, and I judge in a just manner. I judge justly because I do not try to do what I want, but

what the Father wants, he who sent me here.

³¹ If I alone were the only one to be a witness about myself, no one would believe my witness to be true or reliable. ³² Nevertheless, there is someone else who bears witness about me, and I know that his testimony about me is true. ³³ You sent messengers to John the Baptizer, and he told you the truth about me. ³⁴ I do not actually need for him or anyone else to be a witness about me, but I am saying these things so that God can save you.

³⁵ John the Baptizer was a burning and shining lamp, and you were glad to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶ However, the witness I give about myself is even greater than the witness John gave about me. All the things that the Father has allowed me to do—I do those things every day, and you see me doing them—those things tell much about who I am; they explain my purpose for coming here. They are proof that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ The Father who sent me, he is the one who has given testimony about me. You have never heard his voice and you have never seen him physically. ³⁸ The proof that you do not have his word living in you is that you do not trust me, the one he sent. ³⁹ You carefully study the scriptures because you think that by studying them you will find eternal life, and those scriptures tell about me. ⁴⁰ Yet still you refuse to come to me in order that you might receive everlasting life from me.

⁴¹ If people praise me or congratulate me, I ignore them. ⁴² I know this about you, you do not love God. ⁴³ I have come with my Father's authority, but still you do not welcome me or trust me. If someone else came with his own authority, you would listen to him. ⁴⁴ How can you trust in me when you work so hard for others among yourselves to honor you? Yet

all the while, you refuse to seek the true honor that comes from the one and only God.

⁴⁵ Do not think that I am the one who accuses you before my Father. You thought Moses would defend you, so on him you have set your hopes. However, it is Moses who accuses you. ⁴⁶ If you had accepted what Moses said, you would have received what I said as the truth. ⁴⁷ Since you did not even believe in what Moses wrote, how could you possibly trust what I have said to you!"

Chapter 6

¹ Jesus went across the lake to the other side. The name of the lake was the "Sea of Galilee" to some people; other people called it the "Sea of Tiberias." ² A large crowd followed him because they had seen the wonders he had done in healing people who were very sick. ³ Jesus went up on a steep hillside and sat down with his disciples. ⁴ Now it was the time of the year for the Passover Festival, a special celebration of the Jews. ⁵ Jesus looked up and saw that there was a very large crowd of people making their way toward him. Jesus said to Philip, "Where will we buy bread so that all these people can have something to eat?" ⁶ He asked Philip this question to test him, to see what sort of answer he would give. However, Jesus already knew what he was going to do about this problem. ⁷ Philip replied to him, "If we had the money that a man can earn in two hundred days of work, it would not be enough money to buy bread to give each person in this big crowd even a little piece to eat." ⁸ Another one of his disciples, Andrew, who was Simon Peter's brother, said to Jesus, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five little barley loaves of bread and

two small fish. Yet, how could so little food feed so many people?" ¹⁰ The place where the people were all coming together had a lot of grass. So Jesus said, "Tell the people to sit down." So all of the people sat down, and after the disciples counted the crowd, they found that there were about five thousand people. ¹¹ Then Jesus took the small loaves of bread and the fish, and he thanked God for them. Then he passed the bread and the fish among all who were sitting on the ground. The people ate all the fish and bread they wanted. ¹² When everyone had finished eating, he said to the disciples, "Gather up all the pieces of barley bread that the people did not eat. Do not let anything go to waste." ¹³ So they gathered up the pieces from the five barley loaves, and they filled twelve large baskets full from what was left over.

¹⁴ After the people saw the miracle that Jesus had performed in front of them, they said, "Surely he is the Prophet that God has been going to send into the world!"

¹⁵ Jesus knew what the people were planning; they were about to come and force him to be their king. So he left them and went up the mountain to be by himself.

¹⁶ When it was evening, his disciples went down to the Sea of Galilee, ¹⁷ got into a boat, and started to sail across the sea to the city of Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus was not with them. ¹⁸ A strong wind started to blow, and the waves on the sea became very rough. ¹⁹ After they had rowed five or six kilometers, the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water and coming near the boat. They were terrified! ²⁰ Jesus said to them, "It is I! Do not be afraid!" ²¹ They were very glad to take him into the boat. As soon as he was with them, their boat arrived at the place where they were going.

²² The next day the crowd of people that had stayed on the other side of the lake re-

alized that there had been only one boat there the day before. They also knew that Jesus had not gone in the boat with his disciples. ²³ Some men came across the lake from the city of Tiberias in other boats they had. They put their boats near the place where the people had eaten the bread, that bread for which the Lord had given thanks to God. ²⁴ When the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, some of them got into those boats and sailed to Capernaum to find Jesus.

²⁵ They searched and found Jesus in Capernaum on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. They asked him, "Teacher, when did you come here?" ²⁶ Jesus replied to them, "I am telling you the truth: You are not looking for me because you saw me perform miracles that show who I am. No! You are looking for me only because you ate until you were full of the loaves of bread. ²⁷ Stop working for food that will soon spoil! Instead, work for the food that will bring you everlasting life! That is the bread that I, the Son of Man, God's chosen one, will give you. For God the Father approves of me in every way."

²⁸ Then the people asked him, "What works and service should we do to please God?" ²⁹ Jesus replied, "What God wants you to do is this: Trust in me, the one he has sent." ³⁰ So they said to him, "Then perform another miracle to prove who you are so that we can see it and believe that you came from God. What will you do for us? ³¹ Our ancestors ate manna, just as the scriptures say: 'God gave them bread out of the heavens to eat.'"

³² Jesus said to them, "I am telling you the truth: It was not Moses who gave your ancestors that bread from heaven. No, it was my Father, the same one who is giving you the true bread from heaven. ³³ The true bread of God is I, the one who has come

down from heaven in order to make everyone in the world truly able to live."

³⁴ They said to him, "Sir, always give us this bread." ³⁵ Jesus said to them, "Just as people need food to live, everyone needs me to live spiritually. Those who take ordinary food and water will become hungry and thirsty again. But for those who ask me and trust me to enable them to live spiritually, I will do this for them. ³⁶ Nevertheless, I have told you that, although you see me, you still do not trust me. ³⁷ All the people my Father gives to me will come to me, and I will never drive away anyone who comes to me. ³⁸ I came down from heaven not to do what I want, but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ This is what the one who sent me wants, that I lose none of those whom he has given me, and that I raise all of them up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is what my Father wants, that everyone who looks in faith on me, the Son, and who trust in me, will have everlasting life. I will raise them up on the last day."

⁴¹ The Jewish leaders began to grumble about Jesus because he said, "I am the bread who came down from heaven." ⁴² They said, "Is this not Jesus, whose father is Joseph? Do we not know his father and mother? How can he say with any truth, 'I have come from heaven'?" ⁴³ Jesus answered them, "Stop grumbling among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him to me. The one who comes to me, I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, 'God will teach them all.' Everyone who hears and learns from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶ No one has seen the Father except me, the one who comes from God. I alone have seen the Father. ⁴⁷ I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread that gives true life. ⁴⁹ Your ances-

tors ate the manna in the wilderness, but they still died. ⁵⁰ However, the bread that I am speaking of is the bread that comes down from heaven, and the one who eats it will never die. ⁵¹ I am the bread that makes people truly live, the bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever. The bread that I give for the life of the world is the death of my physical body."

⁵² The Jews who had listened to Jesus were now angrily arguing among themselves. They could not understand how anyone could promise that others would eat his own body. ⁵³ So Jesus confronted them with difficult words: "I am telling you the truth: Unless you eat the flesh of me, the Son of Man, and drink my blood, you will never live forever. ⁵⁴ Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood will live forever, and I will make them alive again at the last day ⁵⁵ because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood will be joined to me, and I will be joined to him. ⁵⁷ My Father, who makes everyone alive, has sent me, and I live because my Father has made me able to. In the same way, those who feed on me will live forever because of what I will do for them. ⁵⁸ I am the true bread that comes down from heaven. Anyone who eats me—this bread—will never die, but will live forever! What I do is not like what happened to your ancestors because they ate the manna and then died." ⁵⁹ Jesus said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue in the city of Capernaum.

⁶⁰ Many of his disciples said, "What he is teaching is hard to understand. How can anyone accept what he is saying?" ⁶¹ Jesus was aware that some of his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, "Does what I teach offend you? ⁶² What would you say if you saw me, the Son of

Man, go back up to heaven? ⁶³ Only the Spirit gives life that can make anyone live forever. The human nature is no help in this matter. The words I have taught you tell you about the Spirit, and they tell you about eternal life. ⁶⁴ Yet there are some of you who do not trust what I am teaching you.” Jesus said this because he knew from the start of his work who it was who would not trust in him, and he knew the person who would betray him.

⁶⁵ Then he said, “That is why I told you that no one can come to me and to live forever unless the Father makes him able to come to me.”

⁶⁶ From that time on, many of Jesus’ disciples turned back from following him. ⁶⁷ So he said to the twelve, “You also do not want to leave me, do you?” ⁶⁸ Simon Peter replied, “Lord, to whom would we go? Only you have the message that allows us to live forever! ⁶⁹ We trust in you, and we know for certain that you are the Holy One whom God has sent!” ⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve disciples? Yet one of you is a devil!” ⁷¹ He was talking about Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Even though Judas was one of the twelve, he was also the one who would later betray Jesus.

Chapter 7

¹ After this, Jesus went to other areas in the region of Galilee. He avoided traveling to Judea because the Jewish authorities were searching for a way to charge him with a crime and to have him put to death. ² Now it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters. This was a time to remember when the Jewish people lived in tents during the Exodus long ago. ³ Because the festival was to take place in Judea, Jesus’ brothers said to him, “Leave

here and go to Judea so your other followers can see the powerful works you can do. ⁴ No one hides his work if he wants people to know what kind of a person he is. Show yourself to the world!” ⁵ For not even his own brothers trusted in him or thought he was telling the truth. ⁶ So Jesus said to them, “It is not yet time for me to bring my work to an end. However, you can choose any time you want to accomplish whatever you wish. ⁷ The people who live for themselves and love the things of this world cannot hate you, but they do hate me. I am the one who tells them that what they do with their lives is evil. ⁸ You go ahead to the festival. I am not going up now; it is not the right time for me.” ⁹ After he said that, Jesus stayed a little longer in Galilee.

¹⁰ However, a few days after his brothers left for the festival, he also went, but he did so secretly. ¹¹ The Jewish opponents of Jesus were looking for him, hoping to find him at the festival. They were asking people, “Where is Jesus? Is he here?” ¹² Among the crowds, many people were quietly speaking with each other about Jesus. Some were saying, “He is a good man!” Others were saying instead, “No! He is deceiving and misleading the crowds!” ¹³ Because they were afraid of the Jewish enemies of Jesus, no one spoke of him in a public place where other people could overhear what they were saying.

¹⁴ When the Festival of Shelters was about half over, Jesus went to the temple courtyard and started to teach there. ¹⁵ The Jews were amazed at what he was saying. They said, “This man never studied our doctrines with an approved instructor; he never enrolled in our schools! How does he know so much?” ¹⁶ Jesus replied to them, “What I teach does not come from myself. It comes from the one who sent me. ¹⁷ If anyone chooses to do what

God wants, he will find out if what I teach comes from God or if I speak only by my own authority. ¹⁸ Anyone who speaks on his own authority speaks so others will honor only him. However, if a servant works hard to honor the person who sent him, to give him a good reputation as a man of integrity, there is no fault in that kind of a servant. ¹⁹ Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you does what the law demands. You are the ones plotting to murder me right now!

²⁰ Someone in the crowd answered, "You have a demon! Name the person who wants to put you to death!" ²¹ Jesus replied to the crowd, "Because I did one work of power for you to see, you all marvel at it. ²² Moses gave you a law, and that law says you must circumcise your male children and that you must do that exactly seven days after the children are born. (To be accurate, this rite was from your forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and not from Moses, who wrote down the law about this practice.) Because of that requirement in the law, you sometimes have to circumcise a baby on the Sabbath day, and that is working, too! ²³ You sometimes circumcise boys on the Sabbath so that you will not violate the law of Moses. So why are you angry with me, saying I worked on the Sabbath when I was healing a man! Healing someone is more wonderful, and it is a greater work than circumcising a baby! ²⁴ Stop deciding whether healing this man was right or wrong according to a false application of God's law, and that without any thought! Instead, decide what a person should do and how he should be judged by the principle of what is right and what is just according to God, not man."

²⁵ Some of the people from Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man they are trying to put to death? ²⁶ He is saying these

things publicly, but the authorities are not saying anything to oppose him. Is that because they know he is the Messiah? ²⁷ But this cannot be the Messiah! We know where this man came from, but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."

²⁸ So while Jesus was teaching in the temple courtyard, he called out as he taught, "Yes, you say you know me, and you think you know where I am from. But I have come here not because I appointed myself. Instead, the one who sent me bears the truth as his testimony, and you do not know him. ²⁹ I know him because I have come from him. He is the one who sent me."

³⁰ Then they tried to lay their hands on him, but no one could arrest him because it was not yet the time for him to complete his work and for his life to end. ³¹ Many in the crowd, after they heard him and saw his works, put their trust in him. They said, "When the Messiah comes, will he be able to do more miraculous signs than this man has done?" ³² The Pharisees heard them quietly speaking these things about Jesus. So they, the chief priests and Pharisees together sent some officers to arrest him.

³³ Then Jesus said, "I will be with you for only a short time. Then I am going back to the one who sent me. ³⁴ You will search for me, but you will not find me. Where I am going, you cannot come." ³⁵ So the Jewish people who were his enemies said to themselves, "Where can this man go where we cannot find him? Does he intend to go where the Jews are spread all across the Greek world, and will he teach the people there these new things? ³⁶ What did he mean when he said, 'You will search for me, but you will not be able to find me,' and when he said, 'Where I am going, you cannot come?'"

³⁷ So on the last day of the festival, the great day, Jesus stood up cried out with a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.” ³⁸ Whoever trusts in me, as the scripture said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹ He said this about the Spirit, whom the Father was going to give to those who trusted in him. God had not yet sent the Spirit to live within those who trusted him because Jesus had not yet finished his work, that work which would bring great honor to God by saving his people through his death.

⁴⁰ When some of the crowd heard those words, they said, “This truly is the Prophet that we were expecting.” ⁴¹ Others said, “The Messiah cannot come from Galilee. ⁴² Do not the scriptures say that Messiah must come through the descendants of David and that he must be born in Bethlehem, the village that was David’s home?” ⁴³ So there was a division of opinion about Jesus. ⁴⁴ Some of the people wanted to arrest him. Yet no one laid a hand on him.

⁴⁵ So the officers returned to the chief priests and the Pharisees. These were the officers that the rulers had sent to arrest Jesus. The Pharisees said to the officers, “Why did you not seize him and bring him here?” ⁴⁶ The officers replied, “No one ever spoke like this man.” ⁴⁷ Then the Pharisees replied, “Have you been deceived, too? ⁴⁸ None of the Jewish authorities or the Pharisees have trusted in Jesus. ⁴⁹ This crowd who does not know the teachings of our laws, let them be cursed!”

⁵⁰ Then Nicodemus spoke. (He was the one who had gone to see Jesus at night to speak with him, and he was one of the Pharisees.) He said to them, ⁵¹ “Our Jewish law does not permit us to condemn a man before we have listened to him. First, we give him a hearing, and we must learn

about what he has done.” ⁵² They replied to him, “Are you also from Galilee? Search carefully and read what is written in the scriptures! You will find that no prophet comes from Galilee.”

⁵³ [Then they all left and went to their own homes.

Chapter 8

¹ Jesus went with his disciples to the Mount of Olives, and they stayed near there that night. ² Early the next morning, Jesus returned to the temple courtyard. Many people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ Then men who taught the Jewish laws and some who were Pharisees brought a woman to him. She had been caught in the act of adultery—she had been sleeping with a man who was not her husband. They made her stand up in the front of this group so they could question her. ⁴ They said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught committing adultery with a man, someone not her husband. ⁵ Now Moses commanded us in the law that we must execute such a woman with stones. Nevertheless, what do you say we should do?” ⁶ They asked this question as a trap so that they could accuse him of saying something wrong. If he said that they should not kill her, they could say that he dishonored the law of Moses. However, if he said that they should kill her, he would be breaking the Roman law that reserved for the governor the power to execute people.

However, Jesus bent down and wrote something on the ground with his finger.

⁷ While they continued to question him, he stood up and said to them, “Whichever one of you has never sinned, you are one who should lead the rest to punish her. You throw the first stone!” ⁸ Then Jesus

stooped down and wrote some more on the ground. ⁹ After they heard what he said, those who were questioning him started walking away, one by one, the older ones first and then the younger ones. They knew they were all sinners. Finally only Jesus was there with the woman. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and asked her, "Woman, where are those who accuse you? Has no one brought a charge against you that you must be punished?" ¹¹ She said, "No, sir, no one." Then Jesus said, "I do not condemn you either. Go home now, and from now on, do not sin like this anymore!"] ^[1]

¹² Jesus spoke to the people again. He said, "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will have the light that gives life, and he will never walk in darkness again. ¹³ So the Pharisees said to him, "It sounds as though you are trying to convince us to trust you by talking about yourself more and more! What you say about yourself does not prove anything!" ¹⁴ Jesus replied, "Even if I were the only one to say these things about myself, what I say is true because I know where I came from and I know where I am going. Nevertheless, you do not know where I came from and you do not know where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge people according to human standards and the laws of men. I have not come at this time to judge anyone. ¹⁶ When I do judge, it will be right and just because I am not the only one who will bring justice. I and the Father who sent me, we will execute justice together. ¹⁷ It is written in your law that a matter can be settled only when there are at least two witnesses to give evidence in the case. ¹⁸ I am bringing evidence to you about myself, and my Father who sent me also brings evidence about me. So you should believe that what we tell you is true."

¹⁹ Then they asked him, "Where is your father?" Jesus replied, "You do not know

me, and you do not know my Father. If you knew me, you would also know my Father." ²⁰ He said these things when he was near the treasury within the temple courtyard, the place where the people brought in their offerings. Yet no one arrested him because it was not yet time for him to die.

²¹ Jesus also said to them, "I am going away, and you will seek me, but it is certain that you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." ²² His Jewish opponents said among themselves, "Perhaps he is thinking that he will kill himself, and that is what he means when he says, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'" ²³ Jesus continued saying to them, "You are from this earth below, but I am from heaven above. You belong to this world. I do not belong to this world. ²⁴ I told you that you will die and that God will condemn you for your sins. This will certainly happen unless you trust that I am God, as I say I am."

²⁵ "Who are you?" they asked him. Jesus said to them, "Ever since the very beginning, I have been telling you! ²⁶ I could judge you and say that you are guilty of many things. Instead, I will say only this: The one who sent me tells the truth, and I tell the people in the world only what I have heard from him."

²⁷ They did not understand that he was talking about the Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said, "When you have lifted me up on a cross to kill me—me, the Son of Man,—you will know that I am God, and you will know that I do not do anything on my own authority. Instead, I only say what my Father has taught me to say. ²⁹ He who sent me is with me, and he has not left me alone because I do only the things that delight him." ³⁰ As Jesus was saying these things, many more people trusted in him.

³¹ Then Jesus said to the Jews who now were saying that they trusted in him, "If

you listen to all I teach you and live by it in everything you do, you are truly my disciples.³² You will know the truth, and the truth will lead you to be free from everything that made you its slaves.”³³ They answered him, “We are the descendants of Abraham, and we have never been anyone’s slaves. Why do you say we need to be free?”³⁴ Jesus replied, “I am telling you the truth: All who sin obey their sinful desires just as a slave is forced to obey his master.³⁵ Slaves will not remain as permanent members of a family but may be set free to return home or sold. However, a son is a member of the family forever.³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be absolutely free.³⁷ I know that you are in Abraham’s family; you are his descendants. Yet, your people are trying to put me to death. You will not trust anything I say.³⁸ I tell you all about the wonders and wisdom my Father has shown me, but you are only doing what your father told you to do.”

³⁹ They replied to him, “Abraham is our ancestor.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s descendants, you would be doing the things he did.⁴⁰ I have been telling you the truth that I heard from God, but you are trying to put me to death. Abraham did not do things like that.⁴¹ No! You are doing the things that your real father did.” They said to him, “We do not know about you, but we are not illegitimate children. We have only one Father, and that is God.”⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me because I came from God and now I have come here to this world. I did not come because I myself decided to come but because he sent me.⁴³ I will tell you why you do not understand what I say. It is because you do not accept my message or my teachings.⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you desire to do what he wants. He was a murderer from the time

people first sinned. He has abandoned God’s truth; it is not in him. Whenever he lies, he is speaking according to his character because he is a liar; everyone who lies does what the devil wants him to do.⁴⁵ Because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me!⁴⁶ Which one of you finds me guilty of sin? Since I tell you the truth, what reason do you give for not trusting me?⁴⁷ Those who belong to God hear and obey what he tells them. The reason that you do not hear and obey his message is that you do not belong to God.”

⁴⁸ His Jewish enemies replied to him, “We are certainly right in stating that you are a Samaritan—you are not really a true Jew at all!—and that a demon lives in you!”⁴⁹ Jesus replied, “A demon does not live in me! I honor my Father, and you dishonor me!⁵⁰ I do not try to persuade people to praise me. There is someone else who desires to give me what I deserve, and he is the one who will judge everything that I say and do.⁵¹ I am telling you the truth: If anyone holds firm to my word and trusts in it as I gave it, that person will never die!”

⁵² Then his Jewish enemies said to him, “Now we are sure that a demon lives within you! Abraham and the prophets died long ago! Yet you say that anyone who holds firm to what you teach will not die!⁵³ You are not greater than our father Abraham. He died and all the prophets died with him. So who do you think you are?”⁵⁴ Jesus replied, “If I tried to get people to praise me, that would be worthless. It is my Father who praises me, my character and goodness, and yet he is the one of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’⁵⁵ Although you do not know him, I do know him. If I said that I did not know him, I would be a liar like you. I know him and I always obey what he says.⁵⁶ Your father Abraham was happy when, as a prophet,

he looked forward and saw what I could do.”

⁵⁷ Then the Jewish leaders said to him, “You are not fifty years old yet! You have seen Abraham?” ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “I am telling you the truth, before Abraham was, I AM.” ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to put him to death. However, Jesus hid himself, left the temple, and went somewhere else.

8:11 ^[1]The best ancient copies do not have John 7:35-8:11

Chapter 9

¹ As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who had been blind his whole life, since the day he was born. ² The disciples asked him, “Teacher, whose sin caused this man to be born blind? Was it this man himself who sinned, or was it his parents?” ³ Jesus replied, “It was not that either this man or his parents sinned. He was born blind so that today people may see the powerful work God would do in him. ⁴ We must do the works of the one who sent me while it is still day. Night is on the way and when it arrives, no one will be able to work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ When he said this, he spit on the ground. He made mud with his saliva, and applied it like a medicine to the man’s eyes. ⁷ Then Jesus said to him, “Go and wash in the pool of Siloam!” (The name of the pool means ‘sent’). So the man went and washed in the pool. When he came back, he was able to see. ⁸ The man’s neighbors and others who had seen him when he was begging said, “Is that not the man who used to sit here and beg?” ⁹ Some said, “He is the

one.” Others said, “No, but he just looks like that man.” However, the man himself said, “Yes, I am the man!” ¹⁰ So they said to him, “How is it that you are now able to see?” ¹¹ He replied, “The man called Jesus made some mud and used it like medicine and put it on my eyes. Then he told me to go to the pool of Siloam and wash. So I went there and washed, and then I could see for the first time.” ¹² They said to him, “Where is that man?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³ Some of the people there took the man to a gathering of the Pharisees. ¹⁴ Now it was on the Sabbath day when Jesus did this miracle. ¹⁵ So the Pharisees asked the man again about how he was now able to see. He said to them, “The man put mud on my eyes and I washed, and now I see.” ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “We know this man Jesus is not from God because he does not keep the Sabbath day.” Others from that group asked, “If he were a sinner, how could he do such works of power that everyone sees?” So there was a difference of opinion among the Pharisees. ¹⁷ They asked the blind man again, “What do you say about him, since he is the one who restored your sight?” The man said, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸ Now the Jews who were opposed to Jesus did not believe the man had been blind and then became able to see. So they sent someone to bring in the man’s parents so that they could be questioned also. ¹⁹ They asked his parents, “Is this your son? Do you say that he was blind from the day he was born? How, then, is he able to see?” ²⁰ His parents replied, “We know that this is our son. We know that he was blind when he was born. ²¹ Nevertheless, we do not know how he is now able to see. We also do not know who healed his eyes. Ask him, he is old enough to speak for himself.” ²² The Jews who were

against Jesus had previously agreed with one another that they would take anyone who declared that Jesus was the Messiah and ban him from the synagogue.²³ That is why his parents said, "Ask him, he is old enough to speak for himself."

²⁴ So they called the man who had been blind, and they asked him to come before them a second time. When he got there, they said to him, "Swear to God that you will speak only the truth! We know that this man who healed you is a sinner and that he does not keep the law that Moses gave us."²⁵ He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I used to be blind, but now I see."²⁶ So they said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he heal you so that you now see?"²⁷ He answered them, "I have told you that already, but you did not believe me. Why do you want me to tell you again? Do you also really want to become his disciples?"²⁸ Then they became angry and insulted him: "You are that man's disciple, but we are Moses' disciples!"²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses; but about this man, we do not even know where he comes from."³⁰ The man replied, "That is very amazing! You do not know where he comes from, but he is the one who opened my eyes so that I can see!"³¹ We know that God does not listen to the prayers of sinners, those who ignore his law, but he listens to people who worship him and who do what he wants.³² Not since the beginning of the world has it been heard anywhere that someone was able to open the eyes of a man who was blind from birth!³³ If this man had not come from God, he could do nothing like that!"³⁴ They replied to him, "You were born in sin and have lived your whole life entirely in sin! Do you think you are qualified to teach us?" Then they banned him from the synagogue.

³⁵ Jesus heard about what the Pharisees did to the man he healed, how they threw him out of the synagogue. So he went and searched for the man. When he found him, he said to him, "Do you believe in me, the Son of Man?"³⁶ The man answered, "Sir, who is he? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen him. He is the one who is speaking to you now."³⁸ The man said, "Lord, I believe." Then he went down on his knees and worshiped him.

³⁹ Jesus said, "I have come into this world to judge the world so that those who do not see may see and so that those who see may become blind."⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard him say this, and they asked Jesus, "Are we also blind?"⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt. However, because you now defend yourself and say, 'We see,' your guilt is staying with you.

Chapter 10

¹ "I am telling you the truth: The one who enters into the sheep pen, must always enter through the gate. If he climbs in any other way, he is not the one who cares for the sheep, but he is a thief and a criminal who steals the sheep.² The man who enters the pen through the gate is the true shepherd, for he takes care of the sheep.³ The hired man who guards the gate when the shepherd is away will open the gate for him when he comes. However, the sheep recognize only the shepherd's voice and only when he calls them by name. Then he leads them outside of the pen to feed them and to give them water.⁴ After he has brought out all of his own sheep, he goes in front of them. His sheep are eager to follow him because they know his voice.⁵ They will never follow a stranger

who calls out to them. They will run away from him because they do not recognize the stranger's voice."

⁶ Jesus used this illustration from the work of shepherds. Nevertheless, his disciples did not understand what he was telling them. ⁷ So Jesus spoke to them again, "I am telling you the truth: I am the gate through which all the sheep enter into the pen. ⁸ All who came before me, they were thieves and criminals who stole the sheep; but the sheep did not listen to them, and they would not follow them. ⁹ I myself am like that gate. If anyone enters through the gate and goes into the pen where the sheep are, he will be safe, and he will go out and find good pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and that life will be full to overflowing.

¹¹ I am like a good shepherd. The good shepherd will die in order to protect and to save his sheep. ¹² Someone pays the hired man money to watch over the sheep. He does not treat the sheep like they belong to him; he is just an employee doing a job. So when he sees a wolf coming to kill the sheep, he does not risk his life. He leaves the sheep and runs away so that it is possible for the wolf to attack the sheep, seizing some of them and scattering others. ¹³ The hired worker runs away because he is only working for the money. He does not care about what happens to the sheep. ¹⁴ I am, myself, the good shepherd. I know my own sheep, and my own sheep know me, ¹⁵ just as I know my Father, and my Father knows me. Because of that, I am willing to die for my sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that do not belong to the same group of sheep that you do. I will cause them to listen to me also. They will listen to me, so there will eventually be only one flock of sheep under me, the only shepherd. ¹⁷ The reason my Father

loves me is that I will sacrifice my life. I will give up my life, and I will take it up to live again. ¹⁸ No one is causing me to lay down my life. I have chosen to sacrifice myself. I have authority to lay down my life and I have authority to take it up and to live again. This work is from my Father, and he has commanded me to do it."

¹⁹ After hearing these words Jesus had been speaking, the Jews were divided in their opinion of him. ²⁰ Many of them said, "A demon is controlling him and has caused him to become crazy. Do not waste time listening to him!" ²¹ Others said, "What he is saying is not something a man oppressed by a demon would ever say. No demon can open the eyes of a blind man!"

²² The time for the celebration called the Festival of Dedication had now come, the time when the Jewish people remembered when their ancestors purified the temple in Jerusalem and gave it to God again. It was in the winter. ²³ Jesus was walking in the temple courtyard in the place called Solomon's porch. ²⁴ The Jewish opponents of Jesus gathered around him and said, "How long will you keep us wondering about who you are? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly so that we can know." ²⁵ Jesus answered them, "I have told you, but you would not believe me. You know who I am because of the miracles and other things I do by my Father's name and his authority. Those things tell you all you need to know about me. ²⁶ You do not believe in me because you do not belong to me. You are sheep who belong to another shepherd. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice. I know each one of them by name; they follow me and obey me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life. No one can ever destroy them, and no one will ever be able to steal them away from me. ²⁹ My Father gave them to me; he is greater than anyone, so no one is able to steal them away from him. ³⁰ I

and the Father are one.”

³¹ The enemies of Jesus again picked up stones to throw at him and to put him to death. ³² Jesus said to them, “You have seen me do many good works, things that my Father had told me to do. For which of them are you going to stone me?” ³³ The Jewish opponents replied, “We are wanting to take your life, not because you did any good work, but because you, just a man, are insulting God and are making yourself God!” ³⁴ Jesus replied to them, “In the scriptures it is written what God said to the rulers whom he had appointed: ‘I have said that you are like gods (with great honor and with power over many).’ ³⁵ God said that to those leaders when he appointed them. No one objected to that, and nothing that is in scripture can be shown to be false. ³⁶ I am the one whom my Father chose to send here into this world. So why are you angry with me for saying that I am equal with God when I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’ ³⁷ If I were not doing the works that my Father told me to do, I would not expect you to believe in me. ³⁸ However, because I am doing these works, place your trust in what these works tell you about me even though you do not trust what I say. If you do that, then you will know and understand that my Father is in me and that I am in my Father.”

³⁹ After they heard that, they tried to seize Jesus again, but he got away from them one more time.

⁴⁰ Then Jesus went back across to the east side of the Jordan River. He went to the place where John the Baptizer had baptized many people at the beginning of his ministry. Jesus stayed there for several days. ⁴¹ Many people came to him. They were saying, “John the Baptizer never performed a miracle, but this man has performed many miracles! Everything that

John said about this man is true!” ⁴² Many people came to trust him; they put their trust in who he was and in what he would do for them.

Chapter 11

¹ A man named Lazarus fell very sick. He lived in the village of Bethany where Mary and Martha lived. ² This is the same Mary who later would pour perfume on the Lord to show her love and honor of him, and would wipe his feet with her hair. It was her brother Lazarus who was sick. ³ So the two sisters sent someone to tell Jesus about Lazarus; they said, “Lord, the one you love is ill.” ⁴ When Jesus heard about Lazarus’ illness, he said, “This illness will not end in the death of Lazarus. The purpose of this illness is so that people may see and know how great God is when he does wonderful things and so that I, the Son of God, also will show his great power.” ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister Mary, and Lazarus. ⁶ Nevertheless, when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, he delayed going to see him. He stayed where he was for two more days.

⁷ Then he said to disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.” ⁸ The disciples said, “Teacher, just a short while ago the Jews who oppose you wanted to murder you with stones, and now you want to go back there again!” ⁹ Jesus answered them, “You know there are twelve hours of light in a day, is that not true? The one who walks during the daytime will walk safely because he can see what is in the road. ¹⁰ However, when a person walks during the night, he may easily stumble because he cannot see.”

¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I will go there to wake him up.” ¹² The disciples said to him, “Lord,

if he has fallen asleep, he will get well.”¹³ Jesus was really speaking about Lazarus’ death, but the disciples thought that he was talking about the sleep that we all know gives us rest.¹⁴ Then he told them plainly, “Lazarus has died.”¹⁵ Jesus continued, “But, for your sakes, I am glad that I was not there when he died so that you may see why you can trust in me. Now it is time; let us go to him.”¹⁶ Then Thomas, who was called ‘The Twin,’ said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go with Jesus so that we may die with him.”

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived in Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already died and had been in the tomb for four days.¹⁸ Now Jerusalem was only about three kilometers from Bethany.¹⁹ Many Jews knew Lazarus and his family, and they came from Jerusalem to comfort Martha and Mary over their brother’s death.²⁰ When Martha heard someone say Jesus was nearby, she went out to the road to meet him. Mary did not get up but stayed in the house.²¹ When Martha saw Jesus, she said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”²² Yet, even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”²⁴ Martha said to him, “I know that he will come alive again on the day when God raises all the dead on the last day.”²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the one who raises people from the dead; I am the one who gives them life. Whoever trusts in me, even if he dies, yet he will live again.”²⁶ All those who receive life joined to me and who trust in me—they will never die. Do you believe me?”²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord! I trust what you say and I trust who you are, that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one God promised would come into the world.

²⁸ After she said that, she returned to the

house and took Mary her sister aside privately and said to her, “The Teacher is here, and he is calling for you.”²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went out to him.³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him.³¹ The people who had come to the house to comfort the sisters saw Mary get up quickly and go outside. So they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb where they had buried Lazarus in order to grieve for her brother there.

³² Mary came to the place where Jesus was; when she saw him, she fell down before him at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³³ When Jesus saw her grieving and crying, and that the mourners who had come with her were also crying, he cried out in distress deep within his spirit, and he was very upset.³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid his body?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ Jesus wept.³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how much he loved Lazarus!”³⁷ However, some others said, “Did he not open the eyes of the blind man? Why could he not have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Jesus was physically shaken and emotionally upset when he came to the tomb. It was a cave, and the entrance had been covered by a large stone.³⁹ Jesus gave a command to those standing there, “Take away the stone.” However, Martha objected, “Lord, by this time there will be a putrid odor, for he has been dead for four days.”⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you the truth when I told you that if you trusted me, you would see who God is and you would know what God can do?”

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Jesus looked up toward heaven and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

⁴² I know that you always hear me. I said

this for the sake of the people who are standing here so that they might put their trust in you and have confidence in the fact that you sent me.”⁴³ After he said that, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”⁴⁴ The man who had died came out! His hands were still wrapped and his feet were still bound with linen strips of cloth, and there was a cloth wrapped around his face as well. Jesus said to them, “Take off the strips of cloth that bind him and untie him. Let him go.”

⁴⁵ As a result, many of the Jews who had come to see Mary and who had witnessed what Jesus did, put their trust in him.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, some of the others went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered all the members of the Jewish council together. They were saying to each other, “What are we going to do? This man is performing many miracles.⁴⁸ If we allow him to keep doing them, everyone will trust in him and rebel against Rome. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our temple and our nation!”

⁴⁹ One of them on the council was Caiaphas, the high priest for that year. He said to them, “You all know nothing!⁵⁰ Do you not realize that it is better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perishes?”⁵¹ He said that, not because he thought of it himself. Instead, since he was the high priest that year, he was prophesying that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation.⁵² But he was also prophesying that Jesus would die, not just for the Jewish nation only, but also so he could gather into one nation from all the children of God, those who live in other lands everywhere.⁵³ So from that day forward, the council began to look for any way to arrest Jesus and put him to death.

⁵⁴ Because of that, Jesus no longer trav-

eled around publicly among his Jewish opponents. Instead, he left Jerusalem and, with the disciples, went to a town called Ephraim in an area near the wilderness and desert region. There he stayed with his disciples for a while.

⁵⁵ Now it was almost time for the Jewish Passover Celebration, and many worshipers went up from the country and the villages to Jerusalem. They would wash themselves in preparation, to make themselves clean according to the Jewish rules, so that they would be allowed to celebrate the Passover.⁵⁶ The worshipers who came to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival were all looking for Jesus. When they came and stood in the temple, they said to one another, “What do you think? He will not come to the Passover, will he?”⁵⁷ The Jewish chief priests and the Pharisees had issued orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, they should report it to them, so that they could arrest him.

Chapter 12

¹ Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover Festival began. Bethany was the village where Lazarus lived, the man Jesus made alive again after he had died.

² There in Bethany, they gave a dinner to honor Jesus. Martha made preparations for the dinner, and Lazarus was among those who were sitting together and eating.³ Then Mary took a bottle of expensive perfume (called nard) and, to honor Jesus, she poured it out on his feet and then wiped his feet with her hair. The fragrance of the perfume filled the entire house.

⁴ However, one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, (he was the one who broke the trust Jesus had in him, and soon he would give Jesus up to his enemies)—he objected and

said,⁵ "We should have sold this perfume for three hundred days' wages and given the money to the poor."⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor people, but because he was a thief. He kept charge of the bag that held their money, but he would take money for his own use whenever he wanted.⁷ Then Jesus said, "Leave her alone! She bought this perfume for the day when I would die and they would bury me.⁸ You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me."

⁹ A large crowd of Jews in Jerusalem heard that Jesus was in Bethany, so they went there. They came not only because Jesus was there, but also to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had made alive.¹⁰ Then the chief priests decided it was necessary to put Lazarus to death, as well,¹¹ for it was because of him that many of the Jews were no longer believing in what the chief priests were teaching; instead, they were putting their trust in Jesus.

¹² The next day the large crowd that had come for the Passover Festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.¹³ So they cut branches from palm trees and went out to welcome him as he came into the city. They were shouting, "Hosanna! Praise God! God bless the One who comes in the Name of the Lord! Welcome, King of Israel!"¹⁴ When Jesus came near to Jerusalem, he found a young donkey and sat on it, riding into the city. By doing this, he fulfilled what had been written in scripture:

¹⁵ "Do not be afraid, you who live in Jerusalem.

Look! Your King is coming.

He is riding on a donkey's colt!"

¹⁶ When this happened, his disciples did not understand that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. However, after Jesus had fin-

ished his work and had received again his full powers as God, they looked back and remembered what the prophets had written about him and what people had done to him.

¹⁷ The crowd that was following along with Jesus kept telling others what they had seen: That Jesus had called Lazarus out of the tomb and had made him alive again.¹⁸ The other crowd of people, those who went out of the city gate to meet Jesus, did so because they heard he had done great things to show them his power.¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to each other, "See! We are gaining no advantage here. Look! The whole world is following him!"

²⁰ Among those who went up to Jerusalem during the Passover Festival were some Greeks.²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in the district of Galilee. They had something to ask him; they said, "Sir, would you introduce us to Jesus?"²² So Philip reported this to Andrew, and they both went and told Jesus.²³ Jesus answered Philip and Andrew, "It is time for God to show the people everything that I, the Son of Man, have done and to tell them all that I have said.²⁴ I am telling you the truth: Unless a seed of wheat is planted in the earth and dies, it remains only one seed; but after it dies in the ground, then it will grow and produce a harvest of many seeds.²⁵ Anyone who tries to live to please himself will fail, but anyone who does not live to please himself will keep his life forever.²⁶ If anyone wants to serve me, he must also follow me because my servant must be where I am. The Father will honor everyone who serves me.

²⁷ Now my soul is greatly troubled. Should I say, 'Father, save me from this time when I will suffer and die!?' No, for this is the very reason I came into this world.

²⁸ My Father, show how powerful you are in all you have said, in all you have done,

and in all you are!"

Then God spoke from heaven, "I have already displayed my nature, my words, and my works; and I will do it again!"²⁹ The crowd that was there heard the voice of God, but some said it was just thunder. Others said an angel had spoken to Jesus.³⁰ Jesus replied to them, "The voice you heard speaking was God's voice. However, he spoke not for my benefit, but for yours!³¹ Now is the time for God to judge the world. Now is the time when he will drive out Satan, the one who rules this world.³² As for me, when people raise me high on a cross, I will draw everyone to myself."³³ He said this to let the people know how he would die.

³⁴ Someone in the crowd answered him, "We understand from the scriptures that the Messiah will live forever. So why do you say that the Son of Man will die? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"³⁵ Jesus answered, "My light will shine on you for just a little longer. Walk in the light while you have my light, or the darkness will overtake you. Those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going!"³⁶ Trust in that light while you have the light; then you will belong to the light.

After he said those things, Jesus left them and hid from them.³⁷ Although Jesus had done many miracles, most of the people did not believe what he had told them.³⁸ This was to make come true what Isaiah the prophet had written long ago:

"Lord, who has believed anything that they have heard from us?"

The Lord has shown us how he can powerfully rescue us!"³⁹ Yet, they could not trust in him for the reason that Isaiah had written:⁴⁰ "The Lord has made them so they cannot see,

and he has made them stubborn;
they cannot even see with their eyes,

If they could, they would understand;
they would repent and pray for me to forgive them.

For this reason, I cannot heal them!"

⁴¹ Isaiah wrote those words long ago because he understood that the Messiah would serve God powerfully.

⁴² Although this was true, many of the leaders of the Jewish people put their trust in Jesus. Nevertheless, they greatly feared that the Pharisees would ban them from the synagogues, so they did not speak out about trusting in Jesus.⁴³ They preferred that other people praise and respect them rather than that God would praise them.

⁴⁴ Jesus shouted out to the crowd that had gathered, "Those who put their trust in me are not only putting their trust in me but also are putting their trust in the Father who sent me.⁴⁵ When you see me, you are also seeing the one who sent me.⁴⁶ I have come into the world as the light of the world; whoever puts his trust in me will not remain in the darkness.

⁴⁷ I do not judge those who listen to my words but refuse to obey me. I did not come into the world to condemn the world.⁴⁸ Yet, there is something that will condemn those who reject me and do not follow my message. They are condemned by the message I have spoken to them.⁴⁹ When I taught about God, I was not merely saying what I thought. The Father, who sent me, gave me clear instructions on what I should say and how I should say it.

⁵⁰ I know that the Father's most important instructions are the ones that teach people how to live forever, and I have said exactly what my Father has told me to say."

Chapter 13

¹ It was now the day before the Passover

Festival was to begin. Jesus knew it was time for him to leave this world and to return to his Father. He showed how much he loved those who were with him here in this world, and he loved them until the end of his life.² Before Jesus and the disciples had their evening meal, the devil had already put the thought into the mind of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, that he would hand Jesus over to his enemies.³ Yet Jesus knew that his Father had given him complete power and authority over everything. He also knew that he himself had come from God and would soon return to God.⁴ Jesus got up from the dinner. He took off his outer clothing and wrapped a towel around his waist.⁵ He poured out some water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them dry with the towel.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus replied to him, "You do not understand now what I am doing for you, but later you will understand."⁸ Peter said, "You will never wash my feet!" Jesus replied to him, "If I do not wash you, then you have nothing to do with me."⁹ So Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, wash not only my feet! Wash my hands and my head also!"¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "One who has taken a bath needs only to wash his feet. The rest of his body is already clean. You are clean, but not all of you."¹¹ He knew who was going to hand him over. That is the reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹² After he finished washing their feet, he put his outer clothing on again. Then he sat down at his place again and said, "Do you understand what I have done for you?

¹³ You call me 'teacher' and 'Lord. You are right to say this, for that is what I am.¹⁴ If I, your teacher and Lord, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one an-

other's feet.¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow in order that you should do as I have done for you.¹⁶ I am telling you the truth: A servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who has sent him.¹⁷ If you know these things, how fortunate you will be if you do them.

¹⁸ I am not saying this about all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. However, what is written in scripture must come true: 'The one who ate my food with me as a friend, he has turned against me and treated me like an enemy.'

¹⁹ I am telling you this now before he hands me over so that when it does happen, you may believe that I am God.²⁰ I am telling you the truth: If you receive the one I send to you, you are also receiving me; and whoever receives me, is also receiving my Father, the one who sent me."

²¹ After Jesus said this, he was troubled within himself. He solemnly declared, "I am telling you the truth: One of you is going to hand me over to my enemies."²²

The disciples looked at one another. They were confused about which of them he was talking about.²³ One of the disciples, John, the one whom Jesus especially loved, was at the table next to Jesus.²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to John that he should ask Jesus which disciple he was talking about.

²⁵ So John leaned back against Jesus and asked him quietly, "Lord, who is it?"²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread after I dip it in the bowl." Then he dipped the bread and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

²⁷ As soon as Judas took the piece of bread, Satan entered in to him and took control of him. Jesus said to him, "Whatever you need to do, do it quickly."²⁸ No one else at the table knew why Jesus had said that to him.²⁹ Some thought that because Judas had the money bag, Jesus was telling

him to go and buy some things needed for the Passover Festival. Others thought Jesus was telling Judas to give something to the poor.³⁰ After receiving the bread, immediately Judas went out. It was night.

³¹ After Judas left, Jesus said, "Now God will make people know what I, the Son of Man, am doing. I, the Son of Man, will make people know what God is doing as well, and people will praise him for it.³² Since I, the Son of Man, make God known to people and since I honor him, God will also honor me. God will do this immediately.

³³ Little children, I am with you just a little while longer. You will look for me; but, just as I told the Jews, and as I am now telling you, where I am going, you cannot come.³⁴ I will give you this new command: You must love one another, just as I have loved you.³⁵ If you love one another, all people will know that you are my disciples."

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot come with me now; but you will come later."³⁷ Peter said, "Lord, why can I not come with you now? I would lay down my life for you!"³⁸ Jesus answered, "Would you really lay down your life for me, Peter? I am telling you the truth: The rooster will not crow in the morning before you will say three times that you do not know me!"

Chapter 14

¹ "Do not be upset or anxious. You are trusting in God; trust also in me.² Where my Father lives there are many places to live. If that were not true, I would have told you. I go there to prepare a place for you.³ If I am going there to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you

to be with me, so that where I am, there you may be with me.⁴ You know where I am going, and you know the way."

⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life. No one can come to the Father and live with him unless he comes through me.⁷ If you knew me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you know him and you have seen him."

⁸ Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be all we will ever want!"⁹ Jesus said to him, "Philip, I have been with you so long, and still you do not know me. Those who have seen me, have seen my Father. So why do you say 'Show us the Father'?"¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am joined to my Father and that my Father is joined to me? The things I have told you—I did not think of these things; rather, it is my Father who has sent me to tell you all of these things, for my Father is joined to me and works through me.¹¹ Trust me because I have told you that I am joined to the Father and that the Father is joined to me, or else trust me because of all the signs and mighty acts you have seen me do.¹² I am telling you the truth: Whoever trusts in me will also do the things that I do. He will do even greater works because I am going to be with the Father.¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, that I will do. I will do this in order that everyone might honor the Father and that they might know the Father because of everything that I, his Son, do.¹⁴ If you ask the Father for anything because you belong to me, I will do it.

¹⁵ If you love me, you will live as I have taught you.¹⁶ Then I will ask the Father to give you another gift, and he will send you another Helper, one who will come alongside you to be with you forever.¹⁷

He is the Spirit who tells the truth about God. The unbelieving people in this world will never welcome Him. The world cannot see him or know him. You know him because he lives with you and he will be joined to you. ¹⁸ I will not abandon you and leave you with no one to care for you; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Soon the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live. ²⁰ When you see me again, you will know that I am joined to the Father and that you are joined to me and I to you. ²¹ Everyone who has heard my commandments and obeys them, they are the ones who love me. And the ones who love me, my Father will love them, too; I will love them and I will reveal myself to them."

²² Then Judas (not Iscariot, but the other disciple with the same name) spoke to Jesus. He said, "Lord, how will you reveal yourself just to us and not to the whole world?" ²³ Jesus replied to him, "This is how you can tell whether people love me: Whether they do what I have told you to do. Any people like this, my Father will love them. He and I will come to them and live with them. ²⁴ As for those who do not love me, they will not obey what I have told them to do. The things I have told you are not things that I have decided to say on my own; instead, they are things that my Father has sent me to tell you. ²⁵ I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ The Helper, the one who comes alongside to be with you—my Father will send him in my name. He will teach you everything that you need to know. He will also cause you to remember all the things that I have told you. ²⁷ As I leave you with peace, it is my peace that I am giving to you. I give you a kind of peace no one and nothing that belongs to this world can give you. So do not be upset or anxious; and do not be afraid.

²⁸ You heard me say to you that I am going away and will later come back to you. If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going back to the Father because the Father is greater than I am. ²⁹ I have told you these things now before they happen so that, when they do happen, you will continue to trust me. ³⁰ I will not be able to talk with you much longer because the ruler of this world is coming. However, he has no power over me, ³¹ and I will do what the Father has commanded me to do. This is so that the world will know forever that I love the Father. Come, let us go from here."

Chapter 15

¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² Every branch in me that does not grow fruit—my Father cuts it off and takes it away. As for every branch that gives good fruit, he makes it clean by pruning it so that it may produce even more fruit. ³ You are already pure because of the message I spoke to you. ⁴ Remain joined to me, and I will remain joined to you. As the branch cannot bear any fruit on its own, neither can you bear fruit unless you stay joined to me and depend upon me for everything.

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain joined to me and I remain joined to you, you will bear much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing at all. ⁶ Everyone who does not stay joined to me and draw his life from me will be thrown away like a dead branch. Those branches are gathered together and thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you stay joined to me and live by my message, you can ask God for anything, and he will do it. ⁸ When you bear much fruit, it causes people to honor the Father. Then you are my disciples.

⁹ As the Father loved me, so I have loved you. Continue to allow me to love you. ¹⁰ If you obey what I tell you to do, you will continue to allow me to love you. You will be like me in this way: I obeyed what my Father required me to do, and because of my obedience, I have stayed in his love. That will be true of you, too. ¹¹ I told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and so that you may rejoice to the fullest extent. ¹² What I command you to do is this: Love each other in the way that I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than a person who gives up his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you not only listen to my commands but also live by them. ¹⁵ I no longer call you my servants, for the servant does not understand what his master is doing. I now call you friends, for everything I heard from my Father I made it all known to you so that you also could understand it. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you for a reason, so that you should go out and bear much fruit and so that your fruit should last forever. As a result, everything you ask the Father in my name, he will do for you. ¹⁷ This is what I command you to do: Love one another.

¹⁸ If the world despises you, you should realize that it hated me first. ¹⁹ If you belonged to the unbelievers in this world, the world would love you, and you would love what they love and do what they do. But you do not belong to them; instead, I chose you to come out from among them. That is the reason the unbelievers in this world despise you. ²⁰ Remember when I taught you this: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ Since they have made me suffer, you can be sure they will make you suffer also. If any of them have received my teachings and followed them, they will also follow what you teach them. ²¹ The unbelievers in this world will do horrible things to you because you repre-

sent me and because they do not know my Father, who has sent me to you. ²² If I had not come and spoken God’s message to them, they would not have been guilty of rejecting me and my message. However, now I have come and told them God’s message, and they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me also hates my Father. ²⁴ If I had not done those things among them, those things in which I showed my power, things that no one else has ever done, they would not have been guilty of sin. Yet now that they have seen me, they hate me, and they hate my Father, too. ²⁵ These words were written in their law and have now come true: ‘They hated me for no reason.’

²⁶ When the Helper comes, he is the one who will come from the Father and who will comfort you. He is the Spirit who tells the truth about God and me. He will tell everyone who I am, and he will show everyone all that I have done. ²⁷ You also must tell everyone what you know about me because you have been with me the whole time from the very first days when I began to teach the people and to do miracles.”

Chapter 16

¹ I told you these things so that you would not stumble or stop trusting in me because of the difficulties you must face. ² Difficult days are ahead. Your enemies will stop you from worshiping in the synagogues. However, something even worse will happen. The days are coming when people will put you to death and think that they are pleasing God. ³ They will do this because they have not known the Father or me. ⁴ I have told you these things so that at the time when these hardships come, you will remember that I warned you. I did

not tell you these things at the beginning because I was with you then.

⁵ "Now I am going back to the Father. He is the one who sent me. Yet none of you dares to ask me, 'Where are you going?'

⁶ Because I have said these things to you, now sorrow has filled up your hearts. ⁷ I tell you the truth, it is good for you that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Helper who comforts you will not come. If I go away, I will send him to you. ⁸ When the Helper comes, he will convict them of the sins they have committed; he will show them that they do not reach God's standard of goodness; and he promises them that God will judge them because they did what God commanded them not to do. ⁹ Their guilt from sin comes because they could not put their trust in me. ¹⁰ Their failure to measure up to God's standard of goodness is confirmed because I am going back to my Father, and you will no longer see me. ¹¹ Their final accounting will come when God brings his punishment against them for their sin. This is shown by the punishment that Satan, the prince of this world, will receive because he fought against God.

¹² I have many more things I want to tell you. However, if I tell you now, you will not be able to live well knowing these things. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you into all the truth you need to know. He will not speak from his own authority, but whatever he hears he will tell you, and he will tell you ahead of time about things that will happen. ¹⁴ The Spirit will honor me by telling you who I am and showing you what I have done. He will explain to you everything he heard from me. ¹⁵ Everything my Father has belongs to me. That is why I said that the Spirit will take whatever he receives from me and will explain it to you.

¹⁶ In a little while, you will not see me.

Then after a little while, you will see me again." ¹⁷ So some of his disciples said to one another, "What does Jesus mean when he says to us, 'In a little while, you will not see me,' and 'after a little while, you will see me again' and what does he mean by 'because I am going back to my Father'?" ¹⁸ They kept asking, "What does he mean by saying, 'after a little while'? We do not understand what he is saying."

¹⁹ Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him more questions. So he said to the disciples, "Why are you asking each other what I meant? I said that in a little while, you would not see me; and then after a little while, you would see me again. ²⁰ I am telling you the truth: You will cry and grieve, but those who belong to this world will rejoice. You will go through great sadness, but your sadness will turn into joy.

²¹ This is like a woman who is suffering the pains of labor when giving birth. After her baby is born, she forgets her anguish because of the joy she has that her child has been born into the world. ²² You, like her, have sorrow now, but I will see you again and God will give you great joy, joy no one can take from you. ²³ On that day, you will have no more questions to ask me. I am telling you the truth: Whatever you ask the Father, he will give it to you when you ask because you are joined to me. ²⁴ Up until now, you have not asked for anything like that. Ask and you will receive it, and God will give you such joy that fills everything.

²⁵ I have been speaking these things using language of parables and riddles, but there will soon be a time when I will no longer use that kind of language. Instead, I will tell you all about my Father in language that you can clearly understand. ²⁶ At that time you will make your requests to God in my name and according to God's purposes. I will not have to ask the Father

to meet your needs,²⁷ for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have put your trust in me and because you know that I came from God.²⁸ I came from the Father, and I entered this world. Now I am leaving this world, and I am going back to the Father.”

²⁹ Then his disciples said, “Finally! Now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative language.³⁰ Now we understand that you know everything. There is no need to ask you questions. This is why we gave you our trust, and we know for certain that you came from God.”

³¹ Jesus replied to them, “Do you now finally put your trust in me?³² Look! The time is coming when others will scatter you everywhere! Each one will go toward his own home, and you will leave me. However, I will not be alone because the Father is always with me.³³ I have told you these things so you may have peace in me. In the world you have trials and sorrows, but be brave! I have conquered the world!”

Chapter 17

¹ After Jesus said these things, he looked up to the sky and said, “Father, it is time for you to announce to everyone and to tell them who I, your Son, am, and to show them all that I have done. Do this so that I, your Son, may reveal you to everyone who you really are, the great King who can do anything.² Do this just as you have allowed me, your Son, to rule over all people. Father, you have done this in order that I might be able to them live forever—all whom you have given to me.³ This is everlasting life: To know you, Father—you, who are the only true God, and to know me, Jesus the Messiah, the one whom you have sent into the world.

⁴ I have brought all kinds of people to you to show them all about you. I did this by finishing the work you gave me.⁵ Father, give me honor by bringing me into your own presence, as we were before the time we created the world.

⁶ Those whom you chose from everyone in this world to belong to me—I have taught them who you really are and what you are like. They belonged to you and you have given them to me. They have believed in what you said to them, and they have obeyed it.⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.

⁸ I gave them the message that you gave me. They accepted it, and now they know for sure that I came from you, and they believe that you sent me.⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for those who belong to this world, those who continue to oppose you. I am praying for those whom you gave me because they belong to you.¹⁰ All I have belongs to you, and all you have is mine. They know who I am, and they sincerely tell the truth about who I am.

¹¹ I am not staying in the world any longer. However, they are staying in the world. I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them safe; keep them belonging to yourself by the same power that you gave to me so that they may be united together, just as we are.¹² While I was with them, I kept them safe and watched over them by your own power. Not one of them was lost, except the one whom you had destined for destruction, as the scriptures foretold long ago.

¹³ Now I am coming to you, Father. I have said these things while I am here in the world so that I may give them my complete joy.¹⁴ I have spoken your messages to them, and the world has hated them and would not listen to your message. The world hated them because, like me, they do not belong to this world, but they have

another home. ¹⁵ I am not asking for you to take them out of this world, but instead for you to protect them from the harm that the evil one can do to them. ¹⁶ They do not belong to this world, just as I do not. ¹⁷ Set them apart for yourself by teaching them the truth about yourself. Teach them what they need to know so that you can set them apart, for your messages are completely true. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. ¹⁹ I am giving myself completely to you for their sakes so that they can truly give themselves to you.

²⁰ "I am praying not only for these, but also I am praying for those who will trust in me when they hear their message. ²¹ I pray that they may all be united, just as you and I are united. Father, you are united to me, and I am to you—may they also be united to us. Do this so that the world will know you sent me. ²² I have shown them who I am, and they have seen what I have done. I have taught them this so that they may be united together, as you and I are united. ²³ I am united with them and you are united with me. I have done this so that they may be perfectly united together and so that the unbelievers may know that you sent me and that you love them, just as you love me.

²⁴ "Father, I want these whom you have given to me to be with me always where I am so that they can see the splendor and majesty you will give to me when I am with you. You do this because you have loved me from before the time we created the world.

²⁵ O Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these with me here know that you have sent me to them. ²⁶ I have made them know who you are. I will continue to do this so that you may love them like you love me and so that I may be united with them."

Chapter 18

¹ When Jesus finished his prayer, he went with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a grove of olive trees, and they entered it.

² Judas, the one who was about to hand Jesus over to his enemies, knew where the place was because Jesus often went there with his disciples. ³ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had ordered some soldiers and officers to go there with Judas. So they went to the garden with lanterns, torches, and weapons. ⁴ Jesus knew what was going to happen to him, so he went forward and asked them, "For whom are you looking?" ⁵ They replied to him, "Jesus the Nazarene." Jesus said to them, "I am that person." (Now Judas, the one who was handing him over, was standing with them.) ⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am that person," they swiftly moved back and fell to the ground. ⁷ So he asked them again, "For whom are you looking?" They answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." ⁸ Jesus replied to them, "I told you that I am that person. Since I am the one you are looking for, let these other men go. ⁹ This happened in order to fulfill the words he had said when he was praying to his Father, "I did not lose even one of those you gave me."

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter drew out a short sword and struck the high priest's servant, a man named Malchus, and cut off his right ear. ¹¹ Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath! Of course I will suffer in the way that my Father has planned for me to do."

¹² Then the group of soldiers, along with their captain and some of the temple guards, seized Jesus and tied him to prevent him from escaping. ¹³ Then they took him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year.

¹⁴ It was Caiaphas who had advised other leaders that it would be better that one man should die for the people than that all the people should perish.

¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus and so did another disciple. The other disciple was known to the high priest, so he had permission to enter the high priest's courtyard when the soldiers took Jesus. ¹⁶ Peter had to stop outside at the gate. So the other disciple went out again and spoke to the servant girl who was watching the gate, and she let Peter in. ¹⁷ That servant girl said to Peter, "You are one of the disciples of the man whom they have arrested, are you not?" He said, "No, I am not." ¹⁸ It was cold, so the high priest's servants and temple guards made a charcoal fire and were standing and warming themselves around it. Peter was also there with them. He was standing and warming himself.

¹⁹ The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and what he had been teaching them. ²⁰ Jesus replied, "I have spoken openly to everyone. I have always taught in the synagogues and in the temple, in the places where our people come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ So why are you asking me these questions? Ask the people who heard what I taught them. They know what I said." ²² When Jesus said these things, one of the temple guards standing near him struck him hard with his hand. He said, "That is not the right way to answer the high priest." ²³ Jesus replied to him, "If I had said something wrong, tell me what it was. However, if what I said was right, you should not slap me!" ²⁴ Then Annas sent Jesus, who was still tied up, to Caiaphas the high priest.

²⁵ Simon Peter was still standing and warming himself. Another person said to him, "You are one of the disciples of the man whom they have arrested, are you not?" He said, "No, I am not." ²⁶ One of

the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said to him, "Surely I saw you in the olive tree grove with the man they have arrested, did I not?" ²⁷ Peter again denied it, and immediately a rooster crowed.

²⁸ Then the soldiers led Jesus from Caiaphas' house to the headquarters of Pilate, the Roman governor. It was early morning. Pilate was not a Jew, so Jesus' accusers thought that if they entered his headquarters, they would defile themselves and be unable to celebrate the Passover Festival. So they did not go in. ²⁹ So Pilate came out to talk to them. He said, "Of what are you accusing this man?" ³⁰ "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have brought him to you!" they replied. ³¹ Then Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves, and judge him by your own law." Then the Jewish leaders said, "We want to execute him, but your Roman law prevents us from doing that." ³² They said this in order to make true what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

³³ Pilate then went back inside his headquarters. He summoned Jesus and said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" ³⁴ Jesus replied, "Are you asking because you yourself want to know, or did others tell you to ask me this question?" ³⁵ Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew! Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done wrong?" ³⁶ Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not part of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting to keep me from being handed over to my Jewish opponents, but my kingdom is not of this world." ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus replied, "Yes. The reason I was born and came into this world was to tell people the truth about God. Everyone who loves the truth

listens to me.” ³⁸ Pilate asked him, “What is true?”

After Pilate asked that question, he went outside and talked to the Jewish leaders again. He said to them, “I find he has broken no law. ³⁹ However, you Jews have a custom where every year during the Passover Festival, you ask me to release one man who is in prison. So would you like for me to release to you the King of the Jews?” ⁴⁰ They shouted again, “No, do not release this man, but release Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

Chapter 19

¹ Then Pilate sent for Jesus. He had his soldiers beat him severely using whips. ² The soldiers also twisted together a crown and they put it on his head. They also put a purple robe on him. ³ They mocked him and said, “Greetings, King of the Jews!” and they struck him over and over again.

⁴ Pilate came outside again and said to the people, “Look, I am bringing him out to you so that you can know that I find no reason to punish him.” ⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Look, here is the man!” ⁶ When the chief priests and temple guards saw him, they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him! As for me, I find no reason to punish him.” ⁷ The Jewish leaders replied to Pilate, “We have a certain law that says he ought to die because he claimed to be the Son of God.” ⁸ When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid. ⁹ He entered his headquarters once more and called the soldiers to bring Jesus back inside. Then he said to Jesus, “From where do you come?” However, Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, “Will

you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you, and I also have authority to crucify you?” ¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all, if God had not given it to you. So the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a worse sin.”

¹² From that moment on, Pilate kept trying to release Jesus. However, the Jewish leaders cried out, “If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar! Anyone who makes himself a king, stands opposed to Caesar.” ¹³ When Pilate heard that, he brought Jesus out. Then Pilate sat down before him in the judgment seat, the place where he usually pronounced verdicts. This was called “The Stone Pavement,” and in Aramaic it was “Gabbatha.”

¹⁴ Now it was the day before the Passover Festival, the day of preparation. It was almost noontime when Pilate said to the Jews, “See, here is your king!” ¹⁵ They shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Should I crucify your king?” The chief priests replied, “We have no king but Caesar!” ¹⁶ So Pilate handed Jesus over to them, and they took him away.

¹⁷ He went out, carrying his own cross by himself to the place called “The Place of a Skull,” which in Aramaic is called “Golgotha.” ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and at the same time they also nailed two other criminals to their crosses. One was on either side, with Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹ Pilate also told someone to write on a board a notice and fasten it to Jesus’ cross. It read, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’ ²⁰ Many Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in three languages: Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. ²¹ The chief priests went back to Pilate and said, “You should not have written, ‘King of the Jews’, but rather, this man

said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’” ²² Pilate replied, “You must leave the sign exactly as I have written it.”

²³ After the soldiers had put Jesus on the cross, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. However, they kept his tunic separate. This tunic had been woven from top to bottom from one piece of cloth. ²⁴ So they said to each other, “Let us not tear it. Instead, let us decide who will keep it as one piece by casting lots for the one who will get it.” This happened to make come true the scripture that said,

“They divided my clothes among them.
They cast lots for my clothing.”

²⁵ The soldiers did those things.

Jesus’ mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were all standing near his cross. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother standing there and John, the disciple whom he especially loved, standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Mother, here is the one who will act like a son to you.” ²⁷ And he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother!” So from that very moment, that disciple took her to live in his home.

²⁸ A little later, Jesus knew that everything that God sent him to do had now been done, and in order to make come true one final thing that the scriptures had foretold, he said, “I am thirsty!” ²⁹ A jar of sour wine stood there, so they took a short branch from a hyssop plant and put a sponge on it, and they dipped in the sour wine and held it up to Jesus’ mouth. ³⁰ After Jesus drank the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and died.

³¹ This was the day of preparation for the Passover (and the next day was a very special Sabbath). It was against the law to allow dead bodies to remain on the

crosses on the Sabbath, so they went to Pilate and asked him to break the legs of the three men so that the men would die quickly and their bodies would be taken down. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other, the two men who had been crucified with Jesus. ³³ When they came to Jesus, they saw he was dead already. So they did not break his legs. ³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, and right away blood and water poured out of his body. ³⁵ The one who saw this bears witness—his testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth—so that you may put your trust in Jesus. ³⁶ These things happened in order to fulfill what was written in scripture: “No one will break any of his bones.”

³⁷ And they fulfilled another scripture that read: ‘They will look on the one whom they have pierced.’

³⁸ After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, but a secret disciple because he was afraid of the Jews, went to Pilate and asked him if he might take away Jesus’ body. Pilate gave Joseph permission, so he came and took away the body of Jesus. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who had once come to Jesus at night, also came and brought with him a mixture of myrrh and aloë spices to prepare the body for burial. The spices weighed about 33 kilograms. ⁴⁰ They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it in strips of linen cloth, and they packed the wrappings full with all the spices. ⁴¹ Now in the place where Jesus was crucified was a garden, and at the edge of the garden was a new tomb in which no one had been buried. ⁴² The Passover was about to begin that evening, and they chose this tomb because it was close at hand and because they could bury Jesus quickly. So they laid Jesus there.

Chapter 20

¹ Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb very early in the day, while it was still dark. She saw that someone had moved the stone away from the tomb. ² So she ran to Jerusalem, where Simon Peter and the other disciple—the one whom Jesus loved—were staying, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we do not know where they have put him!” ³ When they heard this, Peter and the other disciple rushed out to the tomb.

⁴ They were both running, but the other disciple was faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down and looked into the tomb; he saw the strips of linen lying there, but he hesitated to go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter, who was running behind him, arrived there, but he went inside the tomb. He, too, saw the strips of linen cloth lying there, ⁷ but he also saw the cloth cover that had been on Jesus’ head, folded and put aside, separate from the linen strips. ⁸ Then the other disciple also went inside; he saw these things and began to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. ⁹ They still did not understand the scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.

¹⁰ So the disciples went back to their homes. ¹¹ Mary was left standing just outside the tomb, weeping. As she wept, she bent down and looked into the tomb. ¹² She saw two angels dressed in white robes sitting on the very place where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head, the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have put him!” ¹⁴ After she said that, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was he. ¹⁵ He said to her, “Woman,

why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?” She thought the man speaking to her was the gardener, and she said to him, “Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, “Do not touch me, for I have not yet gone up to heaven to be with my Father. Go to my disciples and tell them, ‘I am about to return to heaven to be with my Father and your Father, to the one who is my God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples and announced, “I have seen the Lord”—and she reported to them what Jesus had said to her.

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked, and the disciples were staying inside because they were afraid that the Jewish authorities might arrest them. Suddenly Jesus came and stood in the middle of their group; he said to them, “May God give you peace.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples had great joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “May God give you peace. Just as the Father sent me, now I am sending you.” ²² After he said this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of anyone, God will forgive them. If you do not forgive another’s sins, they will be held against them.”

²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who was called “The Twin,” was not with the other disciples when Jesus came to them.

²⁵ The other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” However, he said to them, “Unless I see the marks of the nails in his hands and put my fingers in the holes made by the nails, and unless I put my hand into the gaping wound on his side, I will never put my trust in him.”

²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were again inside the house, and this time Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, and he said to them all, “May God give you peace.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands, and put out your hand and place it in my side! Stop doubting that it is I; put your trust in me.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Now you believe that I have risen because you see me. Yet God gives great happiness to those who have not seen me and still believe.”

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other works of power and miracles that proved who he is. The disciples witnessed them, but they were so numerous that I have not written them all down in this book. ³¹ Nevertheless, I have written these so that you may have complete confidence that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and so that by trusting in him, you may have eternal life in his name.

Chapter 21

¹ After that, Jesus appeared to the disciples by Lake Tiberias (also known as the Sea of Galilee). He made himself known in this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called The Twin), Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee (James and John), and two other disciples, were together. ³ Simon Peter said to the others, “I am going fishing.” They said, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ In the morning as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, “My friends, do you have any fish?” They said, “No.” ⁶ He said to them, “Throw your net

out off the right side of the boat and you will find some.” They cast it as he told them, and they caught so many fish in the net that they were unable to pull the net into the boat! ⁷ John, the disciple whom Jesus especially loved, said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard him say this, he tucked up his outer garment around himself (he had worn almost nothing while working), and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples came to shore in the boat, pulling behind the net full of fish. They were not far from shore, only ninety meters away. ⁹ When they got to shore, they saw a charcoal fire ready and hot, with fish cooking on it, and there was some bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught!” ¹¹ Simon Peter got back in the boat and dragged the net to the shore, full of large fish. There were 153 of them. Even so, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast!” None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after God had brought him back from the dead.

¹⁵ When they finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others love me?” Peter said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ Jesus said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He replied, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Be a shepherd to my sheep.” ¹⁷ Jesus said to him a third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because Jesus asked him three times, “Do you love me?” Peter said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” ¹⁸ I am telling

you the truth: When you were young, you put your own clothes on and you walked about wherever you wanted to go. However, when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone will dress you and will lead you where you do not want to go.”¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate how Peter would die in order to honor God. Then Jesus said to him, “Follow me.”

²⁰ Peter turned around and saw John, the disciple whom Jesus especially loved following them. He was the one who had leaned close to Jesus at the table and said, “Lord, who is going to hand you over to your enemies?”²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what is going to happen to this man?”²² Jesus said to him, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, that is not your concern! You follow me.”²³ So the report circulated among the brothers and sisters that this disciple was not going to die. Yet Jesus did not say that he would not die. He said only, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, that is not your concern!”

²⁴ I, John, am the disciple who is bearing witness about all these things, and I have written them down. We know that his testimony is true.

²⁵ Jesus did many other things, so many that if they were all written down, I suppose the whole world could not contain the books that would be written.

ACTS

Chapter 1

¹ Dear Theophilus,

In my first book that I wrote for you, I wrote about many of the things that Jesus did and taught ² until the day on which God took him up to heaven. Before he went to heaven, he told the apostles by the power of the Holy Spirit the things that he wanted them to know. ³ After he had suffered and died on the cross, he became alive again. As he appeared often during the next forty days, the apostles saw him many times. He proved to them in many ways that he was alive again. He talked with them about how God would rule the lives of people in his kingdom.

⁴ One time while he was with them, he told them, "Do not leave Jerusalem. Instead, wait here until my Father sends his Spirit to you, as he promised to do. You have heard me speak to you about that. ⁵ John baptized people in water, but after a few days God will baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

⁶ One day when the apostles met together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you now become the king of Israel?" ⁷ He replied to them, "You do not need to know the time periods and the days when that will happen. My Father alone has decided when that will happen. ⁸ But the Holy Spirit will make you strong when he comes to you. Then you will tell people about me in Jerusalem and in the regions of Judea, Samaria, and all over the world." ⁹ After he said that, he rose up into heaven, and a cloud kept them from seeing him any longer.

¹⁰ While the apostles were still staring toward the sky as he was going up, suddenly

two men wearing white clothes stood beside them. They were angels. ¹¹ One of them said, "You men from Galilee, you do not need to stand here any longer looking up at the sky! Some day this same Jesus, whom God took from you up to heaven, will come back to earth. He will return in the same manner as you just now saw him go when he went up to heaven."

¹² Then after the two angels left, the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which was a short distance from Jerusalem. ¹³ After they entered the city, they went into the upstairs room in the house where they were staying. Those who were there included Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, another James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of another man named James. ¹⁴ All these apostles began to pray together all the time. Others who prayed with them included the women who had been with Jesus, Mary who was Jesus' mother, and his younger brothers.

¹⁵ During those days Peter stood up among his fellow believers. There was a group of about 120 followers of Jesus at that place. He said, ¹⁶ "My brothers, there are words about Judas that King David wrote long ago. These words had to come true, and they did, because the Holy Spirit told David what to write. ¹⁷ Although Judas was an apostle like us, he guided the people who arrested Jesus and killed him."

¹⁸ Now this man earned money by doing this evil. With this money he bought a field. Then he fell there onto the ground, his body split wide open, and all his intestines fell out. ¹⁹ All the people who reside in Jerusalem heard about that, so they called that field according to their own Aramaic language, Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood," because it was where someone died.

²⁰ Peter also said, "I see that what happened to Judas is like what the Psalms says: 'May his family line die out; may there be no one left in it at all.' And it seems that these other words that David wrote also refer to Judas: 'Let someone else take over his work as a leader.'"

²¹ "So it is necessary for us apostles to choose a man to replace Judas. He must be one who was with us all the time when the Lord Jesus was with us." ²² That is, from the time when John the Baptizer baptized Jesus until the day when Jesus left us and rose up to heaven. The man to replace Judas must be one who saw Jesus alive again after he died."

²³ So the apostles and other believers suggested the names of two men. One man was Joseph Barsabbas, who also had the name Justus. The other man was Matthias.

²⁴⁻²⁵ Then they prayed: "Lord Jesus, Judas stopped being an apostle. He sinned and went to the place where he deserves to be. You know what every man thinks in his own heart, so please show us which of these two men you have chosen to take the place of Judas." ²⁶ Then they cast lots to choose between the two of them, and the lot fell for Matthias, and he became an apostle along with the other eleven apostles.

the head of each of the believers.⁴ Then all of the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages, in the way that the Spirit made each one able to.

⁵ At that time many Jews were staying in Jerusalem to celebrate the Pentecost festival. They were Jewish people who always worshiped God. They had come from many different countries.⁶ When they heard the loud noise like a wind, a crowd of them came together at the place where the believers were. The crowd was amazed because each of them was hearing one of the believers speaking in his own language.⁷ They were completely amazed, and they said to each other, "All these men who are speaking have come from Galilee, so how can they know our languages?"⁸ But all of us hear them speaking our own language that we learned from birth!⁹ Some of us are from the regions of Parthia and Media and Elam, and others of us are from the regions of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia.¹⁰ There are some people there from Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the regions in Libya that are near the city of Cyrene. There are others of us who are here visiting Jerusalem from Rome.¹¹ They include native Jews as well as non-Jews who believe what we Jews believe. And others of us are from the Island of Crete and from the region of Arabia. So how is it that these people are speaking our languages about the great things God has done?"¹² The people were amazed and did not know what to think about what was happening. So they asked one another, "What does this mean?"¹³ But some of them made fun of what they saw. They said, "These people are talking like this because they have drunk too much new wine!"

¹⁴ So Peter stood up with the other eleven

Chapter 2

¹ On the day when the Jews were celebrating the Pentecost festival, the believers were all together in one place in Jerusalem. ² Suddenly they heard a noise coming from the sky that sounded like a strong wind. Everyone in the entire house where they were sitting heard the noise.

³ Then they saw what looked like flames of fire. These flames separated from one another, and one of them came down on

apostles and spoke loudly to the crowd of people; he said, "You men of Judea and you others who are staying in Jerusalem, listen to me, all of you, and I will explain to you what is happening! ¹⁵ Some of you think that we are drunk, but we are not drunk. It is only nine o'clock in the morning, and people here never get drunk at this time of the day! ¹⁶ Instead, what has happened to us is the miraculous thing that the prophet Joel wrote about long ago. He wrote:

God says, ¹⁷ 'During the last days, I will give my Holy Spirit to all people, and your sons and daughters will tell people my messages, and I will give visions to the young men and I will give dreams to the old men. ¹⁸ During those days I will give my Holy Spirit to my servants, so they can tell people my messages. ¹⁹ I will cause amazing things to happen in the sky, and I will do miracles on the earth to show that important and amazing things will happen. Here on the earth there will be blood, fire, and smoke everywhere. ²⁰ In the sky the sun will appear dark to people and the moon will appear red to them. Those things will happen before I, the Lord God, will come to judge everyone. ²¹ And I will save all those who call to me to help them.'"

²² Peter continued speaking, "My fellow Israelites, listen to me! When Jesus from Nazareth lived among you, God proved to you that he had sent him by making him able to do many amazing miracles that showed that he was from God. You yourselves know that this is true. ²³ Even though you knew that, you handed this man Jesus over into the hands of his enemies. However, God had already planned for that, and he knew all about it. Then you urged men who do not obey God's law to kill Jesus. They did that by nailing him to a cross. ²⁴ He died, but God raised him

up again, because it was not possible for him to remain dead. God caused Jesus to become alive again."

²⁵ "Long ago King David wrote what the Messiah said,

I knew that you, Lord God, would always hear me. You are right beside me, so I will not be afraid of those who want to harm me. ²⁶ Because of that my heart was glad and I rejoiced; even though I will die one day, I know that you will always help me. ²⁷ You will not make me remain in the place where the dead are. You will not even let my body waste away, because I am devoted to you and always obey you. ²⁸ You have shown me how to become alive again. You will make me very happy because you will be with me forever."

²⁹ Peter continued, "My fellow Jews, I am sure that our forefather, King David, died, and that the people buried him. And the place where they buried his body is still here today. ³⁰ King David was a prophet and he knew that God promised to him that one of his descendants would become king. ³¹ A long time ago, David knew what God would do. He said that God would cause Jesus the Messiah to live again after he died. God would not allow him to remain in a grave, and he would not let his body waste away."

³² "After this man Jesus had died, God caused him to become alive again. All of us, his followers, know this because we saw him. ³³ God has greatly honored Jesus by placing him at his right hand to rule with him, his Father. He has given us the Holy Spirit, and that is what you are seeing and hearing here today. ³⁴ We know that David was not speaking about himself because David did not go up into heaven as Jesus did. Besides that, David himself said this about Jesus the Messiah:

The Lord God said to my Lord the Mes-

siah, 'Rule here at my right hand,³⁵ while I completely defeat your enemies.'"

³⁶ Peter ended by saying, "So I want you and all other Israelites to know that God made Jesus both Lord and Messiah, this same Jesus whom you had nailed to a cross and killed."

³⁷ When the people heard what Peter and the other apostles said, they knew they had done wrong. The people said to them, "What should we do?"

³⁸ Peter answered them, "Each of you should turn away from your sinful behavior. If you now believe in Jesus we will baptize you. God will forgive your sins, and he will give you his Holy Spirit.³⁹ God has promised to do this for you and your children, and for all others who believe in Jesus, even those who live far away from here. The Lord our God will give his Holy Spirit to everyone whom he calls to become his people!"⁴⁰ Peter spoke much more and spoke strongly to them. He told them, "Ask God to save you so that he will not punish you when he punishes these evil people who have rejected Jesus!"

⁴¹ So the people who believed Peter's message were baptized. There were about three thousand of those who joined the group of believers that day.⁴² They continually obeyed what the apostles taught. They met many times together with the other believers and they ate a meal and prayed together every day.

⁴³ All the people who were in Jerusalem respected and honored God very much because the apostles were doing many kinds of miraculous things.⁴⁴ All of those who believed in Jesus believed the same things and regularly met together. They also kept sharing everything that they had with one another.⁴⁵ From time to time some of them sold some of their land and some of the other things that they

owned, and they gave some of the money to others among them, according to what they needed.⁴⁶ Every day they gathered in the temple area, and then they would have meals together in their homes. They were happy when they were eating together, and they shared what they had with one another.⁴⁷ As they did so, they kept praising God, and all the other people in Jerusalem respected them. As those things were happening, every day the Lord Jesus increased the number of people who were being saved from the punishment of their sins.

Chapter 3

¹ One day Peter and John were going to the temple courtyard. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, at the time when people prayed there.² There was a man there who had not been able to walk from the time he was born. He was sitting by the gate called Beautiful Gate, at the entrance to the temple area. People carried him there every day, so that he could ask those who were entering the temple courtyard to give him some money.

³ As Peter and John were about to enter the temple courtyard, he began to ask them to give him some money.⁴ As Peter and John looked directly at him, Peter said to him, "Look at us!"⁵ So he looked directly at them, expecting to get some money from them.⁶ Then Peter said to him, "I do not have any money, but what I can do I will do for you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth you are healed. Get up and walk!"⁷ Then Peter grasped the man's right hand and helped him to stand up. That moment the man's feet and ankles became strong.⁸ He jumped up and began to walk! Then he entered the temple area with Peter and John, walking and leaping and praising God!

⁹ All the people in the temple saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰ They recognized that he was the man who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate in the temple courtyard and ask people for money! So all the people there were greatly amazed at what had happened to him. ¹¹ As the man clung to Peter and John, all the people were so surprised that they did not know what to think! So they ran to them at the place in the temple courtyard that is called Solomon's Porch.

¹² When Peter saw the people, he said to them, "Fellow Israelites, you should not be surprised about what has happened to this man! Why do you look at us as though we had power by ourselves to make this man walk? ¹³ So I will tell you what is really happening. Our ancestors, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, worshiped God. And now God has greatly honored Jesus. Your leaders brought Jesus to the governor, Pilate, so that his soldiers would execute him. You were the ones who rejected Jesus in the presence of Pilate, after Pilate had decided that he should release Jesus. ¹⁴ Although Jesus was God's own Messiah of Israel, the Righteous One, you asked for a killer to be set free instead of him! ¹⁵ God considers that you killed Jesus, the one who gives people eternal life. But God has caused him to become alive again. We saw Jesus many times after he became alive again. ¹⁶ It is because this man trusts in Jesus that he is strong again and able to walk in front of you all."

¹⁷ "Now, my fellow countrymen, I know that you and your leaders killed Jesus because you did not know that he was the Messiah. ¹⁸ However, God predicted long ago that people would put Jesus to death. God told all the prophets to write what people would do to the Messiah. They wrote that the Messiah, whom God would send, would suffer and die. ¹⁹ So turn

away from your sinful lives and ask God to help you do what pleases him, in order that he may completely forgive you for your sins, and in order that he may strengthen you. ²⁰ If you do that, there will be times when you will know that the Lord God is helping you. And some day he will again send back to earth the Messiah, whom he has given to you. That person is Jesus. ²¹ Jesus will certainly stay in heaven until the time when God will cause all that he has created to become new. Long ago God promised to do that, and he chose holy prophets to tell that to people. ²² For example, the prophet Moses said this about the Messiah: 'The Lord your God will send a prophet like me from among you. You must listen to everything he says to you. ²³ Those who do not listen to that prophet and obey him will no longer belong to God's people, and God will destroy them.'" ²⁴ Peter continued, "All the prophets have told about what would happen during these days. Those prophets include Samuel and all the others who later also spoke about these events before they happened. ²⁵ When God strongly promised to bless our ancestors, he also surely promised to bless you. He said to Abraham about the Messiah, 'I will bless all the people groups on the earth as a result of what your descendant will do.'" ²⁶ Peter concluded, "So when God sent Jesus to the earth to serve him as Messiah, he sent him first to you Israelites to bless you, in order to stop you doing what is wicked."

Chapter 4

¹ Meanwhile, there were some priests in the temple courtyard. There was also the officer in charge of the temple guard, and some members of the Sadducee group. All these men came to Peter and John while

the two of them were speaking to the people.² These men were very angry because the two apostles were teaching the people about Jesus. What they were telling them was that God caused Jesus to become alive again after he had been killed.³ So these men arrested Peter and John and put them in jail. The Jewish council had to wait until the next day to question Peter and John, because it was already evening.⁴ However, many people who had heard Peter speak put their faith in Jesus. The number of men who believed in Jesus increased to about five thousand.

⁵ The next day the high priest called the other chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and the other members of the Jewish council, and they gathered together in one place in Jerusalem.⁶ Annas, the former high priest, was there. Also there were Caiaphas the new high priest, John and Alexander, and other men who were related to the high priest.⁷ They commanded guards to bring Peter and John into the room, and then they asked Peter and John, "Who gave you power to heal the man that could not walk?"

⁸ As the Holy Spirit gave Peter power, Peter said to them, "You fellow Israelites who rule us, and all of you other elders, listen to me!⁹ Today you are questioning us about a good deed we did for a man who could not walk, and you ask us how he became healed. So let me tell you and all other Israelites this:¹⁰ It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that this man was healed, so that he is now able to stand before you. It was you who nailed Jesus to a cross and killed him, but God caused him to become alive again.

¹¹ Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the one of whom the scriptures speak:

"The stone that the builders threw away has become the most important stone in the building."¹² Only Jesus can save us,

for God has given no other man in the world to us who can save us from the guilt of our sins!"

¹³ The Jewish leaders realized that Peter and John were not afraid of them. They also learned that these two men were ordinary people who had not studied in schools. So the leaders were amazed. They knew that these men had spent time with Jesus.¹⁴ They also saw the man who had been healed standing there with the Peter and John, so they were not able to say anything against them.

¹⁵ The Jewish leaders told guards to take Peter, John, and the healed man outside of the room where they were meeting. After they did so, the leaders talked with each other about Peter and John.¹⁶ They said, "There is nothing that we can do to punish these two men! Everyone who is living in Jerusalem knows that they have done an amazing miracle, so we cannot tell people that it did not happen!¹⁷ However, we must not allow other people to hear what they have been teaching about this Jesus. So we must tell these men that we will punish them if they continue to tell other people about the one who they say gave them the power to heal this man."¹⁸ So the Jewish leaders told the guards to bring the two apostles into the room again. After the guards had done so, they told them both that they should no longer speak or teach about Jesus to anyone.

¹⁹ But Peter and John said, "Would God think that it is right for us to obey you and not to obey him? We will let you decide what you think is right.²⁰ But as for us, we cannot obey you. We will not stop telling people about the things that we have seen Jesus do and what we have heard him teach."

²¹ Then the Jewish leaders again told Peter and John not to disobey them, but they decided not to punish them, because all

the people in Jerusalem were praising God about what had happened to the man that could not walk.²² He was more than forty years old, and he was not able to walk since the day that he was born.

²³ After Peter and John left the council, they went to the other believers and told them everything that the chief priests and Jewish elders had said to them.²⁴ When the believers heard this, they all agreed as they prayed to God together, "O Lord! You made the sky, the earth and the oceans, and everything in them.²⁵ The Holy Spirit caused our ancestor, King David, who served you, to write these words:

'Why did the people groups of the world become angry

and the Israelite people plan uselessly against God?

²⁶ The kings in the world prepared to fight God's Ruler,

and the rulers joined with them

to oppose the Lord God and the one whom he had chosen to be the Messiah.'

²⁷ It is true! Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the non-Jews and the Israelite people, came in this city against Jesus, whom you chose to serve you as the Messiah.²⁸ You allowed them to do this because it was what you decided long ago would happen."

²⁹ "So now, Lord, listen to what they are saying about how they will punish us! Help us who serve you to speak about Jesus to everyone!³⁰ Use your power to do great miracles of healing, signs and wonders in the name of your holy servant, Jesus!"

³¹ When the believers had finished praying, the place where they were meeting shook. The Holy Spirit gave them all power to boldly speak the words that God

told them to speak, and this is what they did.

³² The group of people who believed in Jesus were in complete agreement about what they thought and what they wanted. Not one of them said that he alone owned anything. Instead, they shared with one another everything that they had.³³ The apostles continued to strongly tell others that God had caused the Lord Jesus to become alive again. And God was helping all the believers very much.³⁴⁻³⁵ Some of the believers who owned land or houses sold their property. Then they would bring the money for what they sold and they would give it to the apostles. Then the apostles would give money to any believer who needed it. So all the believers had what they needed to live on.

³⁶ Now there was a man named Joseph, who belonged to the tribe of Levi, and who came from the Island of Cyprus. The apostles called him Barnabas; in the language of the Jews that name means a person who always encourages others.³⁷ He sold a field and brought the money to the apostles for them to give to other believers.

Chapter 5

¹ Now there was one of the believers whose name was Ananias, and whose wife's name was Sapphira. He also sold some land.² He kept for himself some of the money he had received for the land, and his wife knew that he had done that. Then he brought the rest of the money and presented it to the apostles.

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, you let Satan completely control you so that you tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. Why did you do such a terrible thing? You have kept for yourself some of the money you received for selling the land. You did not give us

all of it. ⁴ Before you sold that land, you truly owned it. And after you sold it, the money was still yours. So why did you ever think about doing this wicked thing? You were not trying to deceive only us! No, you tried to deceive God himself!" ⁵ When Ananias heard these words, immediately he fell down dead. And all who heard about Ananias' death became terrified. ⁶ Some young men came forward, wrapped his body in a sheet, and carried it out and buried it.

⁷ About three hours later, his wife came in, but she did not know what had happened.

⁸ Then Peter showed her the money that Ananias had brought and asked her, "Tell me, is this the amount of money you two received for the land you sold?" She said, "Yes, that is what we received." ⁹ So Peter said to her, "You both did a terrible thing! You two agreed to try to deceive the Spirit of the Lord! Listen! Do you hear the footsteps of the men who buried your husband? They are right outside this door, and they will carry you out, too!" ¹⁰ Immediately Sapphira fell down dead at Peter's feet. Then the young men came in. When they saw that she was dead, too, they carried her body out and buried it beside her husband's body.

¹¹ All the believers in Jerusalem became greatly frightened because of what God had done to Ananias and Sapphira. And everyone else who heard about these things also became greatly frightened.

¹² God was enabling the apostles to do many amazing miracles that showed the truth of what they were preaching among the people. All the believers were meeting together regularly in the temple courtyard at the place called Solomon's Porch.

¹³ All of the other people who had not believed in Jesus were afraid to be with the believers. However, those people continued to greatly respect the believers. ¹⁴

Many more men and women started believing in the Lord Jesus, and they joined the group of believers. ¹⁵ As a result, people were bringing those who were sick into the streets and laying them on stretchers and mats, in order that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them and heal them. ¹⁶ Large crowds of people were also coming to the apostles from the towns near Jerusalem. They were bringing the sick and those who were being tormented by evil spirits, and God healed all of them.

¹⁷ Then the high priest and all who were with him—they were all members of the Sadducee group—became very jealous of the apostles. ¹⁸ So they commanded the temple guards to arrest the apostles and to put them in the public jail. ¹⁹ But during the night an angel from the Lord God opened the jail doors and brought the apostles outside. Then the angel said ²⁰ to the apostles, "Go to the temple courtyard, stand there, and tell the people all this message of eternal life." ²¹ After hearing this, the apostles entered the temple courtyard about dawn and began to teach the people again about Jesus. Meanwhile, the high priest and those who were with him summoned the other Jewish council members. Together they were all the leaders of Israel. After they had gathered together, they sent guards to the jail to bring in the apostles. ²² But when the guards arrived at the jail, they discovered that the apostles were not there. So they returned to the council and reported, ²³ "We saw that the jail doors were very securely locked, and the guards were standing at the doors. But when we opened the doors and went in to get those men, none of them was inside the jail."

²⁴ When the captain of the temple guards and the chief priests heard that, they became greatly confused, and they wondered where all these events would lead.

²⁵ Then someone came and reported to them, "Listen to this! Right now the men whom you put in jail are standing in the temple courtyard, and they are teaching the people!" ²⁶ So the captain of the temple guards went to the temple courtyard with the officers, and they brought the apostles back to the council room. But they did not treat them roughly, because they were afraid that the people would kill them by throwing stones at them.

²⁷ After the captain and his officers had brought the apostles to the council room, they commanded them to stand in front of the council members, and the high priest questioned them. ²⁸ He said to them, "We commanded you not to teach people about that man Jesus! But you have disobeyed us, and you have taught people all over Jerusalem about him! Furthermore, you are trying to make it seem that we are the ones who are guilty for that man's death!" ²⁹ But Peter, speaking for himself and the other apostles, replied, "We have to obey what God commands us to do, not what you people tell us to do! ³⁰ You are the ones who killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross! But God, whom our ancestors worshiped, caused Jesus to become alive again after he died. ³¹ God has honored Jesus more than anyone. He has made him the one to save us and rule over us. He has allowed us Israelites to stop sinning, so that he might forgive us for our sins. ³² We tell people about these things that we know happened to Jesus. The Holy Spirit, whom God has sent to us who obey him, is also confirming that these things are true." ³³ When the council members heard this, they became very angry with the apostles, and they wanted to kill them.

³⁴ But there was a council member named Gamaliel. He was a member of the Pharisee group. He taught people the Jewish laws, and all the Jewish people respected

him. He stood up in the council and told the guards to take the apostles out of the room for a short time. ³⁵ After the guards had taken the apostles out, he said to the other council members, "Fellow Israelites, you must think carefully about what you want to do to these men. ³⁶ Some years ago a man named Theudas rebelled against the government. He told people that he was an important person, and about four hundred men joined him. But he was killed, and all those who had been accompanying him were scattered. So they were not able to do anything that they had planned. ³⁷ After that, during the time when they were writing down names of the people in order to tax them, a man named Judas from the region of Galilee rebelled and persuaded some people to follow him. But he was killed, too, and all those who had accompanied him went off in different directions. ³⁸ So now I say this to you: Do not harm these men! Release them! I say this because if the things that are happening now are just something that humans have planned, someone will stop them. They will fail. ³⁹ But if God has commanded them to do these things, you will not be able to stop them, because you will find out that you are working against God!" The other members of the council accepted what Gamaliel said. ⁴⁰ They told the temple guards to bring the apostles and beat them. So the guards brought them into the council room and beat them. Then the council members commanded them not to speak to people about Jesus any more, and they released the apostles.

⁴¹ So the apostles went out from the council. They were rejoicing because they knew God had honored them by letting people disgrace them because they were following Jesus. ⁴² Every day after that, the apostles went to the temple area and to various people's houses, and they continued teaching people and telling them

that Jesus is the Christ.

Chapter 6

¹ During that time, many more people were becoming believers. The non-native Jews began to complain about the native born Israelites, because the widows among them were not receiving their fair share of food every day.

² So, after the twelve apostles had heard what they were saying, they summoned all the other believers in Jerusalem to meet together. Then the apostles said to them, "We would not be doing right if we stopped preaching and teaching God's message in order to distribute food to people! ³ So, fellow believers, carefully choose seven men from among you, men whom you know that the Spirit of God directs and who are very wise. Then we will instruct them to do this work. ⁴ As for us, we will keep on using our time to pray and to preach and teach the message about Jesus."

⁵ What the apostles recommended pleased all of the other believers. So they chose Stephen, a man who strongly believed in God and whom the Holy Spirit controlled completely. They also chose Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, who was from the city of Antioch. Nicolas had accepted the Jewish religion before he had believed in Jesus. ⁶ The believers brought these seven men to the apostles. Then the apostles prayed for those men and placed their hands on the heads of each one of them to cause them to do that work.

⁷ So the believers continued to tell many people the message from God. The number of people in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus was increasing greatly. Among them were many Jewish priests who were

following the message about how they should trust in Jesus.

⁸ God was giving Stephen power to do many amazing miracles among the people that showed that the message about Jesus was true. ⁹ However, some people opposed Stephen. They were Jews from a group that regularly met together in a synagogue that was called the Freedmen's Synagogue, and also people from the cities of Cyrene and Alexandria and from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. They all began to argue with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they were not able to prove that what he said was wrong, because God's Spirit enabled him to speak very wisely.

¹¹ So they secretly persuaded some men to falsely accuse Stephen. Those men said, "We heard him say bad things about Moses and God." ¹² So they made the other Jewish people angry at Stephen, including the elders and the teachers of the Jewish laws. Then they all seized Stephen and took him to the Jewish council. ¹³ They also brought in some men and paid them money so they would give false testimony. They said, "This fellow keeps saying bad things about this holy temple and about the laws that Moses received from God. ¹⁴ What we mean is that we have heard him say that this Jesus from the town of Nazareth will destroy this temple and will tell us to obey different customs than Moses taught our ancestors."

¹⁵ All the people in the council room stared at Stephen and saw that his face resembled the face of an angel.

Chapter 7

¹ Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are the things that these people are saying about you true?" ² Stephen replied, "Fellow Jews and respected leaders, please lis-

ten to me! The glorious God whom we worship appeared to our ancestor Abraham while he was still living in the region of Mesopotamia, before he moved to the city of Haran.³ God said to him, ‘Leave this land where you and your relatives are living, and go into the land which I will direct you to.’⁴ So Abraham left that land, which was also called Chaldea, and he arrived in Haran and lived there. After his father died, God told him to move to this land in which you and I are now living.

⁵ At that time God did not give Abraham any land to own here, not even a small plot of this land. But God promised that he would later give this land to him and his descendants, and that it would always belong to them. However, at that time Abraham did not have any children who would inherit it.

⁶ Later God told Abraham, ‘Your descendants will go and live in a foreign country. They will live there for four hundred years, and during that time their leaders will mistreat your descendants and force them to work as slaves.⁷ ‘But I will punish the people who make them work as slaves. After that, your descendants will leave that land, and they will come and worship me in this land.’

⁸ Then God commanded that every male in Abraham’s household and all of his male descendants should be circumcised to show that they all belonged to God. Later Abraham’s son, Isaac, was born, and when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. Later Isaac’s son, Jacob, was born. Jacob was the father of the twelve men whom we Jews call the patriarchs, our forefathers.

⁹ You know that Jacob’s older sons became jealous because their father favored their younger brother Joseph. So they sold him to merchants, who took him to Egypt, where he became a slave. But God

helped Joseph;¹⁰ He protected him whenever people caused him to suffer. He enabled Joseph to be wise, and he caused Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to think well of Joseph. So Pharaoh appointed him to rule over Egypt and to look after all of Pharaoh’s property.

¹¹ While Joseph was doing that work, there was a time when there was very little food in Egypt and also in Canaan. People were suffering. At that time Jacob and his sons in Canaan also could not find enough food.¹² When Jacob heard people report that there was grain that people could buy in Egypt, he sent Joseph’s older brothers to go there to buy grain. They went and bought grain from Joseph, but they did not recognize him. Then they returned home.¹³ When Joseph’s brothers went to Egypt the second time, they again bought grain from Joseph. But this time he told them who he was. And so Pharaoh learned that Joseph’s people were Hebrews and that those men who had come from Canaan were his brothers.¹⁴ Then after Joseph sent his brothers back home, they told their father Jacob that Joseph wanted him and his entire family to come to Egypt. At that time Jacob’s family consisted of seventy-five people.¹⁵ So when Jacob heard that, he and all his family went to live in Egypt. Later on, Jacob died there, and our other ancestors, his sons, also died there.¹⁶ Their bodies were brought back to our land and were buried in the tomb that Abraham had bought from Hamor’s sons in the city of Shechem.

¹⁷ Our ancestors had become very numerous when it was almost time for God to rescue them from Egypt, as he had promised Abraham that he would do.¹⁸ Another king had begun to rule in Egypt. He did not know that Joseph had greatly helped the people of Egypt, long before his own

time. ¹⁹ That king cruelly tried to get rid of our ancestors. He oppressed them and caused them to suffer greatly. He even commanded them to throw their new-born babies outside their homes so that they would die.

²⁰ During that time Moses was born, and God saw that he was a very beautiful child. So his parents secretly cared for him in their house for three months. ²¹ Then they had to put him outside the house, but Pharaoh's daughter found him and cared for him as though he were her own son. ²² Moses was taught all the learning that the people in Egypt knew, and when he grew up, he spoke and did things powerfully.

²³ One day when Moses was about forty years old, he decided that he would go and visit his relatives, the Israelites. ²⁴ He saw an Egyptian mistreating one of the Israelites. So he went over to help the Israelite man, and he avenged the Israelite man by killing the Egyptian. ²⁵ Moses thought that his fellow Israelites would understand that God had sent him to free them from being slaves. But they did not understand. ²⁶ The next day, Moses saw two Israelite men fighting each other. He tried to make them stop fighting by saying to them, 'Men, you two are fellow Israelites! Why are you hurting each other?' ²⁷ But the man who was injuring the other man pushed Moses away and said to him, 'No one appointed you ruler and judge over us!' ²⁸ Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹ When Moses heard that, he fled from Egypt to Midian land. He lived there for some years. He got married, and he and his wife had two sons.

³⁰ One day forty years later, the Lord God appeared as an angel to Moses. He appeared in the flame of a bush that was burning in the desert near Mount Sinai. ³¹ When Moses saw it, he was amazed, be-

cause the bush was not burning up. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord God say to him, ³² 'I am the God whom your ancestors worshiped. I am the God that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob worship.' Moses was so afraid that he began to shake. He was afraid to look at the bush any longer. ³³ Then the Lord God said to him, 'Take your sandals off to show that you honor me. Because I am here, the place where you are standing is especially mine. ³⁴ I have certainly seen how the people of Egypt are continually causing my people to suffer. I have heard my people when they groan because of it. So I have come down to rescue them from Egypt. Now get ready, because I am going to send you back to Egypt.'

³⁵ This Moses is the one who had tried to help our Israelite people, but whom they rejected by saying, 'No one appointed you ruler and judge!' Moses is the one whom God himself sent to rule them and to free them from being slaves. He is the one whom an angel in the bush commanded to do that. ³⁶ Moses is the one who led our ancestors out from Egypt. He did many kinds of miracles in Egypt in order to show that God was with him, at the Sea of Reeds, and during the forty years that the Israelite people lived in the wilderness. ³⁷ This Moses is the one who said to the Israelite people, 'God will cause another man from among your own people to be a prophet like me for you.' ³⁸ It was this man Moses who was among the Israelites who were together in the wilderness; he was with the angel who had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. It is Moses to whom God had the angel on Mount Sinai give him our laws, and he was the one who told our ancestors what the angel had said. He was the one who received from God words that tell us how to live eternally and passed them on to us.

³⁹ However, our ancestors did not want to obey Moses. Instead, they rejected him as their leader and wanted to return to Egypt. ⁴⁰ So they told his older brother Aaron, ‘Make idols for us who will be our gods to lead us. As for that fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him!’ ⁴¹ So they made an image that looked like a calf. Then they offered sacrifices to honor that idol, and they sang and danced because of what they themselves had made. ⁴² So God stopped correcting them. He abandoned them to worship the sun, moon and stars in the sky. This agrees with the words that one of the prophets wrote:

God said, ‘You Israelite people, when you repeatedly killed animals and offered them as sacrifices during those forty years that you were in the wilderness, were you offering them to me? ⁴³ On the contrary, you carried with you from place to place the tent that contained the idol representing the god Molech that you worshiped. You also carried with you the image of the star called Rephan. Those were idols that you had made, and you worshiped them instead of me. So I will cause you to be taken away far from your homes to regions even farther than Babylon country.’

⁴⁴ “While our ancestors were in the desert, they worshiped God at the sacred tent that showed that he was there with them. They had made the tent exactly like God had commanded Moses to make it. It was exactly like the model that Moses had seen when he was up on the mountain. ⁴⁵ Later on, other ancestors of ours carried that tent with them when Joshua led them into this land. That was during the time that they took this land for themselves, when God forced the people who previously lived here to leave. So the Israelites were able to possess this land. The tent

remained in this land and was still here when King David ruled. ⁴⁶ David pleased God, and he asked God to let him build a house where he and all of our Israelite people could worship God. ⁴⁷ But instead, God told David’s son Solomon to build a house where people could worship him.”

⁴⁸ ”However, we know that God is greater than everything, and he does not live in houses that people have made. It is like the prophet Isaiah wrote:

⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰ God said, “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. I myself have made everything both in heaven and on the earth. So you human beings cannot make a place good enough for me to live in!”

⁵¹ ”You people are extremely stubborn toward him! You are exactly like your ancestors! You always resist the Holy Spirit, just as they did! ⁵² Your ancestors caused every prophet to suffer. They even killed those who long ago announced that the Christ would come, the one who always did what pleased God. And the Christ has come! He is the one whom you recently turned over to his enemies and insisted that they kill him! ⁵³ You are the people who have received God’s laws. Those were laws that God caused angels to give to our ancestors. However, you have not obeyed them!”

⁵⁴ When the Jewish council members and others there heard all that Stephen said, they became very angry. They were grinding their teeth together because they were so angry at him!

⁵⁵ But the Holy Spirit completely controlled Stephen. He looked up into heaven and saw a dazzling light from God, and he saw Jesus standing at God’s right side. ⁵⁶ “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open, and I see the Son of Man standing at God’s right side!”

⁵⁷ When the Jewish council members and others heard that, they shouted loudly. They put their hands over their ears so that they would not hear him, and immediately they all rushed at him. ⁵⁸ They dragged him outside the city of Jerusalem and started to throw stones at him. The people who were accusing him took off their outer garments in order to throw stones more easily, and they put their clothes on the ground next to a young man whose name was Saul, so that he could guard them. ⁵⁹ While they continued to throw stones at Stephen, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

⁶⁰ Then Stephen fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not punish them for this sin!" After he had said this, he died.

Chapter 8

¹⁻² Then some men who revered God buried Stephen's body in a tomb, and they mourned greatly and loudly for him.

On that same day people started severely persecuting the believers who were living in Jerusalem. So most of the believers fled to other places throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria. The apostles remained in Jerusalem. ³ While they were killing Stephen, Saul was there approving that they should kill Stephen. So Saul also began trying to destroy the group of believers. He entered houses one by one, he dragged away men and women who believed in Jesus, and then he put them into prison.

⁴ The believers who had left Jerusalem went to different places, where they continued preaching the message about Jesus.

⁵ One of those believers whose name was Philip went down from Jerusalem to a city in the district of Samaria. There he was telling the people that Jesus is the Christ. ⁶

Many people there heard Philip speak and saw the miraculous things that he was doing. So they all paid close attention to his words. ⁷ For example, Philip commanded evil spirits to come out of many people, and they came out screaming. Also, many people who were paralyzed and many others who were lame were healed. ⁸ So many people in that city greatly rejoiced.

⁹ There was a man in that city whose name was Simon. He had been practicing sorcery for a long time, and he amazed the people in the district of Samaria with his magic. He claimed he was "Simon the Great One!" ¹⁰ All the people there, both ordinary and important people, listened to him. They were saying, "This man is the Great Power of God." ¹¹ They continued to listen to him carefully, because for a long time he had astonished them by practicing sorcery. ¹² But then they believed Philip's message about the good news about when God would show himself as king and about Jesus Christ. The men and the women who believed in Jesus were baptized. ¹³ Simon himself believed Philip's message and was baptized. He began to constantly accompany Philip, and he was continually amazed by the great miracles he saw Philip doing, things that showed Philip was speaking the truth.

¹⁴ When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that many people throughout Samaria district had believed God's message, they sent Peter and John there. ¹⁵ When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they prayed for those new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For it was clear that the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸ Simon saw that the Spirit was given to

people as a result of the apostles placing their hands on them. So he offered to give money to the apostles,¹⁹ saying, “Enable me also to do what you are doing, so that everyone on whom I place my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”²⁰ But Peter said to him, “May you and your money be destroyed, because you tried to get God’s gift with money!²¹ You cannot work with us in what we are doing, because your heart is not right with God!²² So stop thinking wickedly like that, and plead that the Lord, if he is willing, will forgive you for what you wickedly thought in your heart to do!²³ Turn away from your evil ways, because I perceive that you are extremely envious of us, and you are a slave of your continual desire to do evil!”²⁴ Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord that he will not do to me what you just said!”

²⁵ After Peter and John told people there what they knew personally about the Lord Jesus and declared to them the message of the Lord, they both returned to Jerusalem. Along the way they preached the good word about Jesus to people in the district of Samaria.

²⁶ One day an angel whom the Lord God had sent commanded Philip, “Get ready and go south along the road that extends from Jerusalem to the city of Gaza.” That was a road in a desert area.²⁷ So Philip got ready and went along that road. On the road he met a man from the land of Ethiopia. He was an important official who took care of all the funds for the queen of Ethiopia. In his language people called their queen Candace. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship God,²⁸ and he was returning home and was seated riding in his chariot. As he was riding, he was reading aloud in the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹ God’s Spirit told Philip, “Go near to that chariot and keep walking close to it!”³⁰ So

Philip ran to the chariot and heard the official reading what the prophet Isaiah had written. He asked the man, “Do you understand what you are reading?”³¹ He answered Philip, “No! I cannot possibly understand it if there is no one to explain it to me!” Then the man said to Philip, “Please come up and sit beside me.”³² The part of the scriptures that the official was reading was this: “He is as calm as a sheep that people lead to the place where they are going to kill it, or as a lamb stands in silence while its wool is being cut off.

³³ He will be humiliated. He will not receive justice. No one will be able to tell about his descendants—for he will have no descendants—because they will take away his life on this earth.”

³⁴ The official asked Philip concerning these words that he was reading, “Tell me, who was the prophet writing about? Was he writing about himself or about someone else?”³⁵ So Philip replied to him; he began with that scripture passage, and he told him the good message about Jesus.

³⁶⁻³⁷ While they were traveling along the road, they came to a place where there was some water. Then the official said to Philip, “Look, there is some water! I would like you to baptize me, because I do not know of anything that would prevent me from being baptized.”³⁸ So the official told the driver to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.³⁹ When they came up out of the water, suddenly God’s Spirit took Philip away. The official never saw Philip again. But although he never saw Philip again, the official continued going along the road, very happy.

⁴⁰ Philip then realized that the Spirit had miraculously taken him to the town of Azotus. While he traveled around in that region, he continued proclaiming the mes-

sage about Jesus in all the towns between the cities of Azotus and Caesarea. And he was still proclaiming it when he finally arrived in Caesarea.

Chapter 9

¹ Meanwhile, Saul angrily continued to threaten to kill those who followed the Lord. He went to the high priest in Jerusalem² and requested him to write letters introducing him to the leaders of the Jewish synagogues in Damascus. The letters asked them to give Saul power to seize any man or woman who followed the way that Jesus had taught, and to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem so that the Jewish leaders could judge and punish them.

³ While Saul and those with him were traveling, they were approaching Damascus. Suddenly a brilliant light from heaven shone around Saul. ⁴ Immediately he fell down to the ground. Then he heard the voice of someone say to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you trying to hurt me?" ⁵ Saul asked him, "Lord, who are you?" He replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are hurting. ⁶ Now stand up and go into the city! Someone there will tell you what I want you to do." ⁷ The men who were traveling with Saul were so astonished that they could not say anything. They just stood there. They heard the Lord speak, but they did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could not see anything. So the men with him took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. ⁹ For the next three days Saul could not see anything, and he did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a follower of Jesus named Ananias. The Lord Jesus made him see a vision and said to him, "Ananias!" He replied, "Lord, I am listening."

¹¹ The Lord Jesus told him, "Go to Straight Street to the house that belongs to Judas. Ask someone there if you can talk to a man named Saul of Tarsus, because he is praying to me at this moment. ¹² Saul has seen a vision in which a man named Ananias entered the house where he was staying and put his hands on him in order that he might see again." ¹³ Ananias answered, "But Lord, many people have told me about this man! He has done many evil things to the people in Jerusalem who believe in you!" ¹⁴ The chief priests have given him power to come here to Damascus in order to arrest all those who believe in you!" ¹⁵ But the Lord Jesus told Ananias, "Go to Saul! Do what I say, because I have chosen him to serve me in order that he might speak about me both to non-Jewish people and their kings and to the Israelite people. ¹⁶ I myself will tell him that he must often suffer in order to tell people about me." ¹⁷ So Ananias went, and after he found the house where Saul was, he entered it. Then, as soon as he met Saul, he put his hands on him, and he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus himself commanded me to come to you. He is the same one who appeared to you while you were traveling along the road to Damascus. He sent me to you in order that you might see again and that you might be completely controlled by the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Instantly, things like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he was able to see again. Then he stood up and was baptized. ¹⁹ After Saul ate some food, he became strong again. Saul stayed with the other believers in Damascus for several days.

²⁰ Right away he began to preach about Jesus in the Jewish synagogues. He told them that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All the people who heard him preach were amazed. Some of them were saying, "We can hardly believe that this is the same man who pursued the believers

in Jerusalem and who has come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests in Jerusalem!" ²² But God enabled Saul to preach to many people even more convincingly. He was proving from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. So the Jewish leaders in Damascus could not think how to disprove what he said.

²³ Some time later, the Jewish leaders there plotted to kill him. ²⁴ During each day and night those Jews were continually watching the people passing through the city gates, in order that when they saw Saul they might kill him. However, someone told Saul what they planned to do. ²⁵ So some of those whom he had led to believe in Jesus took him one night to the high stone wall that surrounded the city. They used ropes to lower him in a large basket through an opening in the wall. In this way he escaped from Damascus.

²⁶ When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with other believers. However, almost all of them continued to be afraid of him, because they did not believe that he had become a believer. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He explained to the apostles how, while Saul was traveling along the road to Damascus, he had seen the Lord Jesus and how the Lord had spoken to him there. He also told them how Saul had preached boldly about Jesus to people in Damascus. ²⁸ So Saul began to meet with the apostles and other believers throughout Jerusalem, and he spoke boldly to people about the Lord Jesus.

²⁹ Saul was also speaking about Jesus with Jews who spoke Greek, and he was debating with them. But they were continually trying to think of a way to kill him. ³⁰ When the other believers heard that they were planning to kill him, some of them took Saul down to the city of Caesarea. There they put him on a ship going to Tar-

sus, his hometown.

³¹ So the groups of believers throughout the entire regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria lived peacefully because no one was persecuting them anymore. The Holy Spirit was strengthening them and encouraging them. They were continuing to honor the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was enabling many other people to become believers.

³² While Peter was traveling throughout those regions, once he went to the coastal plain to visit the believers who lived in the town of Lydda. ³³ There he met a man whose name was Aeneas. Aeneas had not been able to get up from his bed for eight years because he was paralyzed. ³⁴ Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up and roll up your mat!" Right away Aeneas stood up. ³⁵ Most of the people who lived in Lydda and on Sharon Plain saw Aeneas after the Lord had healed him, so they believed in the Lord Jesus.

³⁶ In the town of Joppa there was a believer whose name was Tabitha. Her name in the Greek language was Dorcas. She was always doing good deeds for poor people by giving them things that they needed. ³⁷ During the time that Peter was in Lydda, she became sick and died. Some women there washed her body according to the Jewish custom. Then they covered her body with cloth and placed it in an upstairs room in her house.

³⁸ Lydda was near the city of Joppa, so when the disciples heard that Peter was still in Lydda, they sent two men to go to Peter. When they arrived where Peter was, they urged him, "Please come immediately with us to Joppa!" ³⁹ Peter got ready right away and went with them. When he arrived at the house in Joppa, they took him to the upstairs room where Dorcas' body was lying. All the widows

there stood around him. They were crying and showing him the tunics and other garments that Dorcas had made for people while she was still alive. ⁴⁰ But Peter sent them all out of the room. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Then, turning toward her body, he said, "Tabitha, stand up!" Immediately she opened her eyes and, when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹ He grasped one of her hands and helped her to stand up. After he had summoned the believers and especially the widows among them to come back in, he showed them that she was alive again. ⁴² Soon people everywhere in Joppa knew about that miracle, and as a result many people believed in the Lord Jesus. ⁴³ Peter stayed in Joppa many days with a man named Simon who made leather from animal skins.

Chapter 10

¹ There was a man who lived in the city of Caesarea whose name was Cornelius. He was an officer who commanded one hundred men in a large group of Roman soldiers from Italy. ² He always tried to do what would please God; he and his entire household were non-Jews who habitually worshiped God. He sometimes gave money to help poor Jewish people, and he prayed to God regularly.

³ One day at about three o'clock in the afternoon Cornelius saw a vision. He clearly saw an angel whom God had sent. He saw the angel coming into his room and saying to him, "Cornelius!" ⁴ Cornelius stared at the angel and became terrified. Then he asked fearfully, "Sir, what do you want?" The angel who was sent from God answered him, "You have pleased God because you have been praying regularly to him and you often give money to help

poor people. Those things have been like a memorial offering to God. ⁵ So now command some men to go to Joppa and tell them to bring back a man named Simon whose other name is Peter. ⁶ He is staying with a man, also named Simon, who makes leather. His house is near the ocean." ⁷ When the angel who spoke to Cornelius had gone, he summoned two of his household servants and a soldier who served him, one who also worshiped God. ⁸ He explained to them everything that the angel had said. Then he told them to go to city of Joppa to ask Peter to come to Caesarea.

⁹ About noon the next day those three men were traveling along the road and were coming near Joppa. As they were approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the flat housetop to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat. While some people were preparing the food, Peter saw a vision. ¹¹ He saw the sky open and something like a large sheet being lowered to the ground, with its four corners raised up. ¹² Inside the sheet were all kinds of creatures. These included animals and birds that the Mosaic laws forbade Jews to eat. Some had four feet, others crawled on the ground, and others were wild birds. ¹³ Then he heard God say to him, "Peter, stand up, kill some of these and eat them!" ¹⁴ But Peter replied, "Lord, surely you do not really want me to do that since I have never eaten anything that our Jewish law says is unacceptable to you or something that we must not eat!" ¹⁵ Then Peter heard God talk to him a second time. He said, "I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say that it is not acceptable to eat!" ¹⁶ This happened three times. Immediately after that, the sheet with the animals and birds was then pulled back into the sky.

¹⁷ While Peter was trying to understand

what that vision meant, the men who had been sent by Cornelius arrived. They asked people how to get to Simon's house. So they found his house and were standing outside the gate. ¹⁸ They called and asked if a man named Simon, whose other name was Peter, was staying there. ¹⁹ While Peter was still trying to understand what the vision meant, God's Spirit said to him, "Listen! Three men are here who want to see you. ²⁰ So get up and go down-stairs and go with them! Do not think that you should not go with them, because I have sent them here!" ²¹ So Peter went down to the men and said to them, "Greetings! I am the man you are looking for. Why have you come?" ²² They replied, "Cornelius, who is a Roman army officer, sent us here. He is a good man who worships God, and all of the Jewish people who know about him say that he is a very good man. An angel said to him, 'Tell some men to go to Joppa to see Simon Peter and bring him here, so that you can hear what he has to say.'" ²³ So Peter invited them into the house and told them that they should stay there that night.

The next day Peter got ready and went with the men. Several of the believers from Joppa also went with him. ²⁴ The day after that, they arrived in the city of Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them. He had also invited his relatives and close friends to come, so they were there in his house too. ²⁵ When Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and bowed low in front of him to worship him. ²⁶ But Peter grasped Cornelius by the hand and lifted him to his feet. He said, "Stand up! Do not bow down and worship me! I myself am only human, like you!"

²⁷ While he was talking to Cornelius, Peter and the others entered the house and saw that many people had gathered together there. ²⁸ Then Peter said to them, "You all

know that any of us Jews think we are disobeying our Jewish laws if we associate with those who are descendants of non-Jewish parents or if we even visit in their homes. However, God has shown me in a vision that I should not say anyone is so defiled and unclean that God would not accept him. ²⁹ So when you sent some men to ask me to come here, I came right away without objection. So, please tell me, why have you asked me to come here?"

³⁰ Cornelius replied, "About this time three days ago I was praying to God in my house, as I regularly do at three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly a man whose clothes shone brightly stood in front of me ³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer. He has also noticed that you have often given money to help poor people, and he is pleased with that.' ³² So now, send messengers to go to the city of Joppa in order to ask Simon whose other name is Peter to come here. He is staying near the ocean in a house that belongs to another man named Simon, who makes leather.' ³³ So I immediately sent some men who asked you to come here, and I certainly thank you for coming. Now we all are gathered here, knowing that God is with us, in order to hear all the things that the Lord God has commanded you to say. So please speak to us."

³⁴ So Peter began to speak to them. He said, "Now I understand that it is true that God does not favor only certain groups of people. ³⁵ Instead, from every people group he accepts everyone who honors him and who does what pleases him. ³⁶ You know the message that God sent to us Israelites. He proclaimed to us the good news that he would cause people to have peace with him because of what Jesus Christ has done. This Jesus is not Lord only over us Israelites. He is also the Lord who rules over all people. ³⁷ You know

what he did throughout the land of Judea, beginning in Galilee. He began to do those things after John had been proclaiming to people that they should turn away from their sinful behavior before he baptized them.³⁸ You know that God gave his Holy Spirit to Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, and gave him the power to do miracles. You also know how Jesus went to many places, always doing good deeds and healing people. He was healing all the people whom the devil was causing to suffer. Jesus was able to do those things because God was always helping him.”

³⁹ “We all saw the things Jesus did in Jerusalem and around every part of the country of Israel where he lived. His enemies killed him by nailing him to a wooden cross.⁴⁰ Then God raised him back to life on the third day after he died, and he made sure that many people would see him alive after he was brought back to life. People were sure it was him who had died, and now they saw with their own eyes, and were fully convinced, that he was alive again.⁴¹ At that time God did not let everyone see him, only those he selected to spend time with him and to eat a meal together in those first days just after God raised him back to life.⁴² God commanded us to preach to the people and he told us to tell them that he appointed Jesus to be the judge of everyone one day, a day that is sure to come. He will judge all those who will still be living and all those who have died before that time.⁴³ All the prophets who wrote about him long ago told the people about him. They wrote that if anyone believed in him, God could forgive whatever sins they have done, because of what this man, Jesus, had done for them.”

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking those words, suddenly the Holy Spirit came down on all those people from other na-

tions who were listening to the message.⁴⁵ The Jewish believers who had come with Peter from Joppa were amazed that God had generously given the Holy Spirit to people from all different nations, too.⁴⁶ The Jewish believers knew that God had done that because they were hearing those people speaking languages that they had not learned and telling how great God is. Then Peter said⁴⁷ to the other Jewish believers who were there, “God has given them the Holy Spirit just like he gave him to us Jewish believers, so surely all of you would agree that we should baptize these people!”⁴⁸ Then Peter told those non-Jewish people that they should be baptized as believers in Jesus Christ. So they baptized all of them. After they were baptized, they requested that Peter stay with them several days. So Peter and the other Jewish believers did that.

Chapter 11

¹ The apostles and other believers who lived in various towns in the province of Judea heard people say that some non-Jewish people had also believed the message of God about Jesus.² But there were some Jewish believers in Jerusalem who wanted all followers of Christ to be circumcized. When Peter returned from Caesarea to Jerusalem, they met with him and criticized him.³ They said to him, “Not only was it wrong for you to visit in the homes of uncircumcized non-Jews, you even ate with them!”

⁴ So Peter began to explain exactly what had happened.⁵ He said, “I was praying by myself in the city of Joppa, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw that something like a large sheet was being lowered from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was.⁶ As I was look-

ing intently into it, I saw some tame animals and also some wild animals, reptiles, and wild birds. ⁷ Then I heard God commanding me, ‘Peter, get up, kill and eat them!’ ⁸ But I replied, ‘Lord, you surely do not really want me to do that, because I have never eaten anything that our laws say that we must not eat!’ ⁹ God spoke from heaven to me a second time, ‘I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say it is unacceptable.’ ¹⁰ This same thing happened two more times, and then the sheet with all those animals and birds was pulled up into heaven again.

¹¹ At that exact moment, three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where I was staying. ¹² God’s Spirit told me that I should not hesitate to go with them even though they were not Jews. Six Jewish believers also went with me to Caesarea, and then we went into that non-Jewish man’s house. ¹³ He told us that he had seen an angel standing in his house. The angel told him, ‘Tell some men to go to Joppa and bring back Simon whose other name is Peter. ¹⁴ He will tell you how you and everyone else in your house will be saved.’ ¹⁵ As I started to speak, the Holy Spirit suddenly came down on them, just like he had first come on us during the Pentecost festival. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized you with water, but God will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷ God gave those non-Jews the same Holy Spirit that he had given to us after we had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. So I could not possibly tell God that he did wrong when he gave them the Holy Spirit!”

¹⁸ After those Jewish believers heard what Peter said, they stopped criticizing him. Instead, they praised God, saying, “Then it is clear to us that God has also accepted

the non-Jews so that they will have eternal life, if they turn from their sinful behavior.”

¹⁹ After Stephen died, many of the believers left Jerusalem and went to other places because they were suffering there in Jerusalem. Some of them went to Phoenicia, some went to the Island of Cyprus, and others went to Antioch, a city in Syria. In those places they were continually telling people the message about Jesus, but they told only other Jewish people. ²⁰ Some of the believers were men from the Island of Cyprus and Cyrene city in north Africa. They went to Antioch and were also telling non-Jewish people about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord God was powerfully enabling those believers to preach effectively. As a result, very many non-Jewish people believed their message and trusted in the Lord.

²² The group of believers in Jerusalem heard people say that many people in Antioch were believing in Jesus. So the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he got there, he realized that God had acted kindly toward the believers. So he was very happy, and he was encouraging all of the believers to continue to trust completely in the Lord Jesus. ²⁴ Barnabas was a good man whom the Holy Spirit completely controlled, one who trusted God completely. Because of what Barnabas did, many people there believed in the Lord Jesus.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus city in Cilicia to look for Saul. ²⁶ After he found him, Barnabas brought him back to Antioch to help teach the believers. So during a whole year Barnabas and Saul met regularly with the church there and taught large numbers of people about Jesus. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

²⁷ During the time that Barnabas and Saul

were at Antioch, some believers who were prophets arrived there from Jerusalem.²⁸ One of them, whose name was Agabus, stood up in order to speak. God's Spirit enabled him to prophesy that there would soon be a famine in many countries. (This famine happened when Claudius was the Roman emperor.)²⁹ When the believers there heard what Agabus said, they decided that they would send money to help the believers who lived in Judea. Each of them decided to give as much money as he was able to give.³⁰ They sent the money with Barnabas and Saul to the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem.

Chapter 12

¹ It was about this time that King Herod Agrippa sent soldiers to arrest some of the leaders of the group of believers in Jerusalem. The soldiers put them in prison. He did that because he wanted to make the believers suffer.² He commanded a soldier to cut off the head of the apostle James, the older brother of the apostle John. So the soldier did that.³ When Herod realized that he had pleased the leaders of the Jewish people, he commanded soldiers to arrest Peter, too. This happened during the festival when the Jewish people ate bread without yeast.⁴ After they arrested Peter, they put him in prison. They commanded four groups of soldiers to guard Peter. Each group had four soldiers. Herod wanted to bring Peter out of prison and judge him in front of the Jewish people after the Passover Festival was finished. He then planned to execute Peter.

⁵ So for several days Peter stayed in prison. But the other believers in their group in Jerusalem were praying earnestly to God that he would help Peter.⁶ The night

before Herod planned to bring Peter out from prison to have him executed publicly, Peter was sleeping in the prison between two soldiers, with two chains binding him. Two other soldiers were guarding the prison doors.⁷ Suddenly an angel from the Lord God stood beside Peter, and a bright light shone in his cell. The angel poked Peter in the side and woke him up and said, "Get up quickly!" While Peter was getting up, the chains fell off from his wrists. However, the soldiers were not aware of what was happening.⁸ Then the angel said to him, "Fasten your belt around you and put on your sandals!" So Peter did that. Then the angel told him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me!"⁹ So Peter put on his cloak and sandals and followed the angel out of the prison cell, but he had no idea that all this was really happening. He thought that he was dreaming.¹⁰ Peter and the angel walked by the soldiers who were guarding the two doors, but the soldiers did not see them. Then they came to the iron gate that led into the city. The gate opened by itself, and Peter and the angel walked out of the prison. After they had walked some distance along one street, the angel suddenly disappeared.¹¹ Then Peter finally realized that what had happened to him was not a vision, but that it had really happened. So he thought, "Now I really know that the Lord God sent an angel to help me. He rescued me from what Herod planned to do to me and also from all the things that the Jewish leaders expected would happen."

¹² When Peter realized that God had rescued him, he went to Mary's house. She was the mother of John whose other name was Mark. Many believers had assembled there, and they were praying that God would help Peter somehow.¹³ When Peter knocked at the outer entrance, a servant girl named Rhoda came to find out

who was outside the door.¹⁴ When Peter answered her, she recognized his voice, but she was so happy and excited that she did not open the door! Instead, she ran back into the house. She announced to the other believers that Peter was standing outside the door.¹⁵ But one of them said to her, "You are crazy!" But she continued saying that it was really true. They kept saying, "No, it cannot be Peter. It is probably his angel."¹⁶ But Peter continued knocking on the door. So when someone finally opened the door, they saw that it was Peter, and they were completely amazed!¹⁷ Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet. Then he told them exactly how the Lord God had led him out of the prison. He also said, "Tell James, the leader of our group, and our other fellow believers what has happened." Then Peter left and went away somewhere else.

¹⁸ The next morning the soldiers who had been guarding Peter became terribly upset, because they did not know what had happened to him.¹⁹ Then Herod heard about it. So he commanded soldiers to search for Peter, but they did not find him. Then he questioned the soldiers who had been guarding Peter, and commanded them to be led away to be executed. Afterwards, Herod went from the province of Judea down to the city of Caesarea, where he stayed for some time.

²⁰ King Herod had been furiously angry with the people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Then one day some men who represented them came together to the city of Caesarea in order to meet with Herod. They persuaded Blastus, who was one of Herod's important officials, to tell Herod that the people in their cities wanted to make peace with him. They wanted to be able to trade with the people that Herod ruled, because they needed to buy food from those regions.²¹ On the

day that Herod had planned to meet with them, he put on very expensive clothes that showed that he was king. Then he sat on his throne and formally addressed all the people who had gathered there.²² Those who were listening to him shouted repeatedly, "This man who is speaking is a god, not a man!"²³ So, because Herod let the people praise him instead of praising God, immediately an angel from the Lord God caused Herod to become seriously ill. Many worms ate his intestines, and soon he died very painfully.

²⁴ The believers continued telling God's message to people in many places, and the number of people who believed in Jesus was continually increasing.

²⁵ When Barnabas and Saul finished delivering the money to help the Jewish believers in the province of Judea, they left Jerusalem and returned to the city of Antioch, in the province of Syria. They took John, whose other name was Mark, with them.

Chapter 13

¹ Among the group of believers in Antioch in the province of Syria there were prophets and those who taught people about Jesus. They were Barnabas; Simeon, who was also called Niger; Lucius, who from Cyrene; Manaen, who had grown up with King Herod Antipas; and Saul.

² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, "Choose Barnabas and Saul to serve me and to go and do the work that I have chosen them to do!"³ So they continued to fast and pray. Then they put their hands on Barnabas and Saul and prayed that God would help them. Then they sent them off to do what the Holy Spirit had commanded.

⁴ The Holy Spirit gave Barnabas and Saul instructions about where to go. So they went down from Antioch to the city of Seleucia by the sea. From there they went by ship to the city of Salamis on the Island of Cyprus. ⁵ While they were in Salamis, they went to the Jewish meeting places. There they proclaimed the message from God about Jesus. John Mark went with them and was helping them.

⁶ The three of them went across the entire island to the city of Paphos. There they met a magician whose name was Bar Jesus. He was a Jew who falsely claimed to be a prophet. ⁷ He was with the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor sent someone to ask Barnabas and Saul to come to him because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸ However, the magician, whose name is translated Elymas in the Greek language, tried to stop them. He repeatedly tried to persuade the governor not to believe in Jesus. ⁹ Then Saul, who now called himself Paul, empowered by the Holy Spirit, looked intently at the magician and said, ¹⁰ "You are serving the devil, and you try to stop everything that is good! You are always lying to people and doing other evil things to them. You must stop saying that the truth about the Lord God is false! ¹¹ Right now the Lord God is going to punish you! You will become blind and you will not be able to see the sun for a while." At once he became blind, as though he were in a dark mist, and he groped about, searching for someone to hold him by the hand and lead him. ¹² When the governor saw what had happened to Elymas, he believed in Jesus. He was amazed by what Paul and Barnabas were teaching about the Lord Jesus.

¹³ After that, Paul and the men with him went by ship from Paphos to the city of Perga in the province of Pamphylia. At

Perga John Mark left them and returned to his home in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ Then Paul and Barnabas traveled by land from Perga and arrived in the city of Antioch in the district of Pisidia in the province of Galatia. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ Someone read aloud from what Moses had written in the books of the law. Next someone read from what the prophets had written. Then the leaders of the Jewish meeting place sent a message to Paul and Barnabas: "Fellow Jews, if one of you wants to speak to the people here to encourage them, please speak to us now."

¹⁶ So Paul stood up and motioned with his hand so that the people would listen to him. Then he said, "Fellow Israelites and you non-Jewish people who also worship God, please listen to me! ¹⁷ God, whom we Israelites worship, chose our ancestors to be his people, and he caused them to become very numerous while they were foreigners living in Egypt. Then God did powerful things in order to lead them out of slavery. ¹⁸ Even though they repeatedly disobeyed him, he endured their behavior for about forty years while they were in the wilderness. ¹⁹ He enabled the Israelites to conquer seven people groups who were then living in the region of Canaan, and he gave their land to the Israelites to possess forever. ²⁰ All of these things happened about 450 years after their ancestors had gone to Egypt."

"After that, God chose people to serve as judges and as leaders to rule the Israelite people. Those leaders continued to rule our people, and the prophet Samuel was the last judge to rule them. ²¹ Then, while Samuel was still their leader, the people demanded that he choose a king to rule them. So God chose Saul, the son of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin, to be their king. He ruled them for forty years. ²² Af-

ter God had rejected Saul from being king, he chose David to be their king. God said about him, ‘I have seen that David, son of Jesse, is exactly the kind of man who desires what I desire. He will do everything that I want him to do.’”

²³ “From among David’s descendants, God brought one of them, Jesus, to us Israelite people to save us, just as he had promised David and our other ancestors that he would do. ²⁴ Before Jesus began his work, John the Baptizer preached to all of our Israelite people who came to him. He told them that they should turn away from their sinful behavior and ask God to forgive them. Then he would baptize them. ²⁵ When John was about to finish the work that God gave him to do, he was saying, ‘Do you think that I am the Messiah whom God promised to send? No, I am not. But listen! The Messiah will soon come. He is so much greater than I am that I am not even important enough to take the sandals off of his feet.’”

²⁶ “Dear brothers, and all you who are descendants of Abraham, and you non-Jewish people among you who also worship God, please listen! It is to all of us that God has sent the message about how he saves people. ²⁷ The people living in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus. They did not understand the messages of their own prophets even though the prophets were read aloud to them every Sabbath, and then what the prophets predicted long ago was made true when they condemned Jesus to death. ²⁸ Many people accused Jesus of doing wicked things, but even though they could not prove that he had done anything for which he deserved to die, they asked Pilate the governor to condemn Jesus to death. ²⁹ They did to Jesus all the things that the prophets long ago had written that the people would do to him. They

killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross. Then his body was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. ³⁰ However, God raised him from the dead. ³¹ For many days he repeatedly appeared to his followers who had come along with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. Those who saw him are telling the people about him now.”

³² “Right now we are proclaiming to you this good message. We want to tell you that God has fulfilled what he promised to our Jewish ancestors! ³³ Now he has done this for us who are their descendants, and also for you who are not Jews, by making Jesus alive again. That is just like what David wrote in the second Psalm, when God was speaking about sending his Son,

‘You are my Son,
today I have become your Father.’

³⁴ God has raised the Messiah from the dead and will never let him die again. God said to our Jewish ancestors, ‘I will surely help you, as I promised David that I would do.’ ³⁵ In another Psalm of David, he also says about the Messiah: ‘You will not allow the body of your holy one to decay.’ ³⁶ While David was living, he did what God wanted him to do. And when he died, his body was buried, as his ancestors’ bodies had been buried, and his body decayed. So he could not have been speaking about himself in this Psalm. ³⁷ But Jesus was the one God raised from the dead, and his body did not decay.”

³⁸ “Therefore, my fellow Israelites and other friends, it is important for you to know that God can forgive you for your sins as a result of what Jesus has done. He will even forgive you for those things that you could not be forgiven for by the laws that Moses wrote. ³⁹ All people who believe in Jesus are no longer guilty of any of the things that they have done that displeased God. ⁴⁰ So then be careful that

God does not judge you, as the prophets said that God would do! ⁴¹ The prophet wrote that God said:

'You who ridicule me, you will certainly be astonished when you see what I am doing, and then you will be destroyed. You will be astonished because I will do something terrible to you while you are living. You would not believe that I would do that even though someone told you!"'

⁴² After Paul finished speaking and were going away, many of the people there asked them to return on the next Sabbath and say these things to them again.

⁴³ When the meeting was over, many of them began to follow Paul and Barnabas. These people were both Jews and non-Jews who worshiped God. Paul and Barnabas continued talking to them, and were urging them to continue to trust that God kindly forgives people's sins because of what Jesus did.

⁴⁴ On the next Sabbath day, most of the people in Antioch came to the Jewish meeting place to hear Paul and Barnabas speak about the Lord Jesus. ⁴⁵ But the leaders of the Jews became extremely jealous when they saw the large crowds of people that were coming to hear Paul and Barnabas. So they began to contradict the things that Paul was saying and also to insult him.

⁴⁶ Then, speaking very boldly, Paul and Barnabas said to those Jewish leaders, "We had to speak the message from God about Jesus to you Jews first before we proclaim it to non-Jews, because God commanded us to do that. But you are rejecting God's message. By doing that, you have shown that you are not worthy of eternal life. Therefore, we are leaving you, and now we will go to the non-Jewish people to tell them the message from God. ⁴⁷ We are doing this also because the Lord God has commanded us to do it. He said in the scriptures,

'I have chosen you to reveal things about me to non-Jewish people that will be like a light to them. I have chosen you to tell people everywhere in the world the message that I want to save them."

⁴⁸ When the non-Jewish people heard those words, they began to rejoice, and they gave God praise for the message about Jesus. All of the non-Jewish people whom God had chosen for eternal life believed the message about the Lord Jesus. ⁴⁹ At that time, many of the believers traveled around throughout that region, spreading the message about the Lord Jesus everywhere they went.

⁵⁰ However, some leaders of the Jews talked to some important women who worshiped with them, as well as the most important men in the city. They persuaded them to try to stop Paul and Barnabas. So those non-Jewish people led many people against Paul and Barnabas, and they drove them out of their region.

⁵¹ As the two apostles were leaving, they shook the dust from their feet to show those leaders that God had rejected them and would punish them. Then they left the city of Antioch and went to the city of Iconium. ⁵² Meanwhile the believers continued to be filled with joy and with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 14

¹ At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish meeting place and spoke very powerfully about the Lord Jesus. As a result, many Jews and also non-Jews believed in Jesus. ² But some of the Jews refused to believe that message. They told the non-Jews not to believe it; they made some of the non-Jews angry toward the believers there. ³ So Paul and Barnabas spent a long time there speak-

ing boldly for the Lord, and the Lord Jesus enabled them to do many miracles. In this way he showed people the truth of the message that, even though we do not deserve it, the Lord saves us.

⁴ The people who lived in Iconium had two different opinions. Some agreed with the Jews. Others agreed with the apostles. ⁵ Then the non-Jewish people and the Jews who opposed Paul and Barnabas talked among themselves about how they could mistreat Paul and Barnabas. Some of the important men in that city agreed to help them. Together, they decided that they would kill Paul and Barnabas by throwing stones at them. ⁶ But Paul and Barnabas heard about their plan, so they quickly went away to the district of Lycaonia. They went to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in that district and to the surrounding area. ⁷ While they were in that area, they continually told the people the message about the Lord Jesus.

⁸ In Lystra, a man was sitting there who was crippled in his legs. When his mother gave birth to him, he had crippled legs, so he was never able to walk. ⁹ He listened as Paul was speaking about the Lord Jesus. Paul looked directly at him and could see in the man's face that he believed that the Lord Jesus could make him well. ¹⁰ So with a loud voice, Paul called out to him, "Stand up!" When the man heard that, he immediately jumped up and began to walk around.

¹¹ When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they thought that Paul and Barnabas were the gods that they worshiped. So they shouted excitedly in their own Lycaonian language, "Look! The gods have made themselves to look like people and have come down from the sky to help us!" ¹² They began to say that Barnabas was probably the chief god, whose name was Zeus. And they began to say that

Paul was Hermes, the messenger for the other gods. They thought that because Paul was the one who had been speaking. ¹³ Just outside the gates of the city there was a temple where the people worshiped Zeus. The priest who was there heard what Paul and Barnabas had done, so he came to the city gate, where many people had already gathered. He brought two bulls with wreaths of flowers around their necks. The priest and the crowd of people wanted to kill the bulls as part of a ceremony to worship Paul and Barnabas. ¹⁴ But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard about that, they were very upset, so they tore their own clothes. They rushed among the people, shouting, ¹⁵ "Men, you must not kill those bulls to worship us! We are not gods! We are just human beings with the same feelings as you! We have come to tell you some good news! We have come to tell you about the God who is all-powerful. He wants you to stop worshiping other gods, because they cannot help you. This true God made the heavens, the earth, the oceans, and everything in them. ¹⁶ In the past, all of you non-Jewish people worshiped whatever gods that you wanted to. God let you worship them, because you did not know him. ¹⁷ But he has shown us that he acts kindly toward us. He is the one who causes it to rain and causes crops to grow. He is the one who gives you plenty of food, and fills your hearts with joy." ¹⁸ The people heard what Paul said, but they still thought that they should sacrifice those bulls to worship Paul and Barnabas. But finally, the people decided not to do it.

¹⁹ However, some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and persuaded many of the people of Lystra that the message Paul had been telling them was not true. The people who believed what those Jews said became angry with Paul. They let the Jews throw stones at him until he fell down, un-

conscious. They all thought that he was dead, so they dragged him outside the city and left him lying there.²⁰ But some of the believers in Lystra came and stood around Paul, where he was lying on the ground. And Paul became conscious! He stood up and went back into the city with the believers.

The next day, Paul and Barnabas left the city of Lystra and traveled to the city of Derbe.²¹ They stayed there several days, and they kept telling the people the good message about Jesus. Many people became believers. After that, Paul and Barnabas started on their way back. They went again to Lystra. Then they went from there to Iconium, and then they went to the city of Antioch in the province of Pisidia.²² In each place, they urged the believers to keep on trusting in the Lord Jesus. They told the believers, "We must suffer many hardships before God will rule over us forever."²³ Paul and Barnabas chose leaders for each congregation. Before Paul and Barnabas left each place, they gathered the believers together and spent some time praying and fasting. Then Paul and Barnabas entrusted the leaders and other believers to the Lord Jesus, in whom they had believed, in order that he would care for them.

²⁴ After Paul and Barnabas had traveled through the district of Pisidia, they went south to the district of Pamphylia.²⁵ In that district, they arrived at the town of Perga and preached God's message about the Lord Jesus to the people there. Then they went down to the seacoast at the town of Attalia.²⁶ There they got on a ship and went back to the city of Antioch in the province of Syria. That was the place where Paul and Barnabas had been chosen to go to other places and preach, and where the believers had asked God to help

Paul and Barnabas in the work that they had now completed.²⁷ When they arrived in the city of Antioch, they called the believers together. Then Paul and Barnabas told them all that God had helped them to do. Specifically, they told them how God had enabled many non-Jewish people to believe in Jesus.²⁸ Then Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch with the other believers for a long time.

Chapter 15

¹ Then some Jewish believers went down from Judea province to Antioch. They started teaching the non-Jewish believers there, saying, "You must be circumcised to show that you belong to God, as Moses commanded in the laws that he received from God. If you do not do that, you will not be saved."² Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with those Jews and started arguing with them. So the believers at Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas and some of the other believers to go to Jerusalem, in order that they might discuss this matter with the apostles and other leaders.

³ After Paul, Barnabas, and the others were sent on their way by the believers in Antioch, they traveled through the provinces of Phoenicia and Samaria. When they stopped at different places along the way, they reported to the believers that many non-Jews had become believers. As a result, all the believers in those places rejoiced greatly.⁴ When Paul, Barnabas, and the others arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the apostles, other elders, and the other believers in the group there. Then Paul and Barnabas reported the things that God had enabled them to do among non-Jewish people.

⁵ But some of the Jewish believers who belonged to the Pharisee sect stood up among the other believers and said to them, "The non-Jews who have believed in Jesus must be circumcised, and they must be told to obey the laws that God gave to Moses."

⁶ Then the apostles and the elders met together in order to talk about this matter.⁷ After they had discussed it for a long time, Peter stood up and spoke to them. He said, "Fellow believers, you all know that a long time ago God chose me from among you other apostles, in order that I might tell the non-Jewish people also about God's love, and in order that they might believe in him.⁸ God knows the hearts of all people. He showed me and others that he had accepted the non-Jews to be his people by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just like he had also done for us.⁹ God made no distinction between us and them, because he made them clean inside simply as a result of their believing in the Lord Jesus. That is exactly how he has forgiven us.¹⁰ Why do you want to force the non-Jewish believers to obey our Jewish rituals and laws? Doing that is like putting a heavy burden on them, because it forces them to obey laws that even our ancestors broke and that we Jews today have ever been able to keep! So then, stop making God angry by doing that!¹¹ We know that God saves us Jews from our sins because of what the Lord Jesus did for us. God saves us Jews exactly like he saves those non-Jews who believe in the Lord Jesus."

¹² All the people there became silent after Peter had spoken. Then they all listened to Barnabas and Paul, as the two of them told about the many great miracles that God had enabled them to do among the non-Jewish people, miracles that showed that God had accepted the non-Jews.

¹³ When Barnabas and Paul had finished

speaking, James, the leader of the group of believers in Jerusalem, spoke to them. He said, "Fellow believers, listen to me.¹⁴ Simon Peter has told you how God previously blessed the non-Jews. God did that by choosing from among them a people who would belong to himself.¹⁵ The words that God spoke long ago, words that were written by one of the prophets, agree with that:

¹⁶ Later on I will return and I will choose a king from the descendants of David. It will be like someone who builds a house again after it has been torn down.¹⁷ I will do this in order that all other people might try to know me, the Lord God. This will include even the non-Israelites whom I have called to belong to me. You can be certain that this will happen because I the Lord God have spoken these words.¹⁸ I have done these things, and I have made my people know about them since long ago."

¹⁹ James continued to speak. He said, "Therefore I think that we should stop bothering the non-Jewish people who are turning away from their sins and turning to God. That is, we should stop demanding that they obey all our laws and rituals.²⁰ Instead, we should write a letter to them, requiring only four things: They should not eat meat that people have offered to idols, they should not sleep with someone to whom they are not married, they should not eat meat from animals that have been killed by being strangled, and they should not eat the blood of animals.²¹ In many cities, for a very long time people have been proclaiming the laws that Moses wrote, laws prohibiting those things. And every Sabbath those laws are read in the Jewish meeting places. So if the non-Jews want to know more about those laws, they can find out in our meeting houses."

²² The apostles and the other elders, along

with all the other believers in Jerusalem, accepted what James had said. Then they decided that they should choose men from among themselves and that they should send them, along with Paul and Barnabas, to Antioch, to let the believers there know what the leaders at Jerusalem had decided. So they chose Judas, who was also called Barsabbas, and Silas. These were both leaders among the believers at Jerusalem.

²³ Then they wrote the following letter that they asked Judas and Silas to take to the believers at Antioch: "We apostles and elders who are your fellow believers send our greetings to you as we write this to you non-Jewish believers who live in Antioch and other places in the provinces of Syria and Cilicia." ²⁴ People have told us that some men from among us went to you, although we had not sent them to you. We heard that they have troubled you by telling you things that confused your thinking. ²⁵ So after we met together here, we decided to choose some men and ask them to go to you, along with Barnabas and Paul, whom we love very much. ²⁶ Those two have put their lives in danger because they serve our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ We have also sent Judas and Silas to you. They will tell you the same things that we are writing. ²⁸ It seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to us that you should not be required to obey a lot of burdensome Jewish laws. Instead, we only require you to obey the following instructions,

²⁹ You should not eat food that people have sacrificed to idols.

You should not eat blood from animals, and you should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them.

Also, you should not sleep with someone to whom you are not married.

If you avoid doing these things, you will be doing what is right. Farewell."

³⁰ The four men they selected went down from Jerusalem and came to Antioch. When all the believers there had assembled together, they gave the letter to them. ³¹ When the believers there read the letter, they rejoiced, because its message encouraged them. ³² Being prophets, Judas and Silas spoke a lot and encouraged the believers there, and helped them to trust more strongly in the Lord Jesus.

³³ After Judas and Silas had stayed there for some time and were ready to return to Jerusalem, the believers at Antioch wished them well, and then they left. ^{34/1}

³⁵ However, Paul and Barnabas continued to stay in Antioch. While they were there, they, along with many others, were teaching people and preaching to them the message about the Lord Jesus.

³⁶ After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the fellow believers in every city where we previously proclaimed the message about the Lord Jesus. In that way, we will know how well they are continuing to believe in the Lord Jesus." ³⁷ Barnabas agreed with Paul, and said that he wanted to take John, whose other name was Mark, along with them again. ³⁸ However, Paul told Barnabas that he thought that it would not be good to take Mark with them, because Mark had left them when they were previously in the region of Pamphylia, and had not continued to work with them.

³⁹ Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with each other about this matter, so they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark along with him. They got on a ship and went to the Island of Cyprus.

⁴⁰ Paul chose Silas, who had returned to Antioch, to work with him. The believers there prayed to the Lord God, asking him to graciously help Paul and Silas. Then the two of them departed from Antioch. ⁴¹ Paul continued traveling with Silas

through Syria and Cilicia provinces. In those places they were helping the groups of believers to trust strongly in the Lord Jesus.

15:34 ^[1]The best ancient copies omit verse 34 (see Acts 15:40). Vs. 34, *But Silas thought it would be best for him to stay there.*

Chapter 16

¹ Paul and Silas went to the cities of Derbe and Lystra and visited the believers there. A believer whose name was Timothy lived in Lystra. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. ² The believers in Lystra and Iconium said good things about Timothy, ³ and Paul wanted to take Timothy with him when he went to other places, so he circumcised Timothy. He did that so that the Jews who lived in those places would accept Timothy, because they knew that his non-Jewish father had not circumcised him.

⁴ So Timothy went with Paul and Silas, and they traveled to many other towns. In each town they told the believers the rules that had been decided by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

⁵ They helped the believers in those towns to trust more strongly in the Lord Jesus, and every day more people became believers.

⁶ Paul and his companions were stopped from speaking the word in Asia by the Holy Spirit, so they went through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. ⁷ They arrived at the border of the province of Mysia, and they wanted to go north into the province of Bithynia, but again the

Spirit of Jesus kept them from going there. ⁸ So they went through the province of Mysia and arrived at Troas, a city by the sea. ⁹ That night God gave Paul a vision in which he saw a man from the province of Macedonia. He was calling to Paul, saying, “Come to Macedonia and help us!” ¹⁰ After he saw the vision, we left for Macedonia, because we believed that God had called us to proclaim the good news with the people there.

¹¹ We got on a boat and sailed from Troas to Samothrace, and the next day went to the city of Neapolis. ¹² Then we left Neapolis and went to Philippi. It was a very important city in Macedonia, where many Roman citizens lived. We stayed in Philippi for many days.

¹³ On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate down to the river. We had heard someone say that Jewish people gathered to pray there. When we arrived, we saw some women who had gathered to pray, so we sat down and began to tell them about Jesus. ¹⁴ A woman whose name was Lydia was one of the women who was listening to Paul. She was from the city of Thyatira, sold purple cloth, and worshiped God. The Lord God caused her to pay attention to the message that Paul spoke, and she believed it. ¹⁵ After Paul and Silas baptized Lydia and the others who lived in her house, she said to them, “If you believe I have been faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay there.” After she said this, we stayed at her house.

¹⁶ Another day, while we were going to the place where people gathered to pray, we met a young woman who was a slave. An evil spirit was giving her power to tell the future about people. People paid money to the men who were her owners, in return for her telling them what would happen to them. ¹⁷ This young woman

followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men serve the God who is the greatest of all gods! They are telling you how God can save you." ¹⁸ She continued to do this for many days. Finally, Paul became angry, so he turned toward the young woman and spoke to the evil spirit that was in her. He said, "In the name of Jesus Christ, come out of her!" Right away the evil spirit left her. ¹⁹ And then her owners realized that she could no longer earn money for them because she could no longer predict what would happen to people, so they were angry. They grabbed Paul and Silas and took them to the public square where the rulers of the city were. ²⁰ The owners of the young woman brought them to the city rulers and told them, "These men are Jews, and they are greatly troubling the people in our city. ²¹ They are teaching that we should follow rules that our laws do not allow us Romans to obey!" ²² Many of the crowd joined those who were accusing Paul and Silas, and they started to beat them. Then the Roman rulers told soldiers to tear the shirts off Paul and Silas and to beat them with rods. ²³ So the soldiers beat Paul and Silas badly with rods. After that, they took them and put them into the prison. They told the jailer to make sure they did not get out. ²⁴ Because the officials had told him to do that, the jailer put Paul and Silas into the room that was farthest inside the prison. There, he made them sit down on the floor and stretch out their legs. Then he fastened their ankles in holes between two large pieces of wood, so that Paul and Silas could not move their legs.

²⁵ About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and praising God by singing songs. The other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a very strong earthquake that shook the jail. The earthquake caused all of the doors of the jail to open and all of the chains that fastened

the prisoners to fall off. ²⁷ The jailer woke up and saw that the doors of the jail were open by the earthquake. He thought that the prisoners had left the jail, so he pulled out his sword to kill himself, because he knew that the city rulers would kill him if the prisoners became free. ²⁸ Paul saw the jailer and shouted to him, "Do not kill yourself! We prisoners are all here!" ²⁹ The jailer shouted to someone to bring torches so he could see who was still in the prison. Shaking with fear, he fell down in front of Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought Paul and Silas out of the jail and asked: "Sirs, what do I need to do to be saved?" ³¹ They answered, "Trust in the Lord Jesus, and you and your household will be saved."

³² Then Paul and Silas spoke about the Lord Jesus to him and everyone in his household. ³³ Then the jailer washed their wounds, right at that time in the middle of the night. Then Paul and Silas baptized him and everyone in his household. ³⁴ Then the jailer took Paul and Silas into his house and gave them food to eat. He and all in his household were all very happy because they had believed in God.

³⁵ The next morning, the city rulers told some soldiers to go to the prison to say to the jailer, "Let those two prisoners go now!" ³⁶ When the jailer heard this, he went and told Paul, "The city rulers have told me to let you go. So you two can leave the prison now and go in peace!" ³⁷ But Paul said to the jailer, "The city rulers told men to beat us in front of a crowd, even though we are Roman citizens, and put us in prison. And now they want to send us away without telling anyone! We will not accept that! Those city rulers must come themselves and free us from prison." ³⁸ So the soldiers went and told the city rulers what Paul had said. When the city rulers heard that Paul and Silas were Roman cit-

izens, they were afraid because they had done the wrong thing.³⁹ So the city rulers came to Paul and Silas and told them that they were sorry for what they had done to them. The city rulers brought them out of the prison and asked them to leave the city.⁴⁰ After Paul and Silas left the prison, they went to Lydia's house. There they met with her and the other believers. They encouraged the believers to continue trusting in the Lord Jesus, and then the two apostles left the city of Philippi.

Chapter 17

¹ They traveled through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to the city of Thessalonica. There was a Jewish meeting place there.² On the sabbath Paul went to the meeting place as he usually did. For three weeks he went there on each sabbath day. He spoke to the people about how the scriptures said that Jesus would be the Christ.³ He showed from the scriptures that the prophets wrote that the Messiah would have to die and come alive again. He said, "This man Jesus is the Christ. He died and became alive again, just like the prophets said he would."⁴ Some of the Jews there believed what Paul had said and began to meet with Paul and Silas. There were also many non-Jewish people and important women who worshiped God who also believed the message about Jesus, and they also began to meet with Paul and Silas.

⁵ But some leaders of the Jews became angry because many people believed what Paul taught. So they went to the public square and persuaded some evil men to follow them. In this way, the leaders of the Jews gathered a crowd and caused them to make a lot of noise. Those Jews and others ran to the house of a man named

Jason where Paul and Silas were staying. They wanted to bring Paul and Silas outside to where the crowd of people were.⁶ They discovered that Paul and Silas were not at the house, but they found Jason and grabbed him. They dragged him and some of the other believers who were with him to where the city rulers were. They said, "The men who have caused trouble everywhere in the world have come here also,⁷ and this fellow Jason has asked them to stay at his house. They are acting against the emperor. They say that another person, whose name is Jesus, is the real king!"⁸ When the crowd of people that had gathered and the city rulers heard that, they became very angry and excited.⁹ The city rulers made Jason and the other believers pay a fine and told them that they would give the money back to them if Paul and Silas did not cause any more trouble. Then the city rulers let Jason and the other believers go.

¹⁰ So that same night, the believers sent Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica to the town of Berea. When Paul and Silas arrived there, they went to the Jewish meeting place.¹¹ Most of the Jews in Thessalonica had not been willing to listen to God's message, but the Jews who lived in Berea were very willing to listen, so they listened closely to the message about Jesus. Every day they read the scriptures for themselves to find out if what Paul said about Jesus was true.¹² Because of Paul's teaching, many of the Jewish people believed in Jesus, and also some of the important non-Jewish women and many non-Jewish men believed in him.

¹³ But then the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea preaching the message from God about Jesus. So they went to Berea and said things to the people there that made them very angry with Paul.¹⁴ Some of the believers in Berea

took Paul to the seacoast to go to another city. But Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea.¹⁵ When Paul and the other men arrived at the coast, they got on a boat and went to the city of Athens. Then Paul said to the men who had come with him, "Tell Silas and Timothy to come to me here in Athens as soon as they can." Then those men left Athens and returned to Berea.

¹⁶ In Athens, Paul waited for Silas and Timothy to come. In the meantime, he walked around in the city. He became very distressed because there were many idols in the city.¹⁷ So he went to the Jewish meeting place and talked about Jesus with the Jews, and also with the Greeks who had accepted what the Jews believe. He also went to the public square every day and talked to the people whom he met there.

¹⁸ Paul met some teachers who liked to talk about what people believe. People called some of them Epicureans, and they called others Stoics. They told Paul what they believed, and they asked him what he believed. Then some of them said to one another, "He is saying something about some strange gods." They said that because Paul was telling them that Jesus had died and then had become alive again.

¹⁹ So they took him to the place where the city leaders met. When they arrived there, they said to Paul, "Please tell us, what is this new message that you are teaching people?²⁰ You are teaching some things that we do not understand, so we want to know what they mean."²¹ The people of Athens and also the people from other regions who lived there loved to talk about what was new to them.

²² Then Paul stood up in front of the people and said, "People of Athens, I see that you are very religious.²³ I say that because, while I was walking along I saw the things that you worship, I even saw an altar that had these words that someone

had carved on it: THIS HONORS A GOD THAT WE DO NOT KNOW. So now I will tell you about that God whom you worship but you do not know.

²⁴ He is the God who made the world and everything in it. He rules over all beings in heaven and on earth, and he does not live in temples that people have built.²⁵ He does not need to have anything made for him by people because he makes people live and breath, and he gives them everything they need.

²⁶ In the beginning, God created one couple, and from them God produced all the people groups that now live everywhere on the earth. He put each people group in its place for its time.²⁷ He wanted people to realize that they need him. Then maybe they would look for him and find him. God wants us to look for him, although he is very close to each one of us.²⁸ It is because of God that we live, move, and exist, as one of you has said, 'Because we are his children.'

²⁹ Therefore, because we are God's children, we should not think that God is like gold, silver, or stone, made into something by man.³⁰ During the times when people did not know what God wanted them to do, he did not punish them for what they did. But now God commands all people everywhere to turn away from their evil deeds.³¹ He tells us that on a certain day that he has chosen he is going to judge all of us justly by the man he has chosen, making sure we understand this by raising this man from the dead."

³² When the men heard Paul say that a man had become alive again after he had died, some of them laughed at him. But others asked him to come back and tell them about it another day.³³ After they said that, Paul walked away.³⁴ However, some of the people went with Paul and believed the message about Jesus. Among

those who believed in Jesus was a man named Dionysius who was a member of the council. Also, there were a woman named Damaris and some other people with them who believed.

Chapter 18

¹ After that, Paul left the city of Athens and went to the city of Corinth. ² There he met a Jew whose name was Aquila, who was from the region of Pontus. Aquila and his wife Priscilla had come a short time previously from the city of Rome, in Italy. They left Rome because Claudius, the Roman emperor, had ordered that all the Jews must leave Rome. ³ Aquila and Priscilla made tents to earn money. Paul also made tents, so he stayed with them, and they worked together. ⁴ Every Sabbath, Paul went to the Jewish meeting place, where he spoke to both Jews and non-Jews. He taught them about Jesus.

⁵ When Silas and Timothy came from the region of Macedonia, Paul was strongly moved by the Spirit to tell the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ But the Jews began to turn against Paul and to say evil things about him. So he shook the dust from his clothes and he said to them, "If God punishes you, it is your responsibility, not mine! From now on I will talk to those who are not Jewish!" ⁷ So Paul left the Jewish meeting place and went into a house that was next to it, and preached there. Titius Justus, the owner of the house, was a non-Jewish man who worshiped God. ⁸ After that, the ruler of the Jewish meeting place, whose name was Crispus, and all of his family believed in the Lord. Many other people in Corinth heard about Crispus and his family, they also believed in Jesus and were baptized.

⁹ One night Paul had a vision in which the

Lord Jesus said to him, "Do not be afraid of the people who are against you, but keep talking about me,¹⁰ because I will help you and no one will be able to hurt you here. Keep telling them about me, because there are many people in this city who belong to me."¹¹ So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching the people the message from God about Jesus.

¹² When Gallio became the Roman governor of the province of Achaia, the Jewish leaders got together and seized Paul. They took him before the governor and accused him,¹³ saying, "This man is teaching people to worship God in ways that go against our Jewish laws."¹⁴ When Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, "If this man had broken our Roman laws, I would have listened to what you Jews want to tell me.¹⁵ However, you are talking about words and names and your own Jewish laws, so you yourselves must talk to him about this. I will not judge these things!"¹⁶ After Gallio had said that, he told some soldiers to take the Jewish leaders away from the court.¹⁷ Then the people grabbed the leader of the Jews, Sosthenes. They beat him right there in front of the judge's seat. But Gallio did nothing about it.

¹⁸ Paul stayed with the believers in Corinth for many more days. Then he got on a ship with Priscilla and Aquila and sailed for the province of Syria. He got his hair cut off in Cenchrea because of a vow that he had made.¹⁹ They arrived at the city of Ephesus, and Priscilla and Aquila stayed there.

Paul himself entered the Jewish meeting place and spoke to the Jews about Jesus.²⁰ They asked him to stay longer, but he did not agree to stay.²¹ But as he left, he told them, "I will come back, if God wants me to." Then he got on a ship and sailed

away from Ephesus.

²² When the ship came to the city of Caesarea, Paul got off. He went up to Jerusalem and greeted the believers there. Then he went to the city of Antioch in the region of Syria.

²³ Paul spent some time with the believers there. Then he left Antioch and walked to many cities in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. He urged the believers to believe more and more in the message from God about Jesus.

²⁴ While Paul was going through Galatia and Phrygia, a Jewish man named Apollos came to Ephesus. He was from the city of Alexandria and spoke very well about the scriptures. ²⁵ Other believers had taught Apollos how the Lord Jesus wanted people to live, and he enthusiastically taught those things to the people. However, he was not teaching everything about Jesus, because he only knew about the baptism of John the Baptizer. ²⁶ Apollos went to the Jewish meeting place, and he told the people there about the things that he had learned. When Priscilla and Aquila heard what he taught, they asked him to come to their home where they taught him more about Jesus.

²⁷ When Apollos decided that he would like to go to the region of Achaia, the believers in Ephesus told him that it would be good for him to do that. So they wrote a letter to the believers in Achaia saying that they should welcome Apollos. After he got there, he helped those whom God had kindly enabled to believe in Jesus. ²⁸ Apollos was talking very powerfully with the leaders of the Jews while many other people listened. By reading from the scriptures, he was able to show them that Jesus was the Messiah.

Chapter 19

¹ While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul left Phrygia and Galatia and went through Asia, and he came back to Ephesus. He met some people who said that they were believers. ² He asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed God’s message?” They answered, “No, we did not. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³ So Paul asked, “So when you were baptized, what did you know?” They replied, “We believed what John the Baptizer taught.” ⁴ Paul said, “John’s baptism was a sign that people were turning to God and away from their evil thoughts and deeds. He also told them to believe in someone else, one who is coming after him, and that person is Jesus.” ⁵ So when those men heard that, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ After that, Paul placed his hands on their heads one by one, and the power of the Holy Spirit came upon each of them. The Holy Spirit gave them power to speak in languages that they had not learned, and they also spoke messages that the Holy Spirit told them. ⁷ There were about twelve men whom Paul baptized and who received the Holy Spirit.

⁸ For three months after that, Paul entered the Jewish meeting place in Ephesus on each Sabbath and taught and persuaded people about Jesus and how God would show himself as king. ⁹ But some of the Jews would not believe the message and did not want to hear it any more. They said many bad things about what Paul was teaching. So Paul left them and took the believers with him to meet in the meeting place of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ For two years Paul taught people there. In this way, most of the Jews and non-Jews who lived in the region of Asia heard the message about the Lord Jesus.

¹¹ God also gave Paul the power to do miracles. ¹² If those who were sick could not come to Paul, pieces of cloth that Paul touched would be taken and placed on the sick people. As a result, the sick people would become well, and the evil spirits would leave them.

¹³ There were also some Jews who walked from town to town, and they commanded the evil spirits in those places to depart from people. Some of those Jews told the evil spirits to come out of people by saying "I command you to come out by the power of the Lord Jesus, the man whom Paul teaches about!" ¹⁴ There were seven men who were doing this. They were sons of a man named Sceva, a Jew, who called himself a chief priest. ¹⁵ But one day as they were doing that, the evil spirit did not come out of that person. Instead, the evil spirit said to them, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but no one has given you power to do anything to me!" ¹⁶ After saying that, suddenly the man who had the evil spirit jumped on the sons of Sceva. He knocked all of them down and hurt each of them. He tore off their clothes and wounded them. They became frightened and ran out of the house. ¹⁷ All the people who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and non-Jews, heard what had happened. They became afraid because they saw that the man with the evil spirit was very strong. At the same time, they honored the name of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁸ At that time, while other believers were listening, many believers told about the evil things that they had been doing. ¹⁹ Some of the people who were sorcerers took their scrolls that told how to work magic and burned them in a place where everyone could see them. When people added up how much the scrolls cost, it came to fifty thousand silver coins.

²⁰ In this way, many people heard the mes-

sage about the Lord Jesus and believed in him.

²¹ After Paul completed his work in Ephesus, the Spirit led him to decide to go to Jerusalem, but first he planned to go see the believers in the regions of Macedonia and Achaia. Paul said, "After I have been to Jerusalem, I will also go to Rome." ²² He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia. But Paul stayed in the city of Ephesus, in the province of Asia.

²³ Soon after that, people in Ephesus began to make a great amount of trouble because of Jesus and the teaching about him.

²⁴ There was a man there whose name was Demetrius. He made statues of the goddess Artemis (who is also known as Diana) out of silver. Demetrius made a lot of money for all the men who made and sold these idols.

²⁵ Demetrius called together the workmen who made the idols. He said to them, "Men, you know that we make a lot of money doing our work. ²⁶ You know that Paul has taught many people who live in Ephesus to no longer buy the statutes that we make. Now even the people from many other towns in our province no longer want to buy what we make.

Paul tells people that the gods that we worship are not gods and that we should not worship them. ²⁷ If people listen to him, they will stop our business. People will not think that they should come any longer to the temple of Artemis (also known as Diana) to worship her. People will no longer think that Artemis is great. Yet all the province of Asia and even the whole world worship her!" ²⁸ All the men there became angry at Paul when they heard what Demetrius said. They began to shout, "The goddess Artemis of the Ephesians is great!" ²⁹ Many of the people in the city became angry at Paul and began shouting. Some of the people took hold

of Gaius and Aristarchus, two men from Macedonia who traveled with Paul. Then the whole crowd of people ran, dragging those men along with them, to the city theater. ³⁰ Paul wanted to go into theater to talk to the people, but the other believers would not let him go there. ³¹ Some city rulers who were friends of Paul heard what was happening. They sent someone to tell Paul not to go into the theater.

³² The crowd of people in the theater kept shouting. Some shouted one thing, and some shouted something else. But most of them did not even know why they were meeting!

³³ One of the Jews there was named Alexander. Some of the Jews pushed him to the front of the crowd so that he could speak to the people. Alexander put his hands up trying to get the crowd to stop shouting. He wanted to tell them that the Jews did not cause the trouble. ³⁴ But many of the non-Jewish people knew that Alexander was a Jew and knew that the Jews did not worship the goddess Artemis. So the non-Jews shouted for two hours, "Great is the goddess Artemis of the Ephesians!"

³⁵ Then one of the city rulers made the crowd stop shouting. He said to them, "My fellow citizens, everyone in the world knows that the sacred image of our goddess Artemis fell down from heaven! ³⁶ Everyone knows that, and no one can say that these things are not true. So you should be quiet now. Do not do anything stupid. ³⁷ You should not have brought these two men here, because they have not done anything evil. They have not gone into our temples and taken things from there, and they have not spoken evil of our goddess. ³⁸ Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow workmen want to accuse anyone of doing anything bad, they should do it in the right way. There are courts that they can go to if they want

to, and there are judges who have been chosen by the government. You can accuse anyone there. ³⁹ But if you want to ask about anything else, you should ask for your rulers to take care of it when those rulers come together. ⁴⁰ This is not a good meeting! Take care of this trouble the right way because we do not want to go against the government. If the rulers asked me what you were all shouting about, I would not be able to give them a good answer." ⁴¹ That is what the city ruler said to the crowd. Then he told them all to go home, and they did go to their homes.

Chapter 20

¹ After the people at Ephesus had stopped rioting, Paul called the believers together. He urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Soon after that, he told them "Goodbye" and left to go to the region of Macedonia. ² After he arrived there, he urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Then he went to Greece. ³ He stayed in Greece for three months. Then he planned to return to Syria by ship, but he heard that some of the Jews there were planning to kill him as he traveled. So he decided to go by land, and he went again through Macedonia. ⁴ The men who were going to travel with him to Jerusalem were Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from the town of Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus, who were from the city of Thessalonica; Gaius, who was from the city of Derbe; Timothy, who was from the region of Galatia; and Tychicus and Trophimus, who were from the province of Asia. ⁵ Those seven men went ahead of Paul and me, Luke, by ship from Macedonia, so they got to the city of Troas before we did and waited for the two of us there. ⁶ But Paul and I traveled by land as far as the city

of Philippi. After the Jewish Festival of Bread made without Yeast, we got on a ship that was going to the city of Troas. After five days we arrived at Troas and met the other men who had traveled ahead of us. Then we all stayed in Troas for seven days.

⁷ On the first day of the week, we would gather together and we would share a meal together with the other believers. Paul spoke to the believers until midnight, because he was planning to leave Troas the next day. ⁸ Many oil lamps were burning in the upstairs room in which we had gathered. ⁹ A young man whose name was Eutychus was there. He was seated on the sill of an open window on the third story of the house. As Paul continued talking for a long time, Eutychus became sleepier and sleepier. Finally, he fell sound asleep. He fell out of the window down to the ground. Some of the believers went down immediately and picked him up. But he was dead. ¹⁰ Paul also went down. He lay down and stretched out on top of the young man and put his arms around him. Then he said to the people who were standing around, "Do not worry; he is alive again!" ¹¹ Paul went upstairs again and he prepared a meal and he ate it. Afterwards he talked with the believers until the sun came up. Then he left. ¹² The other people took the young man home, and were greatly comforted because he was alive again.

¹³ We then went to the ship. But Paul did not get on the ship with us in Troas, because he wanted to go more quickly overland to the town of Assos. The rest of us got on the ship and sailed for Assos. ¹⁴ We met Paul in Assos. He got on the ship with us, and we sailed to the city of Mitylene. ¹⁵ The day after we reached Mitylene, we sailed from there and arrived at a place near the Island of Chios. The day after

that, we sailed to the Island of Samos. The next day we left Samos and sailed to the city of Miletus. ¹⁶ Miletus was just south of the city of Ephesus. Paul did not want to stop at Ephesus because he did not want to spend time in Asia. If possible, he wanted to arrive in Jerusalem by the time of the Pentecost festival, and the time of that festival was near.

¹⁷ When the ship arrived at Miletus, Paul sent a messenger to Ephesus to ask the elders of the group of believers there to come to talk with him.

¹⁸ When the elders came to him, Paul said to them, "From the first day when I arrived here in the province of Asia until the day I left, you know how I acted among you the entire time that I was with you.

¹⁹ You know how I kept serving the Lord Jesus very humbly and how I sometimes wept. You also know how I suffered because the Jews who were not believers often tried to harm me. ²⁰ You also know that, when I preached God's message to you, I never left out anything that would help you. You know that I taught you God's message when many people were present, and I also went to your homes and taught you there. ²¹ I preached both to Jews and to non-Jews, telling them all that they must turn away from their sinful behavior and believe in our Lord Jesus."

²² "And now I am going to Jerusalem, because the Holy Spirit has clearly shown me that I must go there, and I must obey him. I do not know what will happen to me there. ²³ But I do know that in each city I have visited, the Holy Spirit has told me that in Jerusalem people will put me in prison and will cause me to suffer. ²⁴

But I do not care even if people kill me, if first I am able to finish the work that the Lord Jesus has told me to do. He called me to tell people the good message that God saves us by doing for us what we do not

deserve. ²⁵ I have preached to you the message about how God will show himself as king. But now I know that today is the last time that you fellow believers will see me. ²⁶ So I want you all to understand that if anyone who has heard me preach dies without trusting in Jesus, it is not my fault, ²⁷ because I told you everything that God has planned for us. ²⁸ You leaders must continue to believe and obey God's message. You must also help all the other believers for whom the Holy Spirit has given you to care for. Watch over yourselves and the group of the Lord's believers as a shepherd watches over his sheep. God bought them with the blood that flowed from his Son's body on the cross. ²⁹ I know very well that after I leave, people who teach lies will come among you and will do great harm to the believers. They will be like fierce wolves that kill the sheep. ³⁰ Even in your own group of leaders there will be some who will lie to other believers by teaching them the wrong things. They will teach those messages so that some people will believe them and will become their followers. ³¹ So watch out that none of you stops believing the true message about our Lord Jesus! Remember that day and night for three years I taught you that message and warned you with tears to be faithful to the Lord."

³² "Now as I leave you I ask God to protect you and to keep you believing the message that he saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. If you continue believing the message that I told you, you will become strong, and God will give you forever the good things that he has promised to give to all of those who belong to him.

³³ As for myself, I never wanted anyone's money or fine clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that I have worked with my hands to earn the money that my friends and I needed. ³⁵ In everything that I did, I

showed you that we should work hard in order to have enough money to give some to those who are needy. We should remember that our Lord Jesus himself said, 'A person is happier when he gives to others than when he receives from them.'"

³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of the elders and prayed. ³⁷ They all cried a lot, and they hugged Paul and kissed him. ³⁸ They were very sad because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they all went with him to the ship.

Chapter 21

¹ After we said goodbye to the elders from Ephesus, we got on the ship and traveled on the water to the Island of Cos, where the ship stopped for the night. The next day we went in the ship from Cos to the Island of Rhodes, where the ship stopped again. The day after that we went to the town of Patara, where the ship stopped. ² At Patara we left that ship, and someone told us that there was a ship that would be going to the region of Phoenicia. So we got on that ship, and it left. ³ We traveled over the sea until we could see the Island of Cyprus. We passed to the south of the island and continued sailing until we arrived at the region of Phoenicia, in the province of Syria, at the city of Tyre. The ship was going to stay there several days because its workers had to unload the cargo.

⁴ Someone told us where the believers in Tyre lived, so we went and stayed with them for seven days. Because God's Spirit revealed to them that people would cause Paul to suffer in Jerusalem, they told Paul that he should not go there. ⁵ But when it was time for the ship to leave again, we prepared to continue on our way to

Jerusalem. When we left Tyre, all the men and their wives and children went with us to the edge of the sea. We all knelt down there on the sand and prayed.⁶ After we all said goodbye, Paul and we his companions got on the ship, and the other believers returned to their own homes.

⁷ After we left Tyre, we continued on that ship to the city of Ptolemais. There were believers there, and we greeted them and stayed with them that night. ⁸ The next day we left Ptolemais and sailed to the city of Caesarea, where we stayed in the home of Philip, who spent his time telling others how to become followers of Jesus. He was one of the seven men whom the believers in Jerusalem had chosen to care for the widows. ⁹ He had four daughters who were not married. Each of them frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit had told them.

¹⁰ After we had been in Philip's house for several days, a believer whose name was Agabus came down from the district of Judea and arrived in Caesarea. He frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit had told him. ¹¹ Coming over to where we were, he took off Paul's belt. Then he tied his own feet and hands with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will tie up the hands and feet of the owner of this belt, like this, and they will put him in the hands of non-Jewish people as a prisoner.'" ¹² When the rest of us heard that, we and the other believers there asked Paul, "Please do not go up to Jerusalem!" ¹³ But Paul replied, "Please stop crying and trying to discourage me from going! Why are you crying and trying to discourage me from going? I am willing to go to prison and also to die in Jerusalem because I serve the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ When we realized that he would go to Jerusalem, we did not try any longer to stop him. We said,

"May the Lord's will be done!"

¹⁵ After those days in Caesarea, we prepared our possessions and left to go by land up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ Some of the believers from Caesarea also went with us. They took us to stay in the house of a man whose name was Mnason. He was from the Island of Cyprus, and he had believed in Jesus when people were first beginning to hear the message about him.

¹⁷ When we arrived in Jerusalem, a group of the believers greeted us happily. ¹⁸ The next day Paul and the rest of us went to speak with James, who was the leader of the church there. All of the other leaders of the church in Jerusalem were also there. ¹⁹ Paul greeted them, and then he told them all of the things that God had enabled him to do among the non-Jewish people. ²⁰ When they heard that, James and the other elders thanked God. Then one of them said to Paul, "Brother, you know that there are very many thousands of us Jewish people here who have believed in the Lord Jesus. Also, you know that we all continue very carefully to obey the laws that Moses gave us. ²¹ But our fellow Jewish believers have been told that when you are among non-Jews, you tell the Jewish believers who live there that they should stop obeying the laws of Moses. People say that you tell those Jewish believers not to circumcise their sons and not to practice our other customs. We do not believe that they are telling the truth about you. ²² But our fellow Jewish believers will hear that you have come, and they will be angry with you. So you need to do something to show them that what they heard about you is not true. ²³ So please do what we suggest to you. There are four men among us who have made a vow to God. ²⁴ Go with these men to the temple and do the ceremonies there necessary for you and

them to be able to worship in the temple. Then, when it is time for them to offer the sacrifices, pay for what they offer. After that, they can shave their heads to show that they have done what they said they would do. When people see you in the courts of the temple with those men, they will know that what they have been told about you is not true. Instead, all of them will know that you obey all our Jewish laws. ²⁵ As for the non-Jewish believers, we elders here in Jerusalem have talked about which of our laws they should obey, and we wrote them a letter, telling them what we decided. We wrote that they should not eat meat that people have offered as a sacrifice to any idol, that they should not eat blood from animals, and that they should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them. We also told them that they should not sleep with someone to whom they are not married.” ²⁶ So Paul agreed to do what they asked, and the next day he took the four men, and together they purified themselves. After that, Paul went to the temple courts and told the priest what day they would finish purifying themselves and when they would offer the animals as sacrifices for each of them.

²⁷ When the seven days for purifying themselves were nearly finished, Paul returned to the temple courtyard. Some Jews from Asia saw him there, and they were very angry at him. They called out to many other Jews who were in the temple courtyard to help them take hold of Paul. ²⁸ They shouted, “Fellow Israelites, come and help us to punish this man! This is the one who is teaching people wherever he goes that they should despise the Jewish people. He teaches people that they should no longer obey the laws of Moses nor respect this holy temple. He has even brought non-Jews here into the court of our temple, causing this place to

become polluted!” ²⁹ They said these because they had seen Paul walking around in Jerusalem with Trophimus, who was a non-Jew. Their laws did not permit non-Jews to be in the temple, and they thought that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple courtyard that day. ³⁰ People all over the city heard that there was trouble at the temple courtyard, and they came running there. They caught Paul and dragged him outside of the temple area. The gates to the temple courtyard were shut, so that the people would not riot inside the temple area.

³¹ While they were trying to kill Paul, someone ran to the fortress near the temple and told the Roman commander that many people in Jerusalem were rioting at the temple. ³² The commander quickly took some officers and a large group of soldiers and ran to the temple area where the crowd was. When the crowd of people who were yelling and beating Paul saw the commander and the soldiers coming, they stopped beating him.

³³ The commander came to where Paul was and took hold of him. He commanded soldiers to fasten a chain to each of Paul’s arms. Then he asked the people in the crowd, “Who is this man, and what has he done?” ³⁴ Some of the many people there were shouting one thing, and some were shouting something else. Because they continued shouting so loudly, the commander could not understand what they were saying. So he commanded that Paul be taken into the fortress so that he could question him there. ³⁵ The soldiers led Paul to the steps of the fortress, but many people continued to follow them, trying to kill Paul. So the commander told the soldiers to carry Paul up the steps into the fortress. ³⁶ The crowd that followed kept shouting, “Kill him! Kill him!”

³⁷ As Paul was about to be taken into the

fortress, he said in Greek to the commander, “May I speak to you?” The commander said, “I am surprised that you can speak Greek! ³⁸ I thought that you were that fellow from Egypt who wanted to rebel against the government not long ago, and who took four thousand violent men with him out into the desert, so that we could not catch him.” ³⁹ Paul answered, “No, I am not! I am a Jew. I was born in Tarsus, which is an important city in the province of Cilicia. I request that you let me speak to the people.” ⁴⁰ Then the commander permitted Paul to speak. So Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand for the crowd to be quiet. And after the people in the crowd became quiet, Paul spoke to them in their own Hebrew language.

Chapter 22

¹ Paul said, “Jewish elders and my fellow Jews, listen to me now while I speak to those who are accusing me!” ² When the crowd of people heard Paul speaking to them in their own Hebrew language, they became quiet and listened. Then Paul said to them, ³ “I am a Jew, as are all of you. I was born in the city of Tarsus, in the province of Cilicia, but I grew up here in Jerusalem. When I was young, I learned the laws that Moses gave to our ancestors. Gamaliel was my teacher. I obeyed those laws because I have wanted to obey God, and I am sure that all of you also obey those laws. ⁴ That is why I tried to arrest those who believed the message of God about Jesus. I looked for ways to kill them. Whenever I found men or women who believed the message, I had them thrown into jail. ⁵ The high priest knows this, and so do the other men who belong to our Jewish council. They gave me letters to take to their fellow Jews in the city of Dam-

ascus. Those letters gave me power to go there and arrest people who believed in Jesus. I was then to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem, so that they would be punished here.

⁶ So I went to Damascus. About noon, as I got near to Damascus, suddenly a bright light from the sky flashed all around me.

⁷ The light was so bright that I fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me from up in the sky, saying, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you do things to hurt me?’ ⁸ I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ He replied, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth the one whom you are hurting.’ ⁹ The men who were traveling with me saw the bright light, but they did not understand what the voice said. ¹⁰ Then I asked, ‘Lord, what do you want me to do?’ The Lord told me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus. A man there will tell you all that I have planned for you to do.’ ¹¹ After that, I could not see, because the bright light had caused me to become blind. So the men who were with me took me by the hand and led me to Damascus. ¹² A man whose name was Ananias came to see me. He was a man who honored God and obeyed the Jewish laws. All the Jews living in Damascus said good things about him. ¹³ He came and stood beside me and said to me, ‘My friend Saul, see again!’ Instantly I could see and I saw him standing beside me. ¹⁴ Then he said: ‘The God whom we worship and whom our ancestors worshiped has chosen you and will show you what he wants you to do. He has shown you the righteous one, Jesus the Messiah, and you have heard him speak to you himself.’ ¹⁵ He wants you to tell people everywhere what you have seen and heard from him. ¹⁶ So now do not delay! Stand up, let me baptize you, and pray to the Lord Jesus and ask God to forgive you for your sins!’”

¹⁷ ”Later, I returned to Jerusalem. One

day I went to the temple courtyard and while I was praying there, I saw a vision. ¹⁸ The Lord spoke to me, saying, ‘Do not stay here! Leave Jerusalem now, because the people here will not believe what you tell them about me!’ ¹⁹ But I said to him, ‘Lord, they know that I went to many of our synagogues looking for people who believe in you. I was putting in jail those whom I found who believed in you, and I was even beating them.’ ²⁰ They remember that when Stephen was killed because he told people about you, I stood there watching and approving of what they were doing. I even guarded the outer clothes that those who were murdering him had thrown aside!’ ²¹ But the Lord said to me, ‘No, do not stay here! Leave Jerusalem, because I am going to send you far away from here to other people groups, the non-Jews!’”

²² The people listened to what Paul was saying until he talked about the Lord sending him to other people groups. Then they began shouting, “Kill him! He does not deserve to live any longer!” ²³ While they were shouting, they took off their outer garments and threw dust into the air, which showed how angry they were. ²⁴ So the leader commanded that Paul be taken into the prison. He told the soldiers that they should whip Paul in order to make him tell what he had done that made the Jews so angry. ²⁵ Then they stretched his arms out and tied them so that they could whip him on his back. But Paul said to the soldier near him, “You will be acting unlawfully if you whip me, a Roman citizen whom no one has put on trial and condemned!” ²⁶ When the officer heard that, he went to the commander and reported it to him. He said to the commander, “This man is a Roman citizen! Surely you would not command us to whip him!” ²⁷ The commander was surprised when he heard that. He himself went into the

prison and said to Paul, “Tell me, are you really a Roman citizen?” Paul answered, “Yes, I am.” ²⁸ Then the commander said, “I am also a Roman citizen. I paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen.” Paul said, “But I was born a Roman citizen.” ²⁹ The soldiers were about to whip Paul and to ask him questions about what he had done. But when they heard what Paul said, they left him. The commander also became afraid, because he knew that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had broken the law when he commanded the soldiers to tie up Paul’s hands.

³⁰ The commander still wanted to know why the Jews were accusing Paul. So the next day he told the soldiers to take the chains off Paul. He also called the chief priests and the other council members to meet. Then he took Paul to where the council was meeting and told him to stand before them.

Chapter 23

¹ Paul looked at the Jewish council members and said: “My fellow Jews, all my life I have lived respecting our God, and I do not know of anything that I have done that I knew was wrong.” ² When Ananias the high priest heard what Paul said, he told the men who were standing near Paul to hit him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to Ananias, “God will punish you for that, you hypocrite! You sit there and judge me, using the laws that God gave Moses. But you yourself disobey those laws, because you commanded me to be struck without having proved that I have done anything that is wrong!” ⁴ The men who were standing near Paul said to him, “You should not speak badly to God’s servant, our high priest!” ⁵ Paul replied, “My fellow Jews, I am sorry that I said that. I did

not know that the man who told one of you to hit me is the high priest. If I had known that, I would not have talked badly about our high priest, because I know that it is written in our Jewish law, ‘Do not speak evil of any of your rulers!’”

⁶ Paul knew that some of the council members were Sadducees and others were Pharisees. So he called out in the council hall, “My fellow Jews, I am a Pharisee, and all in my family were Pharisees, as well. I have been put on trial here because I am sure that one day God will cause those who have died to become alive again.” ⁷ When he said that, the Pharisees and Sadducees started to argue with one another about whether or not people who have died will become alive again, and each of them were arguing with the other. ⁸ The Sadducees believe that after people die, they will not become alive again. They also believe that there are no angels and no other kinds of spirits. But the Pharisees believe all these things. ⁹ They began shouting at one another as they argued. Some of the teachers of the laws who were Pharisees stood up. One of them said, “We think that this man has done nothing wrong. Maybe an angel or some other spirit spoke to him and what he says is true.” ¹⁰ Then the Pharisees and Sadducees became violent with one another. So the commander was afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces. He told soldiers to go down from the prison and take Paul away from the council members and bring him up into the barracks.

¹¹ That night, Paul saw the Lord Jesus come and stand near him. The Lord said to him, “Have courage! You have told people here in Jerusalem about me, and you must tell people in Rome about me too.”

¹² The next morning some of the Jews who hated Paul met and talked about how to kill him. They told themselves that they

would not eat or drink anything until he was dead. They asked God to curse them if they did not do what they promised.

¹³ There were more than forty men who wanted to kill Paul. ¹⁴ They went to the chief priests and Jewish elders and told them, “God has heard us promise that we will not eat or drink anything until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ So we request that you go to the commander and ask him, on behalf of the whole Jewish council, to bring Paul down to us. Tell the commander that you want to talk to Paul some more. We will be waiting to kill Paul while he is on the way here.”

¹⁶ But the son of Paul’s sister heard what they were planning to do, so he went into the fortress and told Paul. ¹⁷ When Paul heard that, he called one of the officers and said to him, “Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something.” ¹⁸ So the officer took the young man to the commander. The officer said to the commander, “The prisoner Paul called me and said, ‘Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something.’”

¹⁹ The commander took the young man by the hand, led him off by himself, and asked him, “What do you need to tell me?”

²⁰ He said, “There are some Jews who want to bring Paul before their council tomorrow. They will say that they want to ask him some more questions. But that is not true. ²¹ Do not do what they ask you to do, because there are more than forty Jewish men who will be hiding and waiting to kill Paul when he passes by on the way to the council. They even promised to God that they will not eat or drink anything until they have killed Paul. They are ready to do it, and right now they are waiting for you to agree to do what they are asking you to do.” ²² The commander said to the young man, “Do not tell anyone that you have told me about their plan.” Then he

sent the young man away.

²³ Then the commander called two of his officers and told them, "Get a group of two hundred soldiers ready to travel. Take along seventy soldiers riding horses, and two hundred other soldiers carrying spears. All of you must be ready to leave at nine o'clock tonight, to go down to the city of Caesarea. ²⁴ And take along horses for Paul to ride, and escort him to the palace of Governor Felix." ²⁵ Then the commander wrote a letter to send to the governor. This is what he wrote: ²⁶ "I am Claudius Lysias writing to you. You, Felix, are our governor whom we honor, and I send you my greetings. ²⁷ I have sent you this man, Paul, because certain Jews seized him and were about to kill him. But I heard someone tell me that he is a Roman citizen, so I and my soldiers went and rescued him. ²⁸ I wanted to know what those Jews were saying that he had done wrong, so I took him to their Jewish council. ²⁹ I listened while they asked this man questions and he answered them. The things they accused him about had to do with their Jewish laws. But Paul has not disobeyed any of our Roman laws. So our officials should not execute him or even put him in prison. ³⁰ Someone told me that some Jews were planning to kill this man, so I sent him to you, so that you may give him a fair trial there. I have also commanded the Jews who have accused him to go there to Caesarea and tell you what they are accusing him about. Goodbye."

³¹ So the soldiers did what the commander told them. They got Paul and took him with them during the night down to Antipatris. ³² The next day, the foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem, and the soldiers who rode horses went on with Paul. ³³ When they arrived in the city of Caesarea, they gave the letter to the governor, and they placed Paul before him. ³⁴ The gov-

ernor read the letter and then he said to Paul, "What province are you from?" Paul answered, "I am from Cilicia." ³⁵ Then the governor said, "When the people who have accused you arrive, I will listen to what each of you says and then I will judge your case." Then he commanded that Paul be guarded in the palace that King Herod the Great had built.

Chapter 24

¹ Five days later Ananias the high priest went down there from Jerusalem, along with some other Jewish elders and a speechmaker whose name was Tertullus. There they told the governor what Paul had done that they thought was wrong.

² The governor commanded Paul to be brought in. When Paul arrived, Tertullus began to accuse him. He said to the governor, "Honorable Governor Felix, during the many years that you have ruled us, we have lived well. By planning wisely, you have improved many things in this province. ³ Therefore, Governor Felix, we always thank you for everything that you have done for all of us, wherever you have done those things. ⁴ But, so that I will not take up too much of your time, I ask that you kindly listen to what I have to say.

⁵ We have observed that this man, wherever he goes, causes trouble with the Jews. He also leads the entire group whom people call the followers of the Nazarene. ⁶ He even tried to do things in the temple in Jerusalem that would pollute it, so we arrested him. ^[1] ^{7[2]} ^{8[3]} If you question him yourself, you will be able to learn that all these things about which we are accusing him are true. ⁹ Then the Jewish leaders there told the governor that what Tertullus had said was true.

¹⁰ Then the governor motioned with his hand to Paul that he should speak. So Paul

replied, and said, "Governor Felix, I know that you have judged this Jewish province for many years. Therefore I gladly defend myself. I know that you will listen to me and will judge me fairly. ¹¹ You know that it has not been more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship God. ¹² No one can say that they saw me arguing with anyone in the temple courts because I did not do that. No one can say that they saw me causing people to riot in any Jewish synagogue or causing trouble anywhere else in Jerusalem, because I did not do that. ¹³ So they cannot prove to you the things about which they are now accusing me. ¹⁴ But I admit to you that this is true: I do worship the God that our ancestors worshiped. It is true that I follow the way that Jesus taught us. I also believe everything that Moses wrote in the laws that God gave him and everything that the other prophets wrote in their books. ¹⁵ I believe, just like these men also believe, that some day God will cause everyone who has died to become alive again, both those who were good and those who were wicked. ¹⁶ Because I believe that day will come, I always try to do what pleases God and what other people think is right. ¹⁷ After I had been in other places for several years, I returned to Jerusalem to bring some money to my fellow Jews who are poor. ¹⁸ Some Jews from Asia saw me in the temple courts after I had completed the ritual that allows one to worship God. There was no crowd with me, and I was not causing people to riot. ¹⁹ But it was those Jews who caused the people to riot. They should be here in front of you to accuse me, if they think that I did something wrong. ²⁰ But if they do not want to do that, these Jewish men who are here should tell you what they think I did that was wrong when I defended myself in their council. ²¹ They might say that I did something wrong when I shouted,

'You are judging me today because I believe that God will cause all people who have died to become alive again.'

²² Felix already knew much about what people called the Way, and so he stopped the trial. He said to them, "Later, when Commander Lysias comes down here, I will decide this case." ²³ Then he told the officer who was guarding Paul to take Paul back to the prison and make sure that Paul was guarded all the time. But he said that Paul was not to be chained, and if his friends came to visit him, the officer should allow them to help Paul in any way that they wanted to.

²⁴ Several days later Felix came back with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jew, and called for Paul to speak with him. Felix listened to what Paul said to him about trusting in Jesus Christ. ²⁵ Paul talked to him about what God wants people to do in order to please him. He also explained how people should control how they act and that there would be a time when God will judge all people. Felix became afraid after hearing those things, so he said to Paul, "That is all I want to hear now. When I have time, I will ask you to come to me again." ²⁶ Felix was hoping that Paul would give him some money, so he sent for Paul to come to him many times. Paul talked with Felix many times, but he did not give Felix any money, and Felix did not tell his soldiers to release Paul from prison.

²⁷ When two years had passed, Porcius Festus became governor in place of Felix. Felix let Paul remain in prison because he wanted to please the Jewish leaders.

24:6 ^[1]the best ancient copies omit the second part of 24:6 *And we wanted to judge him according to our law*

24:7 ^[2]The best ancient copies omit vs 7, *But Lysias, the commander of the Roman fortress, came with his soldiers and took him away from us.*

24:8 ^[3]The best ancient copies omit the first part of vs 8, *sending us to you.*

Chapter 25

¹ Festus began to rule as governor of the province. Three days later, he left the city of Caesarea and went up to Jerusalem.

² There, the chief priests and other Jewish leaders stood before Festus and said that Paul had done things that were very wrong. ³ They urgently asked Festus to bring Paul to trial in Jerusalem. But they were really planning to attack him on the road and kill him. ⁴ Festus replied, “Paul is under guard in Caesarea, let him stay there. I myself will go down to Caesarea very soon.” ⁵ “So,” he said, “you should go there with me, those of you who are able to. If you have anything to accuse Paul of, you can do it there.”

⁶ Festus remained in Jerusalem with the temple leaders eight or ten more days. Then he went back down to the city of Caesarea. The next day Festus commanded that Paul be brought to him, where he sat in the judge’s seat. ⁷ After Paul was brought before the judge’s seat, the Jewish leaders who had come down from Jerusalem gathered around him to accuse him of many serious charges, but they were not able to prove any of them. ⁸ Then Paul spoke for himself. He said, “I have done nothing against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against the emperor.” ⁹ But Festus wanted to please the Jewish leaders, so he asked Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem so I can judge you there about these things?” ¹⁰ Paul replied, “No, I am now standing before

you, who represent the Emperor. This is where I ought to be judged. I have done nothing wrong to the Jewish people, as you know very well. ¹¹ If I had done anything deserving of death, I would not refuse to die; but there is nothing that they accuse me of that deserves such a punishment. No one can condemn me just to satisfy them. I ask that Caesar himself judge me.” ¹² After Festus conferred with his advisors, he said, “You have appealed to Caesar, and so to Caesar you shall go!”

¹³ After several days, King Herod Agrippa arrived at Caesarea, along with his sister Bernice. They had come to pay their respects to Festus. ¹⁴ King Agrippa and Bernice stayed many days in Caesarea. After some time had passed, Festus told Agrippa about Paul. He said, “There is a man here whom Felix kept in prison. ¹⁵ When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the Jewish elders came before me and asked me to condemn him to death. ¹⁶ But I told them that when someone has been accused of a serious crime, it is not a custom for Romans to condemn a person immediately. Instead, we allow the accused man to stand face to face with his accusers and defend himself against what they say about him. ¹⁷ So when those Jews came here to Caesarea, I did not delay the trial at all. The day after they arrived, I sat in the judge’s seat and ordered the guard to bring in the prisoner. ¹⁸ But when the Jewish leaders told me what the prisoner had done wrong, I did not think that anything they said was serious. ¹⁹ Instead, what they argued with him about were things in their own religion and about a man whose name was Jesus who had died, but whom Paul said was alive. ²⁰ I did not understand these matters, or how to find out the truth. So I asked Paul, ‘Are you willing to go to Jerusalem, so I can judge you there about these things?’ ²¹ But Paul asked for Caesar himself to judge

his case, so I ordered him to be kept under guard until I could send him to Caesar.”

²² Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I myself would like to hear what this man has to say.” Festus answered, “I will arrange for you to hear him tomorrow.”

²³ The next day Agrippa and Bernice entered the hall of judgment, and all the other people were honoring them. Some Roman commanders and important men in Caesarea came with them. Then Festus commanded that the guards should bring Paul in. ²⁴ After Paul entered, Festus said, “King Agrippa and all the rest of you who are here, you see this man! Many leaders of the Jews, both in Jerusalem and here, asked me not to let him live any longer. ²⁵ But I found nothing that he had done to deserve death. Even so, he has asked Caesar to judge his case, so I have decided to send him to Rome. ²⁶ But I do not know what exactly I should write to the emperor about him. That is why I have brought him here to speak to you all, and especially to you, King Agrippa! I have done this so that you may question him. Then I may know what to write to the emperor. ²⁷ I think that it would be unreasonable to send a prisoner to the emperor in Rome without telling exactly what were the wrong things people say that he has done.”

Chapter 26

¹ Then Agrippa said to Paul, “We will now allow you to speak on your own behalf.” Then Paul stretched out his hand to show that he was about to speak. He said, ² “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that today that I can explain to you why the Jewish leaders are wrong when they say I have done evil things. ³ I am especially fortunate because you know all about the customs of us Jews and the ques-

tions that we argue about. So I ask you to listen patiently to me.”

⁴ “All my fellow Jews know about how I have conducted my life from the time I was a child. They know how I lived in the city where I was born and also later in Jerusalem. ⁵ They have known me from my very beginning, and they could tell you, if they wanted to, that since I was very young I obeyed the most rigid customs of our religion very carefully. I lived just like the other Pharisees. ⁶ Today I am on trial because I am confidently expecting that God will do what he promised to our ancestors. ⁷ Our twelve Jewish tribes are also confidently waiting for God to do for us what he promised, as they honor him and worship him, day and night. Honored king, I confidently expect that God will do what he promised, and they also believe that! But it is for what I expect God to do that they say I have done wrong. ⁸ Why would any of you think that God could not raise the dead?

⁹ There was a time in the past when I, too, was sure that I should do everything that I could to stop people from believing in Jesus from Nazareth town. ¹⁰ So that is what I did when I lived in Jerusalem. I shut up many of the believers in prison, as the chief priests there had given me power to do. And when their people killed believers, I voted in favor of that. ¹¹ I punished those Jewish people in every synagogue where I could find them. I would force them, with all my anger against them, to make them insult God and curse his name. I even went off to foreign cities to find them so I could do everything in my power to stop them.

¹² “The chief priests gave me power to arrest believers in Damascus, and that is where I went. But while I was on my way, ¹³ at about noon, I saw on the road a bright light in the sky. It was even brighter than

the sun! It shone all around me, and also around those who were traveling with me.
¹⁴ We all fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me in the Hebrew language. He said, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’
¹⁵ Then I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ He said, ‘I am Jesus! I am the one you are fighting against.
¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet! I have appeared to you in order to make you into a servant and a witness both of what you have seen of what you know about me now and what I will show you later.
¹⁷ I will protect you from the people and the non-Jews to whom I will send you,
¹⁸ in order to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of the enemy to God. In this way God will forgive their sins and give to them the things that all my people will have forever, the people who belong to me by faith.

¹⁹ “So, King Agrippa, I did what God told me in a vision to do.
²⁰ First, I spoke to the Jews in Damascus and those in Jerusalem, and in all the countryside of Judea, and to the non-Jews there also. I told them that they should stop sinning and ask God for help. I told them also that they should do those things that show that they have stopped sinning.

²¹ It is because I preached this message that some Jews seized me when I was in the temple courtyard and tried to kill me.

²² However, God has been helping me, so I have continued to proclaim these things to this very day. I have continued to tell both ordinary people and important people exactly what the prophets and Moses said would happen.
²³ They said that the Christ would suffer and die, that he would be the first to rise from the dead. They also said that he would proclaim, both to his own people and to the non-Jewish people,

that God is truly able to save them.”

²⁴ Before Paul could say anything further, Festus shouted out in a loud voice: “Paul, you are crazy! You have studied too much, and it has made you insane!”
²⁵ But Paul answered, “Your Excellency Festus, I am not insane! On the contrary, what I am saying is true and quite sane!
²⁶ For King Agrippa knows the things that I have been talking about, and I can speak freely to him about them. I am sure that none of these things could have escaped his notice, because none of these things happened in secret.”
²⁷ “King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets wrote? I know that you believe those things.”
²⁸ Then Agrippa answered Paul, “In just a short time you have almost persuaded me to become a Christian!”
²⁹ Paul replied, “Whether it takes a short time or a long time, it does not matter. I pray to God that you and also all of the others who are listening to me today will also become like me, except for these chains!”
³⁰ Then the king stood. The governor, Bernice, and all the others also got up³¹ and left the room. After they left, they said to each other, “This man has done nothing deserving death or his chains.”
³² Agrippa said to Festus, “If this man had not appealed to Caesar, he could have been released.”

Chapter 27

¹ When the Governor decided that we should sail for Italy, he put Paul and some other prisoners into the control of an army captain whose name was Julius. He held the rank of centurion and was part of a large number of soldiers who were under the direct command of the emperor.
² We boarded a ship from the city of Adramyttium in Asia. The ship was about to sail to places on the coast of Asia. In this

way we went to sea. Aristarchus, from Thessalonica in Macedonia, went with us. ³ The next day we arrived at Sidon. Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him permission to go see his friends, who would care for him. ⁴ Then the ship set sail from there. We went along the coast of Cyprus, which was sheltered from the wind, because the wind was against us. ⁵ After that, we crossed over the sea close to the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia. The ship arrived at Myra, which is in Lycia. We got off the ship there. ⁶ In Myra, Julius found a ship that had come from Alexandria and would soon sail to Italy. So he arranged for us to go aboard that ship, and we left. ⁷ We sailed slowly for many days and came near to Cnidus, but we got there with difficulty, because the winds were against us. After that, the wind was very strong and did not allow the ship to move straight ahead westward. Instead, we sailed along the coast of the Island of Crete, where the wind was not blowing strongly, and we passed near Salmone, a piece of land sticking out into the water. ⁸ The wind was still strong, and it prevented the ship from moving ahead fast. So we moved slowly along the coast of Crete, and we arrived at a town that was called Fair Havens, near Lasea.

⁹ Much time passed, and it had now become dangerous to sail, because the Jewish fasting period had already passed and the sea would become very stormy. So Paul said to the men on the ship, ¹⁰ "Men, I see that if we sail now, it will be disastrous for us with much injury and loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." ¹¹ But the Roman captain did not believe Paul. Instead, he believed what the pilot and the owner of the ship said, and he decided to do what they advised. ¹² The harbor was not a good place to remain during the winter, so most of the sailors advised going

to sea from there. They hoped that they could reach Phoenix and spend the winter there. Phoenix is a town in Crete. On it blow winds both from the northwest and southwest. ¹³ Because there was only a gentle wind blowing from the south, the ship's crew thought that they could travel like they wanted to. So they lifted the anchor up out of the sea, and the ship sailed close along the coastline of the island of Crete. ¹⁴ After a short time, however, a stormy wind blew down from the shore. It blew across the island from the north side and hit the ship. That wind is called Euroclydon, "the Northeast Wind." ¹⁵ It blew strongly against the front of the ship, and we could not sail against it. So the sailors let the wind move the ship in the direction that the wind was blowing. ¹⁶ The ship then sailed along the coast line of a small island named Cauda. We were able, with difficulty, to fasten the lifeboat securely to the ship. ¹⁷⁻¹⁸ After the sailors hoisted the lifeboat onto the ship, they used cables to reinforce the ship. They passed them under the ship's hull to strengthen the ship. The sailors were afraid that we would run aground on the sandbars called Syrtis, so they lowered the sea anchor and in this manner the wind drove us along. The wind and the waves continued to toss the ship about roughly, so on the next day the sailors began to throw things overboard. ¹⁹ On the third day of the storm, the sailors threw overboard most of the sails, ropes, and poles, in order to make the ship lighter. They did this with their own hands. ²⁰ The wind continued to blow very strongly for many days, and the sky was full of dark clouds day and night so that we could not see the sun or the stars. We had lost all hope that we would survive.

²¹ None of us on the ship had eaten for many days. Then one day, Paul stood up in front of us and said, "Friends, you should

have listened to me when I said that we should not set sail from Crete.²² But now, I urge you, do not be afraid, because none of us will die. The storm will destroy the ship but not us.²³ I know this, because last night God, the one to whom I belong and whom I serve, sent an angel who came and stood by me.²⁴ The angel said to me, ‘Paul, do not be afraid. You must go to Rome and stand before the emperor there so that he can judge you. I want you to know that God has granted to you that all those who are traveling by ship with you will also survive.’²⁵ So cheer up, my friends, because I believe that God will make this happen, exactly as the angel told me.²⁶ However, the ship will crash on some island, and we will go ashore there.’

²⁷ On the fourteenth night after the storm had begun, the ship was still being blown across the Adriatic sea. About midnight, the sailors thought that the ship was getting close to land.²⁸ So they lowered a rope to measure how deep the water was. When they pulled the rope up again, they measured it and saw that the water was forty meters deep. A little later, they measured again and found thirty meters.²⁹ They were afraid that the ship might go onto some rocks, so they threw out four anchors from the ship’s stern. Then they prayed that it would soon be dawn so that they could see where the ship was going.

³⁰ Some of the sailors were planning to escape from the ship, so they lowered the lifeboat into the sea. In order that no one would know what they planned to do, they pretended that they wanted to lower some anchors from the ship’s front.³¹ But Paul said to the army captain and the soldiers, “If the sailors do not stay in the ship, you have no hope of surviving.”³² So the soldiers cut the ropes and let the lifeboat fall into the water.

³³ Just before dawn, Paul urged everyone

on the ship to eat some food. He said, “For the past fourteen days you have been waiting and watching and not eating anything.³⁴ So, now I urge you to eat some food. You must do this to live. Not even one hair from your heads will perish.”³⁵ After Paul had said that, while everyone was watching, he took some bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke the bread and began to eat some of it.³⁶ Then they were all cheered up and ate some food.³⁷ Altogether there were 276 of us on the ship.³⁸ When everyone had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the rest of the wheat into the sea.

³⁹ At dawn we could see land, but the sailors did not know where we were. However, they could see a bay and a wide area of sand at the water’s edge. They decided to try to run the ship up onto the beach.⁴⁰ So they cast off the anchors and let them fall loose into the sea. At the same time, they untied the ropes that fastened the rudders, and they raised the front sail so that the wind would blow into it. They steered the ship toward the shore.⁴¹ But the ship sailed into turbulent waters and ran hard onto a sandbank that was just under the waves. The front of the ship stuck there and could not move, and big waves beat against the back of the ship, so that it began to break apart.

⁴² The soldiers had it in mind to kill all the prisoners so that none of them could swim away and escape.⁴³ But army captain wanted to save Paul, so he stopped the soldiers from doing this. Instead, he commanded that everyone who could swim should jump into the water and swim to shore.⁴⁴ Then he told the others to hold onto planks or other pieces from the ship and go toward the shore. We did what he said, and in that way all of us arrived safely on land.

Chapter 28

¹ After we had arrived safely on the shore, we learned that it was an island called Malta. ² The people who lived there gave to us better than the usual hospitality. They lit a fire and invited us to come and warm ourselves, because it was raining and it was cold. ³ When Paul collected some sticks of wood and put them on the fire, a poisonous snake came out from the fire to escape from the heat, and it bit Paul on his hand and stayed there. ⁴ The people from the island saw the creature dangling from Paul's hand, they said to each other, "Probably this man has murdered someone. Although he has escaped from being drowned in the sea, the god of justice will cause him to die." ⁵ But Paul simply shook the snake off into the fire, and nothing happened to him. ⁶ The people were expecting that Paul's body would soon swell up with a fever or that he would suddenly fall down and die. But after they had waited a long time, they saw that nothing was wrong with him. So the people changed what they were thinking and said to one another, "This man is not a murderer! He is a god!"

⁷ Now in a place near to where they were, there were some fields that belonged to a man whose name was Publius. He was the chief official on the island. He invited us to come and stay in his home. He took very good care of us for three days. ⁸ At that time Publius' father had fever and dysentery, and he was lying in bed. So Paul visited him and prayed for him. Then Paul placed his hands on him and healed him. ⁹ After Paul had done that, the other people on the island who were sick came to him, and he healed them, too. ¹⁰ They brought us gifts and showed in other ways that they greatly respected us. When we were ready to leave three months later,

they brought us food and other things that we would need on the ship.

¹¹ After we had stayed there three months, we got on a ship that was from Alexandria and that was going to Italy and sailed away. On the front of the ship there were carved images of the twin gods whose names were Castor and Pollux. ¹² When we arrived at the city of Syracuse, we stayed there three days. ¹³ Then we sailed and arrived at the city of Rhegium in Italy. The next day, the wind was blowing from the south, so in only two more days we reached the town of Puteoli. There we left the ship. ¹⁴ In Puteoli we met some fellow believers who wanted us to stay with them for seven days. After this, we finally arrived at Rome.

¹⁵ In Rome, some fellow believers had heard about us, so they came to meet us. Some of them met us at the town called The Market on Appian Road, and others met us at the town called The Three Inns. When Paul saw those believers, he thanked God and was encouraged. ¹⁶ After we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to live in a house by himself. But there was always a soldier there to guard him.

¹⁷ After Paul had been there three days, he sent a message to the Jewish leaders to come and talk with him. When they came to him, Paul said to them, "My dear brothers, although I have not opposed our people nor spoken against the customs of our ancestors, our leaders in Jerusalem seized me. But before they could kill me, a Roman commander rescued me and later sent me to the city of Caesarea for Roman authorities to put me on trial.

¹⁸ The Roman authorities questioned me and wanted to release me, because I had not done any bad thing for which I should be executed. ¹⁹ But when the Jewish leaders there spoke against the desire of the Romans to set me free, I had to request

that the emperor judge me here in Rome. But my reason for doing that was not that I wanted to accuse our leaders about anything. ²⁰ So I have requested you to come here so that I can tell you why I am a prisoner. It is because I believe in what the people of Israel confidently expect God will do for us.” ²¹ Then the Jewish leaders said, “We have not received any letters from our fellow Jews in Judea about you. Also, none of our fellow Jews who have arrived here from Judea has said anything bad about you. ²² But we want to hear what you think about this group that you belong to, because we know that in many places people are speaking against it.”

²³ So they decided that they would come back on another day to hear Paul speak to them. When that day arrived, even more people than before came to where Paul was staying. Paul told them about how God would rule everyone; he talked about how the law of Moses and the prophets foretold Jesus. Paul talked with all who would listen from morning until evening. ²⁴ Some of those Jews were persuaded to believe what Paul said about Jesus was true, but others did not believe that it was true. ²⁵ When they began to disagree with each other, and when they were about to leave, Paul had one more thing to say: “The Holy Spirit said the truth to your ancestors, when he spoke these words to Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶ Go to your people and say to them:

’You hear with your ears, but you never understand what God is saying.

You see with your eyes but you never really see the things that God is doing. ²⁷ These people do not understand, because they have become stubborn.

their ears are almost deaf;
and they have closed their eyes because
they do not want to see.

They do not want to hear with their ears or understand with their hearts, for then they would come back to me and I would heal them.

²⁸ Therefore, you should know that God is offering to save the non-Jews, and they will listen.” ²⁹*[1]*

³⁰ For two whole years Paul stayed there in a house that he rented. Many people came to see him, and he received them all gladly and talked with them. ³¹ He preached and taught people about how God would show himself as king, and he taught them about the Lord Jesus Christ. He did that with great boldness, and no one tried to stop him.

28:29 *[1]*Acts 28:29 - the oldest and most accurate ancient copies of the book of Acts do not include the additional words found in Acts 28:29; and for that reason they are not included here.

ROMANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, who serve Christ Jesus, am writing this letter to all of you believers in the city of Rome. God chose me to be an apostle, and he appointed me in order that I should proclaim the good news that comes from him. ² Long before Jesus came to earth, God promised that he would reveal this good news by means of what his prophets wrote in the sacred scriptures. ³ This good news is about his Son. As to his Son's physical nature, he was born a descendant of King David. ⁴ As to his divine nature, it was powerfully shown that he is God's own Son. God showed this when his Holy Spirit caused him to become alive again after he died. He is Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵ He has shown us great kindness and appointed us to be apostles. He did that in order that many among all the people groups would believe in him and obey him. ⁶ You believers who are living in Rome are included among those whom God has chosen to belong to Jesus Christ. ⁷ I am writing this letter to all of you in Rome whom God loves and whom he has chosen to become his people. I pray that God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord may continue to act kindly toward you and will continue to cause you to have peace.

⁸ As I begin this letter, I thank my God for all you believers in Rome. It is because of what Jesus Christ has done for us that I am able to do that. I thank him because people all over the Roman Empire are talking about how you are trusting in him. ⁹ God, whom I devotedly serve as I proclaim to people the good news concerning his Son, knows that I tell the truth when I say that I always mention you whenever I pray to

God. ¹⁰ I especially ask God that if he desires me to visit you, somehow at last I shall be able to do so. ¹¹ I pray this because I long to visit you to help you in order that you may trust and honor Christ more and more. ¹² I mean that I want us to encourage each other by telling each other how we trust in Jesus. ¹³ My fellow believers, many times I planned to visit you. I certainly want you to know that. But I have not been able to come to you because something has always stopped me. I have wanted to come in order that more people among you might trust in Jesus, just as in other places among the non-Jews. ¹⁴ I feel obliged to proclaim the good news to all non-Jewish people, to those who speak Greek and to those who do not, to people who are smart and to those who are unintelligent. ¹⁵ As a result, what I have eagerly desired is that I might proclaim this good news to you who are living in Rome also.

¹⁶ I very confidently proclaim the good news about what Christ has done, because this good news is the powerful way in which God saves those who trust in what Christ has done for them. Specifically, God first saves the Jews who believe the good news, and then he saves non-Jews. ¹⁷ By means of this good news God reveals how he puts people right with himself. This is like what a prophet wrote long ago in the scriptures: "Those whom God puts right with himself will live because they trust him."

¹⁸ God in heaven makes it clear that he is angry with all who show no respect for him and who do wicked things. He shows them that they deserve for him to punish them. Because they do wicked things, they also keep other people from knowing what is true about God.

¹⁹ All non-Jews can clearly know what God is like, because God himself has revealed

this to everyone. ²⁰ People cannot actually see with their eyes what God is like. But ever since he created the world, the things in it make us understand things about him—for example, he has always been able to do powerful things. Another example is that everyone knows that he is completely different from all that he has created. So no one is able to say truthfully, “We never knew about God.” ²¹ Although non-Jews knew what God is like, they did not honor him as God, nor did they thank him for what he had done. But instead, they began to think foolish things about him, and they were no longer able to understand what he wanted them to know about himself. ²² Although they claimed that they were wise, they became foolish, ²³ and they refused to admit that God is glorious and will never die. Instead, they made and worshiped idols that resembled people who will some day die, and then they made other idols that resembled birds and four-footed animals, and finally they made idols that resembled reptiles.

²⁴ So God allowed the non-Jews to do immoral sexual things that they strongly desired, things that they thought they had to do, because they wanted so much to do them. As a result, they began to dishonor each other’s bodies by their sexual actions. ²⁵ Also, they chose to worship false gods instead of admitting what is true about God. They worshiped things that God created instead of worshiping him, the one who created everything, the one whom we should all praise forever! Amen.

²⁶ So God allowed the non-Jews to do shameful sexual things that they strongly desired. As a result, many women began sleeping with other women—something that goes against nature. ²⁷ Similarly, many men abandoned their natural relationships with women. Instead, they

developed strong sexual desire for each other. They committed homosexual acts with other men, acts that were shameful. As a result, God has punished them by sicknesses in their bodies, which is the direct consequence of that kind of sin.

²⁸ Furthermore, because they decided that it was not worthwhile to know God, he allowed their own worthless thoughts to completely control them. As a result, they began doing evil things that no one should do. ²⁹ They strongly desire to do all kinds of unrighteous deeds and evil things to others and take things that belong to others and harm others in various ways. Many constantly envy other people and desire to murder people and to cause arguments and quarrels between people and deceive others and speak hatefully about others. ³⁰ Many say evil things about others and slander others. Many act especially hatefully toward God and violently toward others and treat others contemptuously and boast about themselves to others and invent new ways to do evil deeds. Many children disobey their parents. ³¹ Many act in other foolish ways that offend God and do not do what they promised others that they would do and do not even love their own family members and do not act mercifully toward other people. ³² Although they know that God has declared that those who do such things deserve to be killed, they not only do these kinds of evil things, but they also approve of others who do them.

Chapter 2

¹ You may say that God must punish people for doing what he hates. But when you say that, you are really saying that God should punish you because you also have lived the same kind of life. You did the

same things they have done. ² We know very well that God will judge and punish fairly people who do such evil deeds. ³ So you who say that God should punish others for doing evil deeds, although you do evil deeds yourself, you should certainly not think that you yourself will be able to escape from God when he begins to punish you! ⁴ And you should not say, "God is acting very tolerantly and patiently toward me, so I do not need to turn away from my sin." You should understand that God is patiently waiting for you to repent from your sins. ⁵ But instead, because you are stubborn and refuse to stop sinning, God will punish you even more severely. He will do that at the time when he shows that he is angry and judges all people fairly.

⁶ God will pay back everyone according to what they deserve for what they have done. ⁷ Specifically, some people keep doing good deeds, because they want God to honor them, and they want to live forever with him. God will reward them in this way. ⁸ But some people act in a selfish way and refuse to believe that what God says is true, and they do the things that God says are wrong. God will be very angry and will punish them severely. ⁹ He will cause everyone who habitually does evil deeds to suffer greatly and to have many troubles. This certainly will happen to the Jews who refuse to accept God's message, because God gave them the privilege to be his special people, but it will also happen to the non-Jews. ¹⁰ But God will praise, honor, and give a peaceful spirit to every person who habitually does good deeds. He will certainly do this for the Jews because he chose them as his special people, but he will also do it for the non-Jews. ¹¹ God will do this fairly, because he pays no attention to how important anyone is.

¹² Although non-Jews do not have the laws that God gave to Moses and still sin without having a law, God will bring them to ruin forever. And he will also punish all the Jews who have disobeyed his law, because he will judge them according to what the law says. ¹³ It is right for God to punish them because it is not those who know about God's laws that he makes righteous. Only those who have obeyed all of God's law, they are the only ones God makes righteous. ¹⁴ Whenever the non-Jews, who do not have the law of God, follow those laws because they obeyed them by the light of nature, they prove that they have a law within themselves, even though they never had the laws that God gave to Moses. ¹⁵ They show that they know in their own minds what God commands in his law, for each person in his very own conscience either accuses himself of bad behavior or defends himself. ¹⁶ God will punish them at the time when he will judge people according to what they have thought and done secretly. He will judge people by authorizing Christ Jesus to judge them. This is what I tell people when I preach the good news to them.

¹⁷ Now I have something to say to anyone of you Jews to whom I am writing: You trust that God will save you because you know the laws that he gave to Moses. You boast that you belong to God. ¹⁸ You know what God desires. Because you have been taught God's laws, you are able to know which things are right and to choose to do them. ¹⁹ You are certain that you are able to show God's truth to non-Jews, and that you can instruct those who know nothing about God. ²⁰ You are certain that you can instruct those who believe foolish things about God and those who are like children because they know nothing about him at all. You are certain about all this because you have the law that teaches you truly about God. ²¹ Since you claim that you

have all these advantages because you are a Jew, it is disgusting that you teach others but do not obey the laws yourself! You who preach that people should not steal things, it is disgusting that you yourself steal things! ²² You who command people not to sleep with someone to whom they are not married, it is disgusting that you commit adultery yourself! You who command others not to worship idols, it is disgusting that you do not avoid disgusting things. ²³ You who boast saying, "I have God's laws," it is disgusting that you disobey those same laws! As a result you are insulting God! ²⁴ You must not be like our ancestors, about whom were written these words in the scriptures: "The non-Jews speak evil about God because of the evil actions of you Jews."

²⁵ Any one of you who is circumcised to show that he belongs to God can benefit from that if he obeys the law that he gave to Moses. But if you, a circumcised person, disobey the law, God will consider you to be no better in God's sight than someone who is not circumcised. ²⁶ This means that God will certainly consider that even non-Jews who are not circumcised can become his people if they obey the things that he commanded in his laws. ²⁷ These people, who are not circumcised but who still obey God's laws, will declare that God is right when he punishes you, for you are circumcized but still break the law. ²⁸ It is not those who perform rituals for God who are true Jews, and it is not being circumcised in their bodies that causes God to accept them. ²⁹ On the contrary, we whom God has changed inwardly are the true Jews. God has accepted us and God's Spirit has changed our nature, not because we perform the rituals commanded by the law. Even if other people will not praise us, God will praise us.

Chapter 3

¹ Someone might say then, "If that is true, then it appears that there is no advantage to be a Jew over a non-Jew, and being circumcised does not benefit us Jews at all."

² But I tell you that being Jews has many benefits. First of all because it was to their ancestors that God spoke his words, words that show us who he is. ³ Does the Jews not being faithful mean that God will not bless as he promised that he would? ⁴ No, it certainly does not mean that! God always does what he has promised, even though people do not. All those who accuse God of not keeping his promises to us Jews are very mistaken. King David wrote about this: "So everyone must acknowledge that what you have said about them is true, and that you will always win the case when anyone accuses you of doing wrong."

⁵ So if God did not bless because we were wicked, can we say that he acted unfairly? That he was wrong to punish us out of anger? (I am speaking as ordinary humans speak.) ⁶ We should certainly not conclude that God should not judge, because if God did not judge, it could not possibly be right for him to judge the world!

⁷ But someone might answer, "The fact that God truly keeps his promises becomes very clear because for example, I told a lie and the result is that people praise God because he has mercy! So God should no longer say that I should be punished on account of my having sinned, since people are praising him because of it!" ⁸ If what you, Paul, say is true, then we might as well do evil things in order that good things like that will result!" Some people speak evil about me because they accuse me of speaking like this. God will punish people who say such things about me, and they will deserve for him to punish them!

⁹ Shall we conclude that God will treat us more favorably and will treat the non-Jews less favorably? We can certainly not conclude that! The Jews and also the non-Jews have sinned and so they deserve for God to punish them. ¹⁰ The following words that are written in the scriptures support this,

No person is righteous. There is not even one righteous person! ¹¹ There is no one who understands how to live properly. There is no one who seeks to know God!

¹² Absolutely everyone has turned away from God. God considers them depraved. There is no one who acts righteously; no, there is not even one!

¹³ What people say is foul, like the smell that comes from a grave that has been opened. By what people say, they deceive people.

By what they say they injure people, just like the poison of snakes injures people.

¹⁴ They are continually cursing others and saying cruel things.

¹⁵ They go quickly to murder people.

¹⁶ Wherever they go they ruin everything and make people miserable.

¹⁷ They have not known how to live peacefully with other people.

¹⁸ They absolutely refuse to honor God!

¹⁹ We know that whatever these laws command is to those who are required to obey. This means that Jews or non-Jews are not able to say anything contrary when God demands an answer for having sinned. ²⁰ It is not because people have done the things that God's laws require that God will erase the record of their sins because no one has done those things completely. In fact, the result of our knowing God's laws is that we know clearly that we have sinned.

²¹ When God declares us right with him it does not depend on our obeying the law that he gave Moses. It was written about in the laws and by the prophets that God forgives our sins by a different way. ²² God erases the record of our sins because we trust in what Jesus Christ has done for us. God does this for every person who trusts in Christ, because he considers that there is no difference between Jews and non-Jews. ²³ All people have done evil, and everyone has failed to accomplish the glorious goals that God set for them. ²⁴ Our record of sins has been erased by his acting kindly to forgive our sins, without our doing anything to earn it. Christ Jesus accomplished this by redeeming us. ²⁵ God showed that Christ turned away his anger by shedding his blood when he died, and we must believe in what he did for us. The sacrifice of Christ shows that God acted in a just manner. Otherwise, one might not have thought he was just, because he had overlooked sins that people had previously committed, for he is patient. ²⁶ God appointed Christ to die for us. By doing that, he now shows that he is just, and he shows that he is justly able to erase the record of sins for everyone who trusts in Jesus.

²⁷ It is not at all because we obey the laws of Moses that God erases the record of our sins. So there is no way that we can boast that God favors us because we obeyed those laws. Instead, it is because we believe in Christ that God erases the record of our sins. ²⁸ So it is clear that God makes someone right with himself if that person trusts in Christ—not if that person obeys the law. ²⁹ You who are Jews certainly should not think that you are the only ones whom God will accept! You certainly should realize that he will accept non-Jews, too. Of course, he will accept non-Jews, ³⁰ because, as you firmly believe, there is only one God. It is this

same God who will make Jews—who have been circumcised—right with himself because they trust in Christ, and it is also God who will make non-Jews—who have not been circumcised—right with himself, because they also trust in Christ. ³¹ If you say that God makes us right with himself because we trust in Christ, does that mean that the law is now useless? Certainly not. Instead, that law is truly valid.

Chapter 4

¹ Abraham is the revered ancestor of us Jews. So think about what we can learn from what happened to Abraham. ² If it was because of Abraham's doing good things that God put him right with himself, Abraham would then have had reason to boast about that to people, (but, even so, he would not have had any reason to boast to God about it). ³ Remember that in the scriptures it is written that Abraham believed what God promised to do for him, and that for this reason, God considered Abraham to be right with himself. ⁴ Now if we receive wages for work that we do, those wages are not considered to be a gift. Instead, they are considered to be what we have earned. Similarly, if we could do something to obligate God to be kind to us, then that would not be a gift. ⁵ But in reality, God makes right with himself people who did not honor him previously. Instead, they now trust in him, and God therefore considers them to be right with himself. ⁶ Similarly, it is as David wrote in the Psalms about anyone whom God considers to be right with himself without earning it:

⁷ "How fortunate are the people whose sins God has forgiven, whose sins he no longer looks at. ⁸ How fortunate are the people whose sins he no longer keeps a record of.

⁹ Being fortunate like this is not something that only we Jews can experience. No, it is also something that non-Jews can experience. We know this, because it is written in the scriptures that Abraham trusted in God, so God considered him to be right with himself. ¹⁰ Think about when God did this for Abraham. He did it before Abraham was circumcised, not after. ¹¹ God commanded that Abraham be circumcised many years after God had already accepted him. Circumcision was the mark that showed that Abraham already was right with God. So we can learn here that God considered Abraham to be the ancestor of everyone who trusts in him, even of those who are not circumcised. In this way, God considers all these people to be right with himself. ¹² Likewise, God considers Abraham to be the ancestor of all us who are true Jews, that is, all Jews who not only have the mark of circumcision on their bodies, but—much more importantly—who live like our ancestor Abraham did before he was circumcised, when he was simply trusting in God.

¹³ God promised Abraham and his descendants that they would possess the world. But when he promised that, it was not because Abraham was obeying any law. Instead, it was because Abraham believed that God would do what he promised. So God put Abraham right with himself. ¹⁴ If people possess the world because they obey God's law, then it is useless to trust in God for anything, and his promise means nothing. ¹⁵ Remember that in reality, God says in his law that he will punish anyone who does not perfectly obey it. Also remember, however, that for people who have no law, it is impossible to disobey it. ¹⁶ So it is because we trust in God that we will receive the things that he has promised to us as a gift, because he is very kind. He gives these things to everyone whom he regards as a true descendant of

Abraham—us Jewish believers, who have God's law and trust him, and also those non-Jews who do not have God's laws but who trust in him as Abraham did. For God regards Abraham as the true ancestor of all of us believers.¹⁷ This is what God said to Abraham in the scriptures: "I will make you the ancestor of many ethnic groups." Abraham received this directly from God who raises dead people to life and creates things out of nothing.¹⁸ He trusted firmly in this promise of God, even though there was no physical reason for him to expect that he would have descendants because he and his wife were too old to bear children. God had promised Abraham that he would become the ancestor of many ethnic groups by saying, "Your descendants will be like the stars in the sky."¹⁹ He did not doubt that God would do what he promised, even though he knew that his body was not able to father a child (he was, after all, about one hundred years old), and he knew that Sarah had never had children, especially now, because she was so old.²⁰ He did not doubt at all that God would do what he had promised. Instead, he trusted in God more strongly, and he thanked God for what God was going to do.²¹ He was also convinced that God was able to do whatever he promised that he was going to do.²² And that is the reason that God considered Abraham to be right with himself.

²³ The words in the scriptures, "God considered him to be right with himself because he trusted in him," are not only about Abraham.²⁴ They were also written about us, whom God would consider to be right with himself because we trust in him, the one who caused our Lord Jesus to become alive again after he died.²⁵ God allowed men to execute Jesus because of our evil deeds. And God caused Jesus to live again because God wanted to put us right with him.

Chapter 5

¹ God has put us right with himself because we trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are now at peace with God.² Because of what Christ has done for us, it is as if God has opened up a door for us to go to where he will be kind to us. So we rejoice because we are confidently expecting that God will gladly share his greatness with us.³ When we suffer because we are joined to Christ, we also rejoice because we know that when we are suffering, we are learning to endure things patiently.⁴ And we know that when we endure suffering patiently, God approves of us. And when we know that God approves of us, we confidently expect that he will do great things for us.⁵ And we are very confident that we will receive the things that we wait for, because God loves us very much. His Holy Spirit, whom he gave to us, causes us to understand how much God loves us.

⁶ When we were unable to save ourselves, it was Christ who, at the time that God chose, died for us people, although we were not honoring God at all.⁷ Rarely will anyone die for another person, even if that person were righteous, although for a good person perhaps someone might be courageous enough to die.⁸ Nevertheless, as for God, the way he showed us that he loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still rebelling against God.⁹ So it is even more certain that Christ will save us from God's anger about sin since we are right with God because Christ died for us and shed his blood for our sins.¹⁰ Even when we were his enemies God made us to be his friends with because his Son died for us. Since Christ is alive again, it is even more certain that Christ will save us.¹¹ And that is not all! Now we also rejoice because we have been made friends

with God, because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.

¹² All people are sinful because Adam, the first man whom God created, sinned long ago. Because he sinned, he eventually died. So all people who have lived since then became sinners, and they all die. ¹³ People in the world sinned before God gave his law to Moses but there was no way to recognize sin against that law. ¹⁴ But we know that from the time when Adam lived until the time when Moses lived, all people sinned, and that they died as a consequence. Everyone died, even those who did not break a direct command from God as Adam did. Adam's sin affected all people, just like what Christ did, the one who came later, also affects all people. ¹⁵ But the gift that God gives is not like Adam's sin. Because Adam sinned, everybody dies. But because another single man, Jesus Christ, died for us all, God kindly offers us this gift of everlasting life, although we do not deserve it. ¹⁶ And there is another way in which God's gift is different from Adam's sin. Because Adam sinned, all people after him have sinned, and so God declared that all people deserve to be punished. But as a kind gift, God offers to put us right with himself. ¹⁷ All people die because of what one man, Adam, did. But now many of us experience that God has kindly given us a very great gift—which we do not deserve—and he has put us right with himself. It is also very certain that we will rule with Christ in heaven. This will happen because of what one man, Jesus Christ, did for us.

¹⁸ So, because one man, Adam, disobeyed God's law, all people deserve to be punished. Similarly, because one man, Jesus, acted righteously by obeying God while he lived and died, God offers to put everyone right with himself, for them to live forever. ¹⁹ It was because one person, Adam,

disobeyed God that many people became sinners. Similarly, it is because one person, Jesus, obeyed God when he died that he will put many right with himself. ²⁰ God gave his law to Moses in order that people might realize how greatly they had sinned; but as people sinned more, God continued to act even more kindly toward them in a way that they did not deserve. ²¹ He did that in order that, unlike people die because they sin, his kind gift might put them right with himself. Then they can live forever because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for them.

Chapter 6

¹ Someone might say in reply to what I have written that since God has acted kindly toward us, perhaps we should continue to sin in order that his kindness would be the greater. ² No, certainly not! We are like people who have died, who can no longer do anything evil. So we should not continue to sin. ³ When we were baptized in union with Christ Jesus, God viewed us as dying with Christ on his cross. Do you not know this? ⁴ So, when we were baptized, God viewed us also as being with Christ in his tomb. God the Father used his power to raise Christ from the dead; in the same way, he made it possible for us to live life in a new way. ⁵ Since God views us as joining with Christ when he died, he will also make us rise with him from the dead. ⁶ God views us sinners as having died on the cross with Christ, in order to put an end to our sinful nature. As a result, we no longer have to sin. ⁷ For whoever has died no longer has to sin. ⁸ Since God views us as having died together with Christ when he died, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that since God enabled Christ to live again after he died, Christ will never die again.

Nothing will ever be able to make him die again. ¹⁰ When he died, he went free from our sinful world, and he will never die again; but because he lives again, he lives in order to serve God. ¹¹ In the same way, you must view yourselves as God views you: You are dead people, unable to sin any longer; but you are also living people, living to serve God and joined to Christ Jesus. ¹² So when you want to sin, do not allow yourselves to do what you want. Remember that your body will die one day. ¹³ Do not use any part of your body to do anything wicked. Instead, present yourselves to God as people who are now alive after belonging to the realm of the dead. Use every part of your body for God. Allow him to use you to do righteous things. ¹⁴ When you desire to sin, do not do it! The laws that God gave Moses did not enable you to stop sinning. But now God controls you and kindly helps you not to sin.

¹⁵ We might think from this that because the laws God gave Moses did not enable us to stop sinning and God is now treating us kindly anyway, that God permits us to continue sinning. Absolutely not! ¹⁶ If you offer to obey someone, you become his slaves. If you obey when you wish to sin, then you become the slaves of sin and die as a result. But if you obey God, then you become his slaves and, as a result, will do the right things that God wants you to do. ¹⁷ In the past you sinned in whatever way you wanted to sin—you were slaves of sin. But then you began to sincerely obey what Christ taught you. I thank God for that. ¹⁸ So now you do not have to sin any longer; sin is no longer your master. Instead, you are slaves of God, who is righteous. ¹⁹ I am writing to you in a way that ordinary people can understand. In the past you were slaves to your desires so you did all kinds of impure and evil things. But now act justly as God acts, so that he will set you apart for himself as his people.

²⁰ It is true that in the past, you behaved as people who were free from God's power and righteousness (because you did whatever your evil minds told you to do). You did not have to do things that were right. ²¹ But though you were like a slave to sin, God has set you free from sin and made you his servant. As a result you are being made holy, and the result of that is that you will live forever with him. ²² But now you do not have to sin any longer. You are no longer slaves like that. Instead, you have become slaves of God. In return, he has set you apart as his own people, and he will allow you to live forever, with him. ²³ All who do what their evil minds tells them to do receive payment, too, but that payment is death. They will be apart from God forever. But as for God, he pays no wages to his slaves at all. Instead, he gives us a free gift: He allows us to live forever with him, joined to Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chapter 7

¹ My fellow believers, you know about laws. So you certainly know that people have to obey laws only while they are alive. ² For example, a woman must be faithful to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is does not have to act any longer as if she were married. The law releases her from the marriage. ³ So if she goes to another man while her husband is alive, she will be an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she no longer has to obey that law. Then if she marries another man, she will not be an adulteress. ⁴ In the same way, my brothers and sisters, when you died with Christ on his cross, the law of God could no longer control you. You were free to join Christ, so that you might honor God. You can do this because you are alive again. God has joined you to Christ, and he has

raised Christ from the dead. ⁵ When we were doing what our evil thoughts told us to do, when we learned God's law, we wanted to sin more and more. So we did evil things that would lead God to separate us from him forever. ⁶ But now God has freed us from having to obey law of Moses—it is as though we have died, and the law can no longer tell us what to do. God has done this for us so that we may worship him in a new way that the Spirit shows us, rather than in the old way that the law required.

⁷ Could we say that people want to sin more if they know God's laws? Then those laws themselves must be evil. No, of course not! The law is not evil! But it is true that I did not really know what sin was until I learned about it in the law. For example, I did not realize that it is evil to desire what is not yours until I learned that the law says, "You must not desire what is not yours." ⁸ And because of what that commandment stated, my sinful desire to have things that belong to others caused me to covet in many ways. But where there is no law, there is no sin. ⁹ Formerly, when I did not know what God's law required, I used to sin without worrying about what I was doing. But when I became aware that God had given us his law, I suddenly realized that I was sinning, ¹⁰ and I realized that I was apart from God. The law that was supposed to allow me to live forever, if I obeyed it, was leading me to die instead. ¹¹ When I wanted to sin, I thought that I would live forever if I obeyed the law enough. But I was mistaken: I thought I could keep sinning at the same time. In fact, God was going to separate me from him forever because I did not truly obey the law. ¹² So we know that the law that God gave to Moses is perfectly good. Everything that God commands us to do is also without fault, just, and good.

¹³ Could we say then that the law that God gave Moses, which is good, drove us away from God! Certainly it did not do that! But instead, the law, which is good, made me want to sin. I knew that as a result, I was far away from God. And also, because I learned what God had commanded, I knew that what I was doing was truly sinful.

¹⁴ We know that the law came from God and changes our attitude. But I am a person whose attitude tends toward sin. It is as though I had been forced to become a slave of my desire to sin — I had to do whatever my desires told me to do. ¹⁵ The things that I do, I often do not understand. That is, sometimes it is the good things that I want to do that I do not do. And sometimes it is the evil things that I detest that I do. ¹⁶ Since I do the evil things that I do not want to do, I agree that the law of God directs me in the right way. ¹⁷ So, it is not because I wish to sin that I sin. Instead, I sin because the desire to sin causes me to sin. ¹⁸ I know that when I follow my own attitude I can do nothing good. I know this because I want to do what is good, but I do not do what is good. ¹⁹ I do not do the good things that I want to do. Instead, it is evil things that I do not want to do that I do. ²⁰ When I do evil things that I do not want to do, it is not that really I that do those things. Instead, my attitude that favors sin is making me sin. ²¹ I find, then, that what always happens is that when I want to do what is good, there is an evil desire present within me that prevents me from doing good. ²² In my new attitude I am very happy about the law of God. ²³ Nevertheless, I sense that there is a different power that is in my body. It is opposed to what with my mind I desire to do, and it makes me do what my old sinful attitude wants me to do. ²⁴ When I consider this, I feel that I am a very wretched person. I want someone

to set me free from the control of what my body desires, in order that I might not be separated from God. ²⁵ I thank God that it is by Jesus Christ our Lord that he sets us free from the control of what our bodies desire. So with our minds, I on the one hand want to obey God's law. But also, I often let our sinful desires control me because of my old sinful attitude.

Chapter 8

¹ So God will not condemn and punish those who are joined to Christ Jesus. ² God's Spirit causes us to live in a new way because we are joined to Christ Jesus. In this way, I no longer have to sin when I think about sinning, and I will no more be separated from God. ³ We tried to obey God's law in order to live with God, but it was useless to think that we could—we could not stop sinning. So God helped us instead: He sent his own Son into the world in order that his Son might atone for our sin. His Son came having a body that was like the body of us who sin. His Son came to offer himself as a sacrifice for our sin. When he did this, he also showed that our sins are truly wicked, and that anyone who sins deserves to be punished. ⁴ So we can now fulfill all that God required in his law. We do this, not by our acting the way our old evil attitude desires, but instead by living as God's Spirit desires us to live. ⁵ People who live by their evil attitudes think about paying attention to those attitudes. But people who live by what God's Spirit wants think about the things of the Spirit instead. ⁶ Those who think about and are concerned about what their evil attitude desires will not live forever. But those who want what God's Spirit desires will live forever and have peace. ⁷ Let me explain this. To the extent that people want what their evil at-

titude desires, they are acting contrary to God. They do not obey his law. In fact, they are not even able to obey his law. ⁸ The people who do what their evil attitude tells them cannot please God. ⁹ But we do not have to let our old evil nature control us. Instead, we can let God's Spirit control us, because he lives within us. If the Spirit who comes from Christ does not live in people, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But since Christ is living in you by his Spirit, God views your bodies as dead, so you no longer have to sin. And he views your spirits as alive, because he has put you right with himself. ¹¹ God caused Jesus to live again after he died. And because his Spirit lives in you, God will also make your bodies, which now are sure to die, live again. He caused Christ to live again after he died, and he will make you live again by causing his Spirit to do it.

¹² Therefore, my fellow believers, we are obligated live as the Spirit directs us. What we are not obligated to live as our old evil nature wants us to. ¹³ If you do what your old evil nature wants, you will surely not live forever with God. But if the Spirit stops you from doing those things, then you will live forever.

¹⁴ We who obey the Spirit of God are God's children. ¹⁵ This is because you have not received a spirit who makes you live in fear. You are not like slaves who fear their masters. On the contrary, God has given you his Spirit, and his Spirit has made us God's children. The Spirit now enables us to cry out to God, "You are my Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit himself confirms what our spirits say, that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Because we are God's children, we also will one day receive what God has promised us. And we will receive this together with Christ. But we must suffer for doing good as Christ did, in order that God may honor us.

¹⁸ I think that what we suffer during the present time is not worth paying attention to, because the future splendor that God will reveal to us will be so great. ¹⁹ The things that God has created are very eagerly waiting for the time when he will reveal who his true children are. ²⁰ God caused the things that he created to be unable to achieve what he had intended. That was not because they wanted to fail. On the contrary, God made them that way because he was certain ²¹ that the things he created will one day no longer die, decay, and fall apart. He will free these things from that, in order that he can do the same wonderful things for these things that he will do for his children. ²² We know that until now it is as though all things that God created have been groaning together, and they want him to do those same wonderful things for them. But now it is just like a woman who is having the pains that come before she gives birth to a child. ²³ Not only do those things groan, but we ourselves also groan inwardly. We who have God's Spirit, who is like a partial gift we have received as we wait for everything that God will give us, we groan inwardly. We groan while we wait eagerly for the time when we will receive our full rights as God's adopted children. That will include his freeing our bodies from the things that hinder us on earth. He will do this by giving us new bodies. ²⁴ For God saved us because we had confidence in him. If we had now the things for which we have been waiting, we would not need to wait for them any longer. After all, if you possess something that you have been expecting to get, you certainly do not need to wait for it any longer. ²⁵ But because we keep waiting expectantly to receive what we do not yet have, we wait for it eagerly and patiently.

²⁶ Similarly, God's Spirit helps us when we are weak. We do not know what is

proper for us to pray. But God's Spirit knows; as he prays for us, he groans in a way that cannot be expressed in words. ²⁷ God, who examines our inner attitude and mind, understands what his Spirit desires. His Spirit prays for us who belong to God exactly as God wants him to pray.

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God, he works out all things that happen to them in a way that does us good. He does this for those whom he has chosen, because that was what he planned to do. ²⁹ God knew previously that we would believe in him. We are those who God also decided previously would have a character like his Son's character. The result is that Christ is God's firstborn Son, and those who are God's children are the many younger brothers of Jesus. ³⁰ And the ones God decided previously who would be like his Son, he also called them to be with him. And the ones he called to be with him, he also made them to be right with himself. And to the ones whom he has put right with himself, he also will give them honor.

³¹ So I will tell you what we must learn from all these things that God does for us. Because God is acting on our behalf, no one can win against us! ³² God did not spare even his very own Son. Instead, he turned him over to others to cruelly kill him in order that all we who believe in him may benefit from his dying for us. Because God did that, he will also certainly give us freely everything that we need to live for him. ³³ No one can accuse us before God of doing wrong, for he has chosen us to belong to him. He is the one who has put us right with himself. ³⁴ No one can condemn us any longer. Christ is the one who died for us—and more than that, he also was raised from the dead—and he is ruling with God in the place of honor, and he is the one who is pleading

for us. ³⁵ Absolutely no one and nothing can cause Christ to stop loving us! Even if someone afflicts us, or even someone harms us, or even if we have nothing to eat, or even if we do not have enough clothes, or even if we live in a dangerous situation, or even if someone will kill us.

³⁶ Such things may happen to us, just as it is written that David said to God, “Because we are your people, others repeatedly attempt to kill us. They consider that we are only people to be killed, like a butcher considers that sheep are only animals to be slaughtered.” ³⁷ But even though all these bad things happen to us, we win completely over these things because Christ, who loves us, helps us. ³⁸ I am completely convinced that neither anything from the realm of the dead, nor what happens to us while we live, nor angels, nor demons, nor present events, nor future events, nor powerful beings, ³⁹ nor powerful beings in the sky or below it, nor anything else that God has created can cause God to stop loving us. God showed us that he loves us by sending Jesus Christ our Lord to die for us.

the worship of God. They are the ones to whom God promised many things. ⁵ It was our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom God chose to begin our nation. And, most importantly, it was from us Israelites that the Christ was born as a human being. He is God, the one who is worthy that we praise him forever! This is true!

⁶ God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would all inherit his blessings. But although most of my fellow Israelites have rejected Christ, that does not prove that God has failed to do the things that he promised. For it is not all people who are descended from Jacob and who call themselves the people of Israel whom God considers to be truly his people. ⁷ And it is also not all of Abraham’s natural descendants that God considers to be Abraham’s true descendants. Instead, God considers only some of them to be Abraham’s true descendants. This agrees with what he told Abraham: “It is Isaac, not any of your other sons, whom I will consider to be the true father of your descendants.” ⁸ What I mean is, not all of Abraham’s descendants are the people that God accepts as his own children. Instead, only the people that God had in mind when he promised to give Abraham descendants—it is these people whom he considers to be Abraham’s true descendants and his own children. ⁹ This is what God promised Abraham: “About this time next year I will come back to you, and Sarah your wife will bear a son.” God promised this, and he made it happen. ¹⁰ It was similar with Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, Abraham’s son, when Rebecca conceived twins. ¹¹ Before the twins, Jacob and Esau, were born, ¹² the children had not yet done anything good or bad, God said to Rebecca, “The older one will serve the younger one, contrary to normal custom.” God said this in order that we might know this: That when he plans to do some-

Chapter 9

¹ Because I am joined to Christ, I will tell you the truth. I am not lying! My conscience confirms what I say because the Holy Spirit controls me. ² I tell you that I grieve very greatly and deeply about my fellow Israelites. ³ I personally would be willing to let God curse me and, keep me apart from Christ forever if that would help my fellow Israelites, my natural kinsmen, to believe in Christ. ⁴ They, like me, are Israelites. God chose them to be his children. It is to them that he showed how wonderful he is. It is with them that he made the covenants. It is to them that he gave the law. They are the ones who have

thing, he chooses the people because he wants to choose them, not because they have done anything for him.¹³ It is just what God said in the scriptures: "I chose Jacob, the younger son. I rejected Esau, the older son."

¹⁴ Someone might ask me, "Is God unjust by choosing only certain people?" I would reply, "He is certainly not unjust!"

¹⁵ God told Moses, "I will pity and help anyone whom I choose!"¹⁶ So God chooses people, not because they want God to choose them or because they try hard to please him. Instead, he chooses people because he himself has mercy on undeserving ones.¹⁷ Moses recorded that God had told Pharaoh, "This is why I made you king of Egypt: It was so I might fight against you and everyone in the world will help others respect my reputation."

¹⁸ So we know that God kindly helps the ones he wants to act kindly toward. And we also know that he makes stubborn anyone who he wants to be stubborn, such as Pharaoh.

¹⁹ Maybe one of you will say to me, "Because God determines ahead of time everything that people do and no one can resist what God has wished, it is not right for God to punish those who sin."²⁰ I would reply,

"You are only a human being, so you have no right to criticize God! He is like a man who makes clay pots. A pot has no right to ask its maker, "Why did you make me like this?"²¹ Instead, the potter certainly has the right to take a lump of clay and use part of it to make a beautiful pot that people will value highly—and then use the rest of the clay for a pot that someone will use every day. Certainly God has the same right.²² Although God desires to show that he is angry about sin, and although he desires to make clear that he can powerfully punish people who have sinned, he tolerated very

patiently the people who caused him to be angry and who deserved to be destroyed.

²³ God has been patient in order that he might make clear how very wonderfully he acts toward those upon whom he has mercy, whom he prepared ahead of time in order that they might live with him.²⁴

That means us whom he chose—not only us Jews, but also non-Jews.²⁵ God has the right to choose from among both Jews and non-Jews, as the prophet Hosea wrote:

"Many people who were not my people—I will say they are my people.

Many people whom I did not love before, I will say that I now love them."

²⁶ And another prophet wrote: "Where God told them before, 'You are not my people,'

in those same places they are told that they will become children of the true God."

²⁷ Isaiah also exclaimed concerning the Israelites: "Even though the Israelites are so many that no one can count them, like sand particles beside the ocean, only a small part of them will be saved,²⁸ because the Lord will punish completely and speedily the people who live in that land, as he said that he would do."

²⁹ Isaiah also wrote, "If the Lord of the heavenly armies had not mercifully allowed some of our descendants to survive, we would have become like the people of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, whom he completely destroyed."

³⁰ We must conclude this: Although the non-Jews were not trying to be holy, they discovered that God would put them right with himself if they trusted in Christ.³¹ But the people of Israel did indeed try to be holy by obeying God's law, but they were not able to.³² They were not able to, because they tried to do things to please God. They lost their balance when they

refused to trust God to forgive them by putting their trust in Christ.³³ This is what a prophet said would happen: “Listen! I am placing in Israel one who is like a stone on which people will stumble. What he does will make people angry. Nevertheless, those who believe in him will not be ashamed.”

Chapter 10

¹ My fellow believers, what I greatly desire and what I pray to God earnestly for is that he will save my own people, the Jews.

² I declare truthfully about them that although they earnestly go after God, they do not understand how to go after him in the right way. ³ They do not know how God puts people right with himself. They want to put themselves right with God, so they do not accept what God wishes to do for them. ⁴ Christ has perfectly obeyed the law in order to put everyone who believes in him right with God. So the law is no longer necessary.

⁵ Moses wrote about people who tried to obey all of God’s laws: “It is the people who have done perfectly the things that the law requires who will live forever.” ⁶ But those whom God puts right with himself because they trust in Christ—to them Moses says, “No one should try to go to heaven,” that is, in order to bring Christ down to us. ⁷ Moses also says this to them: “No one should try to go down to where the dead are,” that is, in order to bring Christ back from the dead for us. ⁸ But instead, those who believe in Christ can say what Moses wrote: “You can find out about God’s message very easily. You can speak about it and think about it.” This is the message that we proclaim: People must believe in Christ. ⁹ This message is that if anyone of you confirms that Jesus

is Lord, and if you truly believe that God raised him from the dead, he will save you. ¹⁰ If people believe these things, God will put them right with himself. And for those who state publicly that Jesus is Lord—God will save them. ¹¹ It is written in the scriptures about the Christ, “Whoever believes in him will not be disappointed or ashamed.” ¹² In this way, God treats the Jews and the non-Jews the same. Because he is the same Lord for all people who believe in him, he greatly helps all who ask him to help them. ¹³ This is just like what the scriptures say: “The Lord God will save all those who ask him.”

¹⁴ Most people have certainly not believed in Christ, and some people might try to explain why they have not done so. They might say, “People certainly cannot ask Christ to help them if they have not first believed in him! And they certainly cannot believe in him if they have not heard about him! And they certainly cannot hear about him if someone does not preach to them about him!” ¹⁵ And those who could preach to them about Christ, certainly cannot do so if God does not send them. But if some believers preached to them, it would be just like the scriptures say: ‘It is wonderful when people come and bring good news!’” ¹⁶ I would reply in this way to those who say such things: God has indeed sent people to preach the message about Christ. But not all the people of Israel have paid attention to the good news! It is like what Isaiah said when he felt very discouraged: “Lord, it seems as if hardly anyone believed what they heard us preach!” ¹⁷ So then, I tell you that people are believing in Christ because they hear about him, and people are hearing the message because others are preaching about Christ!

¹⁸ But if someone said to those people, “Of course the Israelites have heard this mes-

sage,” I would say, “Yes, indeed! It is like what the scriptures say:

“The people living all over the world have seen the creation, and what it proves about who God is—even the people living in the most remote places in the world have understood this!”

¹⁹ Furthermore, it is true that the Israelites really did hear this message. They understood it, too, but they refused to believe it. Remember that Moses was the first one to warn the people like this. He told them that God said, “You think that the non-Jewish nations are not real nations at all. But some of them will believe in me, and I will bless them. Then you will envy them and be angry at them, people who you do not think understand me.” ²⁰ Remember also that God said very boldly through Isaiah, “The non-Jews who did not try to know me will surely find me! I will surely reveal what I am like to those who did not ask for me!”

²¹ But God also speaks about the Israelites. He says, “For a long time I have held out my arms to the people who disobeyed and rebelled against me, in order to invite them to return to me.”

Chapter 11

¹ If I should ask, “Has God rejected his people the Jews?” The answer would be, “Certainly not! Remember that I also belong to the people of Israel. I am a descendant of Abraham, and I belong to the tribe of Benjamin, but God has not rejected me!” ² No, God has not rejected his people, whom he chose long ago to be people whom he would bless in a special way. Remember that Elijah mistakenly complained to God about the people of Israel, as the scriptures say: ³ “Lord, they have killed the

rest of your prophets, and they have destroyed your altars. I am the only one who believes in you who remains alive, and now they are trying to kill me!” ⁴ God answered him like this: “You are not the only one left who is faithful to me. I have taken care to keep for myself seven thousand men in Israel, men who have not worshiped the false god Baal.” ⁵ So, similarly, there is also at this time a leftover group of us Jews who have become believers. God has chosen us to become believers only because he acts kindly toward us, in ways that we do not deserve. ⁶ Since it is because he acts kindly toward those whom he chooses, it is not because they have done good things that he has chosen them. If God chose people because they did good deeds, then he would not need to act kindly toward them.

⁷ Since God chose only some people of Israel, this makes us know that most of the Jews failed to get what they were looking for—(although the Jews whom God chose did get it). Most of the Jews remained unwilling to understand what God was telling them. ⁸ This is exactly what the prophet Isaiah had written about: “God caused them to be stubborn. They should be able to understand the truth about Christ, but they cannot. They should obey God when he speaks, but they do not. It is like that to this very day.” ⁹ The Jews remind me of what King David said, when he asked God to cause his enemies’ senses to be dull: “Make them stupid, like animals that fall into nets or traps! May they feel as safe as if they were at their banquets, but let those feasts be times when you will catch them, and they will sin, with the result that you will destroy them.

¹⁰ May they not see the danger when it comes to them. May you always make them suffer because of their troubles.”

¹¹ If I should ask, “When the Jews sinned

by not believing in Christ, did that mean they will always be apart from God?" I would reply, "No, they have certainly not separated themselves from God permanently! Instead, because they sinned, God is saving non-Jews in order to cause the Jews to envy the way he blesses non-Jews, so that they will ask Christ to save them."

¹² When the Jews rejected Christ, the result was that God abundantly blessed the other people in the world by offering them the opportunity to believe. And when the Jews failed spiritually, the result was that God abundantly blessed the non-Jews. Since that is true, think how wonderful it will be when the complete number of the Jews whom God has chosen will believe in Christ !

¹³ Now it is to you non-Jews that I am saying what follows. I am the one who is the apostle to non-Jews such as you, and I highly value this work that God appointed me to do. ¹⁴ But I also hope that by my labors I will make my fellow Jews jealous, with the result that some of them will believe and thus be saved. ¹⁵ God has rejected most of my fellow Jews because they refused to believe, with the result that he made peace between himself and other people in the world. If that is what happened after most of the Jews rejected Christ, think about the excellent things that will happen after they trust in him. It will be like they have risen from the realm of the dead! ¹⁶ Just like the whole lump of dough will belong to God if people offer to God the bread baked from the first part of it, so the Jews will belong to God because their ancestors belonged to God. And just like the branches of a tree will belong to God if the root belongs to God, so the descendants of our great Jewish ancestors who belonged to God will also some day belong to God.

¹⁷ God has rejected many of the Jews, like

people break off dead branches of a tree. And each of you non-Jews whom God has accepted is like a branch of a uncultivated olive tree that someone spliced into the trunk of a cultivated olive tree. God has caused you to benefit from how he blessed our first Jewish ancestors, just as branches benefit from the sap from the root of a cultivated olive tree. ¹⁸ However, you non-Jews must not despise the Jews whom God rejected, even though they are like the branches that someone breaks off from the tree! If you want to boast because of how God has saved you, remember this: Branches do not feed a root. Instead, the root feeds the branches. Similarly, God has helped you because of what you have received from the Jews! You have given the Jews nothing that helps them.

¹⁹ Maybe you will say to me, "God rejected the Jews like people break bad branches off a tree and throw them away, and he has done this in order that he might accept us non-Jews, just like people put branches of a wild olive tree into the trunk of a good tree." ²⁰ I would reply that this is true. However, it is because the Jews did not believe in Christ, God rejected them. As for you, it is only because you believe in Christ that you stand strong! So do not become proud, but instead be filled with awe! ²¹ Since God did not spare those unbelieving Jews, who grew up like a tree's natural branches that came from the root, then know, if you do not believe, he will not spare you either!

²² Note then, that God acts kindly, but he also acts severely. He has acted severely toward the Jews who have refused to trust in Christ. God has acted kindly toward you, but he will act severely if you do not keep trusting in Christ. ²³ And if the Jews believe in Christ, God will also put them back into the tree again, because God is able to do that. ²⁴ You non-Jews who were previously apart from God have benefited

from the ways in which God blessed the Jews. That is like taking branches that someone has cut from a wild olive tree—a tree that just grew without anyone planting it—and, contrary to what people usually do, splicing them into a cultivated olive tree. So God will much more readily receive back the Jews because they belonged to him before! That will be like putting the original branches that someone cut off, back into the olive tree to which they originally belonged!

²⁵ My non-Jewish fellow believers, I certainly want you to understand this secret truth, so that you do not think you know everything: Many people of Israel will continue to be stubborn until all the non-Jews whom God has chosen have believed in Jesus. ²⁶ And then God will save all of Israel. Then these words in the scriptures will become true:

“The one who sets his people free will come from where God is among the Jews. He will forgive the sins of the Israelite people.”

²⁷ And as God says,

“The covenant that I will make with them is one by which I will forgive their sins.”

²⁸ The Jews rejected the good news about Christ and now God treats them as his enemies. But that has helped you non-Jews. But because they are the people whom God chose, God still loves them because of what he promised to do for their ancestors. ²⁹ He still loves them, because he never changed his mind about what he has promised to give them, and about how he has called them to be his own people. ³⁰ You non-Jews once disobeyed God, but now he has acted mercifully toward you because the Jews disobeyed him. ³¹ Similarly, now they have disobeyed God. The result is that in the very same way in which he acted mercifully toward you, he

will act mercifully toward them again. ³² God has declared and proved that all people, both Jews and non-Jews, have been disobedient to him. He has declared that because he wants to act mercifully toward us all.

³³ I marvel how great are the wise things that God has done and what he has always known! No one can understand them or know them fully. ³⁴ I remember the scriptures that say, “No one has ever known what the Lord thinks. No one has ever been able to give him advice.” ³⁵ And, “No one has given anything to God in a way that God had to reward him.”

³⁶ God is the one who created all things. He is also the one who sustains all things. The reason that he created them was that they might praise him. May all people honor him forever! May it be so!

Chapter 12

¹ My fellow believers, since God has acted mercifully toward you in so many ways, I appeal to all of you that you present yourselves like a sacrifice that is alive, a sacrifice that you give to God alone and that pleases him. This is the only right way to worship him. ² Do not let unbelievers guide you in how you behave. Instead, let God change your way of thinking and make it new, in order that you may know what he wants you to do, so you may know how to act in ways that please him, the ways in which he himself acts.

³ Because God has kindly appointed me to be his apostle, which I did not deserve, I say this to every one of you: Do not think you are better than you really are. Instead, think about yourselves in a sensible way, a way that is the same as the way in which God has allowed you to trust in him. ⁴ Although a person has one body,

it consists of many parts. All of the parts are necessary for the body, but they do not all function the same way.⁵ Similarly, we, although we are many, are united into one group because we are joined to Christ, and we belong to one another. So no one should act as though he is more important than the others!⁶ Instead, since each one of us can do different things because God makes us different from each other, we should do them eagerly and cheerfully! Those of us to whom God gives messages for others should speak in a way that fits our trust in God.⁷ Those whom God has enabled to serve others should do that. Those whom God has enabled to teach his truth should do that.⁸ Those whom God has enabled to encourage others should do it wholeheartedly. Those whom God has enabled to give things to others, should do so without holding back. Those whom God has enabled to manage others should do it, and do it with care. Those whom God has enabled to help the needy should do it cheerfully.

⁹ The way you must love people is to love them sincerely! Hate what is evil! Continue to eagerly do what God considers to be good!¹⁰ Love one another as members of the same family do; and in regard to honoring one another, you should be the first ones to do it!¹¹ Do not be lazy. Instead, be eager to serve God! Be enthusiastic as you serve the Lord!¹² Rejoice because you are confidently awaiting what God will do for you! When you suffer, be patient! Keep praying and never give up!¹³ If any of God's people lacks anything, share with them what you have! Be creative in hosting others!¹⁴ Ask God to be kind to those who persecute you because you believe in Jesus! Ask him to be kind to them; do not ask him to cause bad things to happen to them.¹⁵ If they are joyful, you should rejoice with them! If they are sad, you should be sad with them!¹⁶ De-

sire for others what you desire for yourselves. Do not be proud in how you think; instead, be friends with people who seem unimportant. Do not consider yourselves wise.¹⁷ Do not do evil deeds to anyone who has done evil to you. Act in a way that all people will know is good!¹⁸ Live peacefully with other people whenever it is possible, to the extent that you can control the situation.

¹⁹ My fellow believers whom I love, do not do evil in return when people do evil to you! Instead, allow God to punish them. The scriptures say, "I will pay back those who do evil. It is my right to pay them back," says the Lord.²⁰ Instead of doing evil to those who have done evil to you, do as the scriptures teach: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them! If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. By doing that, you will cause them to feel the pain of shame and perhaps they will change their attitude toward you."²¹ Do not let evil deeds that others have done to you overcome you. Instead, do for them better than what they have done to you!

Chapter 13

¹ Every believer must obey the government officials. Remember that God is the only one who gives officials their authority. Furthermore, those officials that exist are ones who have been appointed by God.² So whoever resists the officials is resisting what God has established. Furthermore, those who resist officials will cause the officials to punish them.³ I say this, because rulers do not cause people who do good deeds to be afraid. Instead, they cause people who do evil to be afraid. So if any of you do good, they will praise you instead of punishing you!⁴ All officials exist in order to serve God, in order that they

may help each of you. If any of you does what is evil, of course you should be afraid of them. The officials exist to serve God by punishing those who do evil.⁵ So, it is necessary for you to obey the officials, not only because they will punish you if you disobey them, but also because you know within yourselves that you should be subject to them!⁶ It is for this reason that you also pay taxes, because the officials are ones who serve God as they continually do their work.⁷ Give to all the officials what you are supposed to give to them! Pay taxes to those who require that you pay taxes. Pay duties on goods to those who require that you pay those duties. Respect those whom you ought to respect. Honor those whom you ought to honor.

⁸ Pay all of your debts when you are supposed to pay them. The only thing that is like a debt that you should never stop paying is to love one another. Whoever loves others has fulfilled all that God requires in his law.⁹ There are many things that God has commanded in his law, such as do not commit adultery, do not murder anyone, do not steal, and do not desire anything that belongs to someone else. But we can sum up the meaning of all the law in this sentence: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."¹⁰ If you love everyone around you, you will harm no one. So whoever loves others fulfills all that God's law requires.

¹¹ Do what I have just told you, especially since you know how important is the time in which we are now living. You know that it is time for you to be fully alert and active, like people who have awakened from sleeping, because the time when Christ will finally deliver us from this world's sin and sorrow is near. That time is closer now than when we first believed in Christ.¹² Our time to live in this world

is almost ended, like a night that is nearly ended. The time when Christ will return is near. So we must stop doing the wicked deeds that people like to do at night, and we must be doing the things that will help us resist evil, as soldiers who put on their armor in the daytime get ready to resist their enemies.¹³ We must behave properly, as though the time when Christ will return were already here. We must not get drunk and do evil things with others. We must not commit any kind of sexual immorality or wild sensual behavior. We must not quarrel. We must not be jealous of other people.¹⁴ On the contrary, we should be like the Lord Jesus Christ so that others will see what he is like. You should stop wanting to do the things that your old evil nature wants to do.

Chapter 14

¹ Accept those who are not sure whether God will permit them to do certain things some people think are wrong. But when you accept them, do not argue with them about what they think. These questions are only personal opinions.² Some people believe that they may eat all kinds of food. Others believe that God does not want them to eat certain things, so they believe that they may eat only vegetables.³ Anyone who thinks that it is all right to eat all kinds of food must not despise those who do not think that. Anyone who thinks it is not all right to eat all kinds of food must not condemn those who think differently, because God himself has accepted those people.⁴ You are wrong when you evaluate somebody else's servant. We are all God's servants so God is the master of us all. He is the one who will decide whether those people have done wrong! No one should judge another in this regard, because he is able to keep them faith-

ful to him.

⁵ Some people regard certain days as more holy than other days. Other people regard all days as equally suitable for worshiping God. Each person should be fully convinced about such matters, thinking and deciding for himself and not for others. ⁶ As for those who believe that they should worship on a certain day of the week, it is to honor the Lord that they worship on that day. And as for those who think that it is all right to eat all kinds of food, it is to honor the Lord that they eat those foods, because they thank God for their food. As for those who abstain from eating certain kinds of food, it is to honor the Lord that they do not eat those foods, and they also thank God for the food that they do eat. So these people are not wrong, even though they think differently. ⁷ None of us should live merely to please ourselves, and none of us should think that when we die, it affects only us. ⁸ While we live, it is the Lord whom we belong to and should be trying to please, and not just ourselves. And when we die, it is the Lord whom we should be trying to please. So, while we live and also when we die, we should try to please the Lord, for we belong to him. ⁹ For Christ died and became alive again in order that he might be Lord whom all people should obey, both those alive and those who are dead.

¹⁰ It is disgraceful that you who obey certain rules say that God will punish your fellow believers who do not obey them. For God will judge each one of us. ¹¹ We know this because it is written in the scriptures:

"Everyone will bow down before me!

And everyone will praise me."

¹² So we will each have to tell God what we have done and let him decide whether or not he approves of it.

¹³ Since it is God who will judge everyone, we must stop saying that God should punish some of our fellow believers! Instead, you must be determined to never cause another brother or sister to sin or to stop trusting Christ. ¹⁴ Because I am joined to the Lord Jesus, I am absolutely certain that there is nothing that by itself is wrong to eat. But if people think it is wrong to eat something, then for them it is wrong to eat it. So you should not encourage them to eat it. ¹⁵ If you eat food that a fellow believer thinks is wrong to eat, you might cause him to stop obeying God. You would no longer be loving him. Do not cause any fellow believer to stop trusting in Christ. After all, Christ died for him, too! ¹⁶ Similarly, do not do something that fellow believers would call bad, even if you think it is good. ¹⁷ When God rules how we live, we do not worry about what we eat and drink. Instead, we think about how what is the right way to obey him, have peace with each other, and rejoice because of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Those who serve Christ by acting in such ways please God, and others will also respect them.

¹⁹ So we should always eagerly try to live in a way that will cause peace among fellow Christians, and we should try to do what will help each other to trust and obey Christ. ²⁰ Do not destroy how God has helped any believer just because you want to eat a certain kind of food. It is true that God allows us to eat every kind of food. But if you eat something that another believer thinks is wrong, then you are encouraging him to do what he thinks is wrong. ²¹ It is good neither to eat meat nor to drink wine, nor to do anything else at any time if it will cause one of your fellow believers to stop trusting in God. ²² Let God tell you what things are right for you to do, but do not try to force others to accept what you believe. And you will

please God if you have no doubts about your convictions about what is right and wrong to do. ²³ But some believers fear that God will not be pleased if they eat certain kinds of food. And indeed, he will say that they have done wrong, if they do not do what they believe to be right. If we do anything without being certain that God approves of it, we are sinning.

Chapter 15

¹ Those of us believers who are sure that God allows us to do many more things than other believers think he allows them to do—we should be patient with them and allow them to inconvenience us. This is more important than our pleasing ourselves. ² Each of us should do the things that please our fellow believers, and things that will help them, things that will encourage them to trust in Christ. ³ We should please our fellow believers, since Christ has set us an example. He did not do things to please himself. On the contrary, he tried to please God even when others insulted him. That was as the scriptures say: “When people insulted you, it was as though they were also insulting me.” ⁴ Remember that all the things written in the scriptures are there to teach us, so that we may become patient in hardship. In this way the scriptures will encourage us to expect that God will do for us everything that he has promised.

⁵ I pray that God give you patience and encouragement so that you all live in peace with each other, doing as Christ Jesus did. ⁶ If you do this, you all will be praising God together, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ So I say to all of you believers at Rome, accept each other. If you do that, people will praise God as they see you behave like

Christ. Accept each other just like Christ accepted you! ⁸ I want you to remember that Christ helped us Jews to know the truth about God. That is, he came to make come true everything that God had promised our ancestors that he would do. ⁹ But he also came to help the non-Jews, so they would praise God for his mercy. God’s mercy has produced what is written in the scriptures that David said to God: “So I will praise you among the non-Jews; I will sing and praise you.” ¹⁰ Moses also wrote, “You non-Jews, rejoice with us who are God’s people.” ¹¹ And David wrote in the scriptures, “Praise the Lord, all you non-Jews; may everyone praise him.” ¹² And Isaiah wrote in the scriptures, “There will be a descendant of King David who will rule over the non-Jews. They will confidently expect him to fulfill what he has promised.”

¹³ I pray that God cause you to be confidently expecting him to do what he has promised. I pray that he will cause you to be completely joyful and peaceful as you trust in him. The Holy Spirit will enable you to more and more confidently expect to receive what God has promised you.

¹⁴ My fellow believers, I myself am completely sure that you yourselves have acted toward others in a completely good way. You have done that because you have known completely all that God wants you to know and because you are able to teach each other. ¹⁵ However, I have written to you quite openly in this letter about some things in order to remind you about them. I have written this because God has made me an apostle, although I did not deserve this. ¹⁶ He did this in order that I should work for Jesus Christ among the non-Jews. God has appointed me to act like a priest as I proclaim his good news in order that he may accept the non-Jews who believe in Christ. They will

be like an offering that the Holy Spirit has set completely apart for God only.

¹⁷ It follows that, because of my relationship with Christ Jesus, I am happy about my work for God. ¹⁸ I will speak boldly only about the work that Christ has accomplished through me that non-Jews might pay attention to the message about Christ. These accomplishments came because of words and deeds ¹⁹ by showing signs and other things that convince people. I have done those things God's Spirit has enabled me. In this way I have traveled all the way around from Jerusalem to the province of Illyricum, and I have completed my work of proclaiming the message about Christ in those places. ²⁰ As I proclaim that message, I am always eagerly trying to proclaim it in places where people have not already heard about Christ. I do that in order that I might not be simply continuing the work that someone else already started. I do not want to be like a man who builds a house on someone else's foundation. ²¹ On the contrary, I teach non-Jews, so that what happens may be like what was written: "The people who have never heard any news about the Christ, they will see him. Those who have never heard of him will understand about him."

²² Because I have attempted to preach the message about Christ in places where they have not heard about him, I have been stopped many times from coming to visit you. ²³ But now there are no more places in these regions where people have not heard about Christ. Furthermore, for several years I have wanted to visit you. ²⁴ So I hope to go to Spain, and I hope that you will help me on my journey. And I would like to pause on my journey for a while in order to enjoy being with you. ²⁵ But I cannot visit you now, because I am about to go to Jerusalem in order to take money for God's people there. ²⁶ The believers

in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia decided to contribute money to help the believers in Jerusalem, God's own people, who are poor. ²⁷ They themselves decided to do this, but truly they owe something to God's people in Jerusalem. The non-Jewish believers benefited spiritually from Jewish believers because they heard the message about Christ from them, so the non-Jews should also help the Jewish believers in Jerusalem by giving them material things. ²⁸ When I finish this task of delivering all this money that the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have given, I will leave Jerusalem and visit you in Rome while I am on my way to Spain. ²⁹ And I know that when I visit you, Christ will abundantly bless us.

³⁰ Because we belong to our Lord Jesus Christ and because the Spirit of God causes us to love each other, I urge you all that you help me by fervently praying to God for me. ³¹ Pray that God will protect me from the unbelieving Jews while I am in Judea. And pray that the believers in Jerusalem will be glad to receive the money that I am bringing them. ³² Pray these things in order that God may be pleased for me to come to you, and that I may be able to rest among you—and you rest with me—for a while. ³³ I pray that God, who causes us to have peace, will be with all of you and will help you. May it be so!

Chapter 16

¹ By means of this letter I am introducing and recommending to you our fellow believer Phoebe, who will be taking this letter to you. She is a servant in the assembly in the city of Cenchrea. ² I request that you receive her because you are all joined to the Lord. You should do that because

God's people ought to welcome their fellow believers. I am also requesting that you help her by giving her whatever she needs, because she has helped many people, including me.

³ Tell Priscilla and her husband Aquila that I send greetings to them. They worked with me for Christ Jesus, ⁴ and they were even willing to die for me. I thank them, and the non-Jewish congregations also thank them for saving my life. ⁵ Also tell the congregation that meets in their house that I send my greetings to them. Tell my dear friend Epaenetus the same thing. He is the first man in the province of Asia to believe in Christ. ⁶ Tell Mary, who has worked hard for Christ in order to help you, that I send my greetings to her. ⁷ Tell the same thing to Andronicus and his wife Junia, fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are well known among the apostles, and they became Christians before I did. ⁸ I also send my greetings to Ampliatus, who is a dear friend and is joined to the Lord. ⁹ I also send my greetings to Urbanus, who works for Christ with us, and to my dear friend Stachys. ¹⁰ I also send my greetings to Apelles, of whom Christ has approved because he successfully endured trials. Tell the believers who live in the house of Aristobulus that I send my greetings to them. ¹¹ Also tell Herodion, who is my fellow Jew, that I send my greetings to him. Tell the same thing to those who live in the house of Narcissus, those who belong to the Lord. ¹² Tell the same thing to Tryphaena and her sister Tryphosa, who work hard for the Lord. I also send my greetings to Persis. We all love her, and she has worked very hard for the Lord. ¹³ Tell Rufus, who is an outstanding Christian, that I send my greetings to him. Tell the same thing to his mother, who has treated me as though I were her son. ¹⁴ Tell Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the

fellow believers who meet with them that I am sending my greetings to them. ¹⁵ I also send my greetings to Philologus, to his wife Julia, to Nereus and his sister, and to Olympas, and to all God's people who meet with them. ¹⁶ Greet one another affectionately in a pure way, when you gather together. The believers in all the assemblies joined to Christ greet you.

¹⁷ My fellow believers, I tell you that you must be careful about the people who are causing divisions among you and who cause people to stop honoring God. Keep away from such people! ¹⁸ They do not serve our Lord Christ! On the contrary, they only want to satisfy their own desires. They deceive the people using smooth talk and praise so the people do not realize that these troublemakers are teaching false things. ¹⁹ Believers everywhere know that you have obeyed what Christ says in the good news. So I rejoice about you. But I also want you to be smart enough to recognize what is good and stay away from what is evil. ²⁰ If you do all these things, God, who gives us his peace, will soon smash the work of Satan because of your authority! I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to act kindly toward you.

²¹ Timothy, who works with me, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, who are my fellow Jews, want you to know that they are sending their greetings to you. ²² I, Tertius, one who belongs to the Lord, also want you to know that I am sending my greetings to you. I am writing down this letter as Paul tells me what to write. ²³⁻²⁴ I, Paul, am staying in the house of Gaius, and the whole assembly here meets in his house. He also wants you to know that he is sending his greetings to you. Erasmus, who manages the city's money, sends his greetings to you also, along with our brother Quartus.

²⁵ Now to God, the one who is able to strengthen you spiritually by my proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ that God did not reveal in any age before our own time — ²⁶ but now God has made it known by means of what the scriptures said would happen — so that people in all the people groups in the world may believe in Christ and obey him. ²⁷ May God, who alone is wise, be praised forever, because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. May it be so!

1 CORINTHIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, am writing this letter. Sosthenes, our fellow believer, is with me as I write this letter to you. God appointed me to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and God chose me to serve him. ² This letter is to the church of God in Corinth, to those whom Christ Jesus has set apart for God, with everyone else—everywhere—who calls on God to save them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

³ May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ love you and give you peace.

⁴ I thank my God every day for you because of the many costly gifts that Christ Jesus has given to you because he loves you. ⁵ Christ has given you so many things. He helped you in all your speaking and in all your knowledge. ⁶ You yourselves are the proof that these statements about Christ are true. ⁷ That is the reason you do not lack any gift from the Spirit of God while you wait for the day when God will make the Lord Jesus Christ known and will show him to everyone. ⁸ God will also make you strong so you can serve him to the very end, so you will bring no shame upon yourselves on the day that our Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth. ⁹ God is keeping his promise to do that. God called you, so you can know and love his Son, Jesus Christ, who is our Lord.

¹⁰ My brothers and sisters, I beg you by the authority of Jesus, that you come to an agreement and that you settle your disagreements, and that you no longer divide yourselves into groups. Learn to see things from the same point of view and to work together to accomplish the same task. ¹¹ Those in Chloe's house have re-

ported to me that there are divisions and disagreements among some of you. ¹² This is the problem. Each of you claims to have loyalty to one leader or another. One says, "I am loyal to Paul." Another says, "I am loyal to Apollos." Someone else says, "I am loyal to Peter." And the last one says, "But I am loyal to Christ." ¹³ But Christ does not divide his loyalty. Paul was not crucified for you. The person who baptized you did not baptize you in the name of Paul. ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized only a few people there; among them I baptized Crispus and Gaius. ¹⁵ It would not be true that I baptized them in my name. ¹⁶ (Now I remember that I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but other than those people, I do not remember baptizing anyone else in Corinth.) ¹⁷ The most important work Christ sent me to do was to tell everyone the good news about him, not to baptize people. I did not proclaim the good news using human wisdom or clever words so instead I could use the power of the work of Christ dying on the cross.

¹⁸ For those who are dead to the things of God cannot understand him. Christ died for them on the cross, but this message is pointless to them. However, for those of us whom God has rescued and brought to life, this message allows God to powerfully work in us. ¹⁹ A prophet wrote in the scriptures:

"The wisdom of those who think they are wise,

I will destroy,

and I will make the brilliant plans of the intelligent
to be utter failures."

²⁰ Where are the wise people of this world? They did not understand anything about God. Neither did the scholars, nor those skilled in debate. For God

has shown that everything they call wisdom is really foolishness.²¹ In the wisdom of God, unbelievers did not come to know God by their own wisdom. So God was pleased to use a message that they thought was foolish. That is message we proclaimed and it had power to save all who believe it.²² The Jews wanted public displays of miraculous power before they would follow anyone. The Greeks are looking for wisdom through new and fresh ways of thinking about spiritual ideas.²³ But we proclaim a message about Christ, who died on a cross. For the Jews this message about the cross of Christ is something they cannot receive because death on a cross brings a curse with it. To the Greeks it is too foolish to deserve their attention.²⁴ But for us, we whom God called so we can know him, that message shows that God acted powerfully and wisely by sending Christ to die for us. The good news is not tied to any race or philosophy; in Christ there is no distinction between Jews and all the other nations and races on earth.²⁵ For the things of God that appears foolish are really wiser than the most brilliant ideas human beings can imagine. And the things of God that appear weakest are stronger than the strongest and greatest human being who ever lived.

²⁶ Brothers and sisters, look at the kind of person you were when God called you. See how unimportant you were. You were not the wisest of people. You were not important enough for people to obey you. You had no important ancestors.²⁷ Instead, God chose the things that made no sense to unbelievers so that they would stop praising themselves. God chose to use things that were weak to put to shame the things they believed were so strong.²⁸ God chose what the unbelievers think is of no importance in order to show that the things they consider to be important have

no value.²⁹ God did this so that no human being could have any reason to praise himself and he should offer God all praise instead.³⁰ Because of what God has done, you are now joined to Christ Jesus, who has made clear to us how wise God is. He has put us right with God, he has set us apart for God, and he has rescued us and brought us to safety.³¹ So, as the scriptures say:

“The one who praises himself should praise himself only in what the Lord has done for him.”

Chapter 2

¹ When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not make beautiful speeches, nor did I repeat to you the things that wise men said. I told you the hidden truths about God.² I decided not to talk to you about anything other than Jesus Christ and his death on the cross.³ You know how weak I was when I was with you. You know that fear filled my heart, and that you saw me trembling in terror.⁴ But you heard my message, and you know that when I spoke to you I did not give carefully planned speeches. Instead, the Spirit of God showed you that I was speaking the truth because of the power of the miracles he did through me.⁵ I taught this way so you might trust in God because of his power, and not because of anything having to do with human wisdom.

⁶ Now it is to those who trust fully in Christ that we speak. You now have wisdom, and that wisdom has nothing to do with the kings and governors in this life, all of whom will soon pass away.⁷ No, we proclaim wisdom that God has kept hidden until now; that wisdom is the wise things God decided to do before he created the world, and he decided to do those things

so that he and other beings would someday honor us. ⁸ None of those who rule this world knew about God's wise plans. If they had understood them, they never would have nailed the Lord, the one who is so very great, to the cross. ⁹ But in the scriptures it says:

"The things that no one has seen,
that no one has heard,
and that no one could imagine—

these are what God has prepared for those who love him."

¹⁰ These are the very things that God has shown us by the Spirit. For the Spirit sees everything and he knows everything. He even knows the deepest and hidden secrets that only God knows about himself.

¹¹ No one except the spirit of the person knows what he is thinking. So it is that no one knows the hidden things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² The Spirit that God gave us is not a spirit that comes from this world. We received the Spirit who comes from God. This Spirit helps us understand all the gifts God freely gives to us. ¹³ We teach these lessons that people schooled in the wisdom of this world cannot understand. These lessons are taught only by the Spirit of God. He helps us understand what these lessons mean. ¹⁴

The one who does not know God cannot accept these spiritual lessons. To him they sound like the lessons of fools. Even if he wanted to accept them, he would be unable to, because only people who have the wisdom that comes from God can understand these things. ¹⁵ The one who knows God evaluates all matters, but God will not accept their evaluation of him. ¹⁶ As one of our prophets wrote:

"It is impossible for anyone to know all that is in the mind of the Lord.

No one is able to teach God."

But we can know the very thoughts of Christ.

Chapter 3

¹ My brothers and sisters, when I was with you, you were not ready to hear the difficult truths about God. I could speak to you only as if you were little children who are joined to Christ. ² I taught you things that were easy to understand, as a mother feeds milk to her babies. You were not ready for solid food. And even now, you are not ready. ³ I say this because you are still acting as unbelievers even though you are Christians. I know you are not ready because many of you are jealous and quarreling with each other, and you are judging things just as if you were still unbelievers. ⁴ Some of you say you are following what I, Paul, have taught; others say they are following what Apollos has taught. You are acting the way unbelievers act.

⁵ Compared to the great work that God has done in your lives, Apollos is not important. Neither is Paul important. We are both servants, and we serve the same God in the ways that he has assigned to us. ⁶ Even though I was the first to plant the seed of God's word in you, it was Apollos who made sure you grew in faith. But it was God alone who can give spiritual growth to you. ⁷ Let me say it again: The ones who plant the seeds and water them, we do not matter in the least. God is the one who gives the growth. You are like a garden that he has planted. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters are working in the same job, and each one individually will receive a wage as a reward. The reward is the amount he is paid measured by how hard each one worked. ⁹ We are working together with God and we

both belong to God. But as for you, God is growing you in his field. It is as if he were constructing a building out of you.

¹⁰ God generously gave me the skills so I can do this task for him. I worked among you like an expert builder with great care. But after me, someone else will build on what I began. Everyone builds on what others did before. But each one must be careful how they build. ¹¹ For no other foundation can be laid other than the one that has already been set in place. That foundation is Jesus Christ. ¹² We are like builders who choose what to put on top of that foundation. Builders can chose to use valuable materials like gold, silver, and precious stones, or they can choose to use worthless materials like wood, hay, and straw. ¹³ God will judge our work and put on display what each of us has done for him. He will send fire to test the work we have done. That fire will prove the quality of the work that we did for him. ¹⁴ If what a person builds survives the fire that tests what he built, he will receive a reward for his work, ¹⁵ But if the fire burns up all his work, he will lose all his reward, but God can still save him, even though the flames completely devour everything he did.

¹⁶ Surely you know that you are the dwelling place where God lives, that you are his temple. Surely you know that the Spirit of God lives inside of you. ¹⁷ God promises that he will destroy anyone who attempts to destroy his temple. This is because his temple belongs to him alone. And he protects you by the same promise because you are now his temple and you belong to him alone!

¹⁸ Be on guard that you do not deceive yourselves. If any of you thinks he has great wisdom that unbelievers will admire, he should be careful. He would be far better off if he leaves alone all the things that unbelievers want, even if they

consider him a fool for doing so. When he leaves those things alone, he will begin to learn what is true wisdom. ¹⁹ What the world considers to be great wisdom is really foolishness to God. For scripture says,

“God catches the wise in their own foolish plans.”

²⁰ And again scripture teaches,

“The Lord overhears all the planning of the wise, and he knows that in the end, they will lose everything.”

²¹ So stop boasting about how good one Christian leader is or how good another Christian leader is. For God has given you all things. ²² God gave you Paul, and he gave you Apollos, and Peter. And God gave you this world, and your life, and his victory over death. And God gives you everything that exists and everything that will exist in the future—they are all yours; ²³ and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

Chapter 4

¹ A person should consider us as servants of Christ, and as those to whom God entrusted the hidden truths in the good news. ² We must faithfully do the work that God has given us to do because he trusts us to do it. ³ If a human being, or even a court of law, judges my life, I think little about it. I do not consider it worthwhile to judge myself. ⁴ I am not aware of anyone who accuses me of doing wrong. But that does not mean that I am innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ So then, you should not judge anything before it is time. The Lord will do that when he returns. He is the one who can bring to light everything that is hidden even in total darkness, and he can make a right judgment because he knows what each person truly thinks. When he comes, everyone

will receive whatever honor they deserve from the Lord.

⁶ Now, brothers and sisters, the rule we follow is “Do not go beyond what they have written in the scriptures.” Apollos and I live by it. For your sakes we teach only in this way so you can learn from us. It keeps you from being too proud about the people who are teaching it to you, whether it is I or Apollos. ⁷ There is no difference between you and any other believer. All of you have received everything as a gift. None of you is better than any other. None of you should boast like you are different from all the rest. We are all just the same.

⁸ But you act as if you have everything you want! You live as if you were rich! And you live as if you were reigning kings and queens—even without our help. Well, I wish you really had become kings and queens, for then we could have ruled with you! ⁹ But in reality, it seems that God has put us apostles on display at the end of a line of prisoners being paraded after a battle. We are like men who have been sentenced to death; we have been put on display for the whole world to see, both angels and human beings. ¹⁰ Others think of us apostles as fools because we live for Christ, and yet you see yourselves as wise people. We appear weak, but you seem to be the strong ones! You praise and honor yourselves, but we apostles are the ones whom other people hate. ¹¹ Up to this present time we apostles go around hungry and thirsty. We have been so poor we could not afford our own clothing. Officials have brutally beaten us again and again. We have no place to call our home. ¹² We work hard with our hands to make a living. When others curse us, we bless them in return. When others make us suffer, we endure it. ¹³ When people tell lies about us, we answer by being kind

to them. And yet, they treat us like the garbage of the world and like the filth that people want to throw into a garbage heap.

¹⁴ I am not trying to shame you, but I want to correct you as a loving parent would correct a child. ¹⁵ If you had ten thousand teachers telling you about Christ, you would still have only one spiritual father. I became your father in Christ when you believed the good news that I preached to you. ¹⁶ So I urge you to follow my example. ¹⁷ That is why I sent Timothy to you. I love him, and he is my faithful child. He will remind you of how I live as I am joined to Christ. I teach the same things everywhere we go and in every church we visit.

¹⁸ Some of you have become proud. You live as though I might not come back to you soon. ¹⁹ But if the Lord wants me to come, I will come to you soon. Then I will learn not only how these arrogant people talk, but I will find out whether they have God’s power in them. ²⁰ God’s kingdom is not about what you say; it is about God’s power. ²¹ What would you want me to do? Should I come to punish you with harsh discipline, or should I come so you can see how much I love you by how gentle I am to you?

Chapter 5

¹ People have told us that there is someone in your church who is living in sexual immorality, a kind of immorality that even the unbelievers do not allow. A man has a lover who is his father’s wife. ² You have been so arrogant! Rather you should have wept over this sin, for this harms the whole church. You must put this man out of your church. ³ I am not with you physically, but I am very concerned for you all,

and I am with you in my spirit. And I have already judged the one who did this, just as if I were with you. ⁴ When you gather together for worship under the authority of the Lord Jesus—and I am worshiping with you in spirit—⁵ you should turn this man over to Satan out into the world, so that his physical body might be destroyed, so that God may save his spirit on the day of the Lord's return.

⁶ It is not good that you are praising yourselves. Surely you know that evil is like yeast: A little yeast makes the whole loaf rise. ⁷ Sin is like that yeast. You must clean out the old yeast and throw it away so that it cannot infect the whole batch of dough. You are like an unleavened batch of dough. As in the Passover Festival, the yeast must be kept away from the bread. For Christ is our Passover lamb: He became the sacrifice for us. ⁸ So let us celebrate the Passover Festival, and let us follow all the rules of purification. We must throw out the old yeast, which stands for disobedience and wickedness, and we must celebrate the festival by obeying God and speaking truth to each other. If we do that, we will be like the bread that has no yeast.

⁹ I wrote to you, that you must not keep company with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰ Of course, I did not mean that you should not associate with unbelievers who are immoral, or who selfishly desire many things, or who trick and cheat to take from others, or who worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid all people like that. ¹¹ Instead, I mean that you are not to be close friends with a fellow believer who is living in sexual immorality. We must include other sins, such as greed, or idolatry, or one who is abusive in the way he talks to others, or a drunkard, or a swindler. You must not even eat with these people who claim to trust in Christ, yet they do these terri-

ble things. ¹² For I have no obligation to judge those who are outside the church of Christ. Your duty is to judge those who are in it. ¹³ God is the one who will judge those who are outside the church. The scriptures command us,

“You must take away the evil person who is among you!”

Chapter 6

¹ When you have a dispute with another believer, you should not have the audacity to take that matter before a civil judge who is not a believer. Take the matter to fellow believers, whom God has set apart for himself. ² You should know that we who belong to God will judge the world. If you will judge the world one day, you should be able to settle matters that are less important. ³ You should know that you will judge angels! Certainly you are able to judge matters in this life. ⁴ And if you can settle matters that are important in this life, you should not find it necessary to hand off disputes between Christians to be settled by unbelievers. ⁵ I say this to show how you have disgraced yourselves. There certainly must be someone in the church who is sensible enough to settle these disputes when these sort of cases come up between Christian brothers and sisters. ⁶ But instead, some believers among you accuse other believers in a civil court and you allow a judge who is an unbeliever to settle the matter!

⁷ When you have any disputes between one another it means that you have not done what you should have done. Allow a brother or sister to take advantage of you rather than you take them to court.

⁸ Instead, you have wronged and cheated others, and the ones you cheated are your own brothers and sisters.

⁹ Surely you understand that the wicked will not come under God's rule. Do not believe them when they tell you otherwise. The truth is that the sexually immoral, those who worship anything or anyone other than God, those who break their marriage vows, those who engage in perverse acts of so-called worship involving sex, and those who engage in the practice of homosexuality, ¹⁰ those who steal, the ones who are greedy for more, those who get drunk, those who tell lies about others, and those who trick and cheat to steal from others—these will never come under God's rule. ¹¹ Some of you used to do these things. But God has made you clean from your sins, he has set you apart for himself, and he has made you right with himself. He has done all this through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God.

¹² Some say this: "I am free to do anything I want, because I am joined to Christ." Yes, but because something is permitted does not mean it is good for me. "I am free to do anything I want"—but I will not allow anything to become my master. ¹³ People also say, "Food is made for a person's body to digest, and a person's body is made to digest food"—but God will soon do away with both food and the body's normal functions. Of course, they are really talking about sleeping with people. However, God did not make our bodies so we could be sexually immoral. But the body is to serve the Lord, and the Lord will provide for the body. ¹⁴ God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will also raise us up by his power to live again.

¹⁵ You should know that your bodies are joined to Christ. Should you take away that which is a part of Christ and join it together with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ You understand that anyone who sleeps with a prostitute becomes united with her. It

is like the scriptures say about marriage: "The two will become one." ¹⁷ And those who are joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

¹⁸ So when you want to commit a sexual sin, run away from it as quickly as you can! People say, "Every sin that a person commits is committed outside the body"—except that when one sins sexually, he sins against his own body. ¹⁹ You should know that your body is a dwelling place, a temple of the Holy Spirit within you. God gave you his Spirit and now you no longer belong to yourself. Instead, you belong to God. ²⁰ God purchased you with the price of his Son's life. Therefore honor God in all you do in your human body.

Chapter 7

¹ You wrote to me some questions about how married believers should live. Here is my answer. There may be times in which it is good to abstain from sleeping together in marriage. ² But people are tempted very often to be sexually immoral. So each husband should have his own wife, and each wife should have her own husband. ³ And each married believer should have the right to sleep with his or her spouse. ⁴ For the husband gives control of his body to his wife. And the wife gives control of her body to her husband. ⁵ So do not deprive one another of sleeping together, unless you both agree to abstain from it for a short period of time, so that you may pray. But after that time is over, come together again. Do not allow Satan to tempt you because you cannot control yourself.

⁶ I am not commanding you to get married, but I will compromise because I know that many of you are married or will wish to marry. ⁷ My example is before you: I am

single, and sometimes I wish that each of you were single in order to serve God. But God gives many different gifts to his children; he makes some able to be married, and others to remain single.

⁸ To those of you who have never married and those whose husbands have died, I say that it would be good if you continue to be single, like me. ⁹ But if it is hard for you to control yourself, you should get married. It is better for you to marry than to suffer from strong sexual desires.

¹⁰ The Lord gives his own commands to you who are married: "The wife should not separate from her husband." ¹¹ (But if she separates from her husband, she should not marry again, or else she should make peace with her husband.) And, "the husband should not divorce his wife."

¹² And I have this to say—and this is my advice, not the Lord's command—to you who have a wife who is not a believer: If she is content to stay with you, do not divorce her. ¹³ And if you are a woman with a husband who does not believe, and if he is content to stay with you, do not divorce him. ¹⁴ The unbelieving husband is set apart in a special way because the wife trusts in God. It is the same for an unbelieving woman with a husband who trusts in God. It is the same for your children: They are set apart in a special way to God, because one parent believes in Christ.

¹⁵ However, if the unbelieving spouse wants to leave you, you should let that person go. In this situation, the vow you took when you married is no longer binding on you. God has called us to peace.

¹⁶ You do not know how God may work through the life you live before your unbelieving spouse. And you do not know whether your life may become a means by which God might save your husband or your wife.

¹⁷ We must live the life the Lord has assigned us to live, and to obey the call God gave us. This is the principle in all the churches. ¹⁸ If you were circumcised before you became a Christian, you should not try to remove the marks of that circumcision. If you were not circumcised when God saved you, you should not let anyone circumcise you. ¹⁹ Circumcision or uncircumcision—these are not important to us. But what is important is that we obey what God commands us to do. ²⁰ So continue to live and work as you did when God called you to trust in Christ. ²¹ If you were a slave when God saved you, do not worry about it. Of course, if you have the chance to gain your freedom, take advantage of the opportunity. ²² This is because anyone who the Lord calls a slave is a free person because of the Lord. In the same way, you become God's slave when he calls you, even if you were never a slave to anyone. ²³ God bought you with the price of his Son; your freedom is precious. So do not become slaves of humans. ²⁴ Brothers and sisters in Christ, whatever you were when God called you, whether you were slave or free, remain in that same position.

²⁵ Regarding the question about those who have never married, I will give my views, but I have no specific commandment from the Lord on this question. But you can have confidence in my reply because God has been kind to me and enabled me to be someone whom people can trust. ²⁶ Therefore, because of the difficult times that seem to be coming upon us all, I think it is good for you to remain as you were when God called you. ²⁷ To you who are married, I say this: Do not seek to be freed from your vow. As for you who are not married, do not try to find a wife. ²⁸ But to the men who are single, I say, if you marry, you have committed no sin. I give the same advice to the single women: If

you get married, you have committed no sin. However, if you marry, you will have many worldly troubles, and I would spare you those kind of troubles.

²⁹ This is what I mean about the time in which we are living, brothers and sisters: We have a short amount of time left. From now on those who are married will have to live as though they were not married, because of all the trouble that is coming.

³⁰ Those who are filled with grief should not cry. Those who are rejoicing over some wonderful event should have no joy on their faces. Those who have spent money to buy something should take no delight in it; they should live as if they owned nothing. ³¹ And those who deal with the things of the world should not involve themselves completely with them. For this world system is about to crumble into nothing.

³² I want you to be free from things to worry about. As you see, the unmarried man is concerned about the matters that are important to the Lord. He wants to serve the Lord and do what he wants. ³³ But the man who is married must also concern himself for the ordinary matters of the world as well as serving and pleasing his wife. ³⁴ So married men can only do some of the things they need to do. It is the same with widows and young ladies who have not married: As believing women, they are concerned to spend their time serving the Lord with their entire selves, with their physical abilities and with their spirit. But married women are concerned about the day-to-day matters of the world—such as how to please their husbands. ³⁵ I tell you this to help you. I am not trying to control you. If you follow my advice, you will find it easier to serve the Lord without worrying about things that married people worry about.

³⁶ If a man has promised to marry a

woman, but if he finds he is not treating her with respect because she is becoming too old to marry, he should get married. This is not a sin. ³⁷ But if he has decided that he does not desire to marry at the present time, and if he is in control of the situation, he makes a good decision not to marry. ³⁸ So the one who marries his fiancée does a good thing and does not sin; and the one who chooses not to marry also chooses something even better.

³⁹ A woman must remain with her husband as long as he lives; if her husband dies, she is free to marry whomever she wishes, but she must marry only someone who has faith in the Lord. ⁴⁰ However, it is my judgment that a widow will be happier if she does not marry again. And I think that I, too, have the Spirit of God.

Chapter 8

¹ Now, about the question you asked regarding eating food that was offered to idols: We know that people say, “We all have knowledge.” But if you think you know a lot, you can become very proud of yourself. If, however, when you love others, you help them grow strong in their faith. ² The truth is that if someone assumes he knows something, he has not yet learned the humbleness he needs to know.

³ When you love God, God knows you.

⁴ Now about eating food sacrificed to idols: Let us begin with this principle: Just as some say, “Idols in this world do not actually exist,” and, as Moses taught, “There is only one God.” So idols are not real gods; they are not living gods at all. ⁵ But I know that some people say that many gods and lords exist in the heavens or on the earth—after all, there are many supernatural beings who have real power. ⁶ Yet even so, we say,

"There is one God, the Father,
from him come all things, and for him
we live.

And there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ;
he made everything there is, and he is
the one who gives us life."

⁷ But not everyone knows this. Some worshiped an idol in earlier times, and, now, if they eat food sacrificed to an idol, they worry that they are still worshiping a god. They are torn between two opinions, and they are weak in their faith in Christ, so they feel they are honoring an idol when they eat food that has been offered to it. ⁸ We know that the food we eat does not make us better or worse before God. ⁹ But what is important is your brothers and sisters in Christ. You are free to eat that food, but you should not cause people to fall down in their faith because you have the freedom to eat it. ¹⁰ You know that idols were never alive, nor were they gods at all. But if brothers and sisters who do not know the difference between right and wrong see you eating in an idol's temple, they would think you were encouraging them to turn back to their idolatry. ¹¹ As a result, if your weaker brother or sister sees you eat meat offered to idols because you have freedom in your mind to eat that food but they did not have the same freedom—you by acting as a free person could destroy your fellow believer for whom Christ died. ¹² So, you sin against your weaker brothers and sisters when you encourage them to do something that their sense of right and wrong tells them not to do. This is sinning against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if my brother or sister are unable to serve God well because they have seen me eat something, I will never eat meat again! I do not want to do anything that causes them to fall.

Chapter 9

¹ To people who criticize how I work, I reply like this: I am an apostle. I have seen Jesus our Lord. I am free. You are the result of the work I did—you are my workmanship. ² Even if some others do not think I am a true apostle, I am a true apostle to you. By the Lord's stamp of approval, you are the proof that I am a true apostle.

³ I answer those who say that I am not a true apostle by not using money that you believers give me for payment for my service. ⁴ Of course we have the right to live on such money. ⁵ We certainly have the right to travel with a believing wife, like the other apostles do—like the Lord's brother and Cephas. ⁶ No one made a rule that only Barnabas and I must work to support ourselves. ⁷ No soldiers serves in the army at his own expense. No one plants a vineyard without being able to eat the grapes or drink the wine. No one shepherds a flock and without drinking some of the milk that comes from the animals.

⁸ This is common sense. But the law says this as well. ⁹ For the law of Moses says, "When an ox is treading out the grain, do not stop it from eating some of it." There is more that God is concerned about in this law. ¹⁰ This law is about us. Moses is saying that those who work in any job should benefit from the fruit of that work, just like the ox eating the grain on which he is treading. ¹¹ If we have sown the seed of the good news to you, is it too much for us to receive money from you in our support? ¹² Others received this kind of help from you, and we have certainly proven that we deserve it even more than they do.

However, we have not accepted anything from you, even though we were entitled to it. Instead, we endure all kinds of hardships so that we do not make it more dif-

ficult for people to believe in the good news about Christ.¹³ Certainly you know that those who helped carry out the sacrifices offered to God in the temple received some of those offerings for their own needs. They received some of the food offered to God.¹⁴ In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who proclaim the good news are to receive their living wages from the good news. They receive part of what is given to God for their needs.

¹⁵ But I have not demanded any of these things for myself. And that is not why I am writing this to you now. I boast that I never demand these things from you, and I would have to stop boasting of you were to pay me, so I would rather die than have you pay me.¹⁶ If I proclaim the good news, I am not doing anything for which I should boast. I feel obliged to preach the good news. I would grieve with many tears if I could not do what God called me to do.¹⁷ When I preach the good news because I want to, I have a great reward. But even if I only preached because someone forced me to preach, I would still have to preach, because God trusted me to do this work for him.¹⁸ So what is the reward that God gives me? It is that when I preach the good news, I offer it without anyone paying me for it. Instead, I offer it for free so that I can do it without receiving the payment the Lord would allow me to take.

¹⁹ I am not obligated to anyone, but I am a servant to everyone, so that I might persuade more and more people to trust in Christ.²⁰ When working with Jewish people, I become like a Jew, so that I may win them to Christ. To those who were living under the law I lived as they lived, in order that those living under the law may trust in Christ as I trust in him. I lived as they lived, even though I am not living my life by the law's demands.²¹ When I am

with those who are non-Jews, those who live apart from the law of Moses, I became like them (though I myself am not outside God's law, and I am obedient to the law of Christ), so that I can persuade those apart from the law to trust in Christ.²² To those who are weak about rules and laws, I lived as they did, so I could persuade them to trust in Christ. I have lived under rules and with many life-styles and with all kinds of people so that in any way God chooses to work, God will rescue some of them.²³ I do all this so I may proclaim the good news about Christ, so that I will also experience the good things the good news brings to us.

²⁴ You know when people run in a race, they all run, but only one of them wins the prize. So you also should run to win the prize.²⁵ Every athlete is careful in how he trains. They are running so one of them may get a crown of victory that is put on their heads; but it is made of olive leaves, and it quickly perishes and fades away. But we are running so we might receive a crown that will last forever.²⁶ Therefore, in everything I do, I do it for a purpose. I do not waste my effort or exhaust myself by striking the air like a boxer who has no opponent.²⁷ I discipline my body and I make it obey my commands. I do not want to preach the good news to others and then lose my reward because I failed to fulfill what he commanded me to do.

Chapter 10

¹ I want you to remember, brothers and sisters, that our Jewish ancestors were following God, who led them out of Egypt by means of a cloud during the day, and that they passed through the Sea of Reeds on dry land.² And as we have been baptized into Christ, so the Israelites were to

follow Moses as he followed God in the cloud and across the sea.³ They all ate the supernatural manna that God gave them from heaven,⁴ and they all drank the supernatural water that God gave them when Moses struck the rock. The rock was Christ.⁵ But God was angry with most of them because they worshiped other gods and rebelled against him, so their dead bodies lay on the ground all across the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things were an example for us, so we would learn not to greatly desire evil things, as they did.⁷ Some of our ancestors also worshiped idols. As the scripture says, “The people sat down to eat and drink and then they rose up to dance wildly in a sexual way.”⁸ Twenty-three thousand of our Jewish ancestors died in one day because of their sexual immorality.⁹ Let us not test the authority of Christ by disobeying him, as some of our ancestors did, and poisonous snakes killed them.¹⁰ Do not grumble about what God provides, as some of our ancestors did, and an angel destroyed them.

¹¹ Now these things happened to our ancestors; they were written so we could learn from them—we, who are living very close to when the world will end.¹² And so the lesson is this: If you think you are strong and are standing strong, be very careful, because this is just when you may fall.¹³ Every temptation you have fought against is shared by us all, but God has given us his promise and he will not permit the temptation to be greater than your ability to fight against the sin. When the temptation comes, God will provide a way for you to get free of it, so you may endure the temptation to sin.

¹⁴ Therefore, my loved ones, run away as fast as you can from idol worship.¹⁵ I speak to you as people who consider carefully how you live; think about what I am

saying here.¹⁶ When we drink the cup of wine that we bless, we share in the blood of Christ. When we break the bread, we share in the body of Christ.¹⁷ There is only one loaf of bread, and we, although we are many, all make up just one body together, and we all take and eat from the one loaf of bread together.

¹⁸ Think about the people of Israel. Those who eat the sacrifices at the altar share in the altar.¹⁹ So I am saying that an idol is not something real and to eat food sacrificed to an idol is not significant. But even so, there are important issues here.²⁰ What I mean is this: When non-Jews make their sacrifices, they are really making them to demons, and not to God at all. And I do not wish that you share anything with demons.²¹ You must not drink from the Lord’s cup and then later drink the cup of demons. You must not share in the Lord’s supper and then later eat a meal with demons.²² To do so would provoke the Lord to become jealous about split loyalty. You are not stronger than he is!

²³ Some say, “Everything is lawful,” but not everything is for our good or for the good of other people. Yes, “everything is lawful,” but not everything helps people to grow strong in their life with God.²⁴ Do not work for your good only, but also for the good of other people. All of us must act toward everyone in such a way as to help them all.²⁵ Here is our rule: You may buy and eat whatever meat you want in the market without having to ask whether it was sacrificed to idols or not.²⁶ As the psalmist says, “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.”²⁷ If a non-Jewish unbeliever invites you to a meal, and you desire to go, eat whatever he serves you. God does not require you to ask him about where he purchased the food.²⁸ But if someone says to you, “We bought this food at the idol temple and it was sacri-

ficed to the gods,” then do not eat the food, for the good of the person who served it, and so as not to cause conflict in the sense of right and wrong.²⁹ This is being careful about how that other person thinks about right and wrong, not how you think about it. My personal choices are not to be changed by what another person believes is right or wrong.³⁰ If I enjoy the meal with thanksgiving, I should not permit someone else to condemn me.

³¹ The rule here is that whether you eat a meal or drink something offered to you, or whatever you do, do everything in a way so that you give praise to God.³² Do not be offensive to Jews or to Greeks, nor even to those in the church of God, about matters such as these.³³ I make it my duty to please everyone I can, in every way that is possible. I do this by not seeking my own good. Instead, I try to build up other people by helping them, so that God might save them.

Chapter 11

¹ Follow my example, just like I follow the example of Christ.

² I praise you because you remember me in all you do, and you hold tight to all the important teachings that I have passed down to you and you have kept them just as I taught them to you.³ I want you to understand that Christ has authority over every man, and that a man has authority over a woman, and that God has authority over Christ.⁴ So if any man covers his head when he prays or when he proclaims a message from God, he brings disgrace on himself.⁵ But if a woman prays or proclaims a message God gave her with her head uncovered, she brings disgrace on herself. For it is exactly the same as if she had shaved her head.⁶ If a woman refuses

to cover her head, then she should cut her hair short, like a man’s. But you know that it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut short or to have her head shaved. So, instead, she should cover her head.⁷ A man should not cover his head because God made him like himself, and the man reflects some of what God himself is like. But women reflect some of what men are like.⁸ For God did not make the man Adam from the woman Eve; instead, he made the woman Eve from the man Adam.⁹ It was not the man whom God created to help the woman, but the woman to help the man.¹⁰ This is why women should cover their heads, as a sign of the authority, and because of the angels.

¹¹ So as we live joined to the Lord, women need men to help them, and men need women to help them.¹² This is because the woman was made from the man, and the man is born from the woman. They are dependent on one another. But all things come from God.¹³ Judge this for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God without a cover on her head?¹⁴ Nature itself teaches us that it is a disgrace for a man to have long hair,¹⁵ but nature also teaches that long hair for a woman is a display of her beauty. Her hair is given to her by God to cover her beauty.¹⁶ But if anyone in the church wishes to argue about this matter, we do not have any other custom than this, nor do any of the churches do anything different.

¹⁷ In these instructions, I cannot praise you for what you are doing about the Lord’s supper. When you come together to eat, instead of encouraging and helping one another, you make the fellowship in the church much worse.¹⁸ The first matter of concern is that when you come together, you come with different groups and factions. This is what people have told me, and I believe that some of

what they say is true. ¹⁹ It appears that you need to have different groups among yourselves so that you can test and approve the ones that have places of honor, and others that do not. ²⁰ When you come together you are not eating the Lord's Supper. ²¹ When you eat, one person brings an entire meal and eats it as soon as he arrives; he does not wait for anyone else. Another person goes hungry while other people drink so much wine that they get drunk. ²² You act as though you did not have houses to eat and drink in! You treat the church with dishonor, and you despise the purpose for which you gather. You humiliate those who are poor. I can say nothing good about this. This is a disgrace.

²³ For I have passed on to you what I received from the Lord, that on the night when the Lord Jesus was handed over to his enemies, he took bread, ²⁴ and after he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you, do this and remember me." ²⁵ After the same manner, he took the cup, after they had eaten, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, remember me." ²⁶ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes again.

²⁷ All who come to this celebration of the Lord's Supper should come to give honor to God in the way it is shared. Those who eat the bread and drink the cup must do so in a manner that honors the Lord. Anyone who dishonors the bread and the cup will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Therefore we should all examine ourselves before we take the communion. We should only eat the bread and drink the cup after we have examined ourselves. ²⁹ Anyone who eats and drinks this Supper and does not consider what is

the Lord's body, eats and drinks the judgment of God on himself. ³⁰ Many among you are physically ill, and several have even died because of the way you have treated the Lord's body. ³¹ If we examine ourselves before we take the communion, God will not judge us. ³² But when the Lord judges and punishes us, he disciplines us to correct us, so that he will not condemn us along with the world that has rebelled against God.

³³ My fellow believers, when you come together for the Lord's Supper, wait for one another. ³⁴ If one of you is hungry, eat at home—so that when you come together as the church, it will not be an occasion for God to discipline you.

And when I come to you, I will give you instructions concerning the other matters you wrote me about.

Chapter 12

¹ And now let me teach you about spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters. I want you to know how to use them. ² You may recall how, when you worshiped idols—idols that could not even speak a word—they led you astray. ³ The Spirit of God helps you declare, "Jesus Christ is Lord." No one who is filled with the Holy Spirit would ever say, "Jesus is accursed!"

⁴ The Spirit gives many different gifts to the people of Christ, but he is the same Spirit. ⁵ There are also many different ways to serve God, but there is only one Lord. ⁶ There are also many ways for people to work in God's kingdom, but it is God who gives the power to his people to work for him.

⁷ God makes it possible for each believer to show that he has some of the Spirit's power; God does this in order to help all

believers together to trust him and honor him more. ⁸ For the Spirit makes one person able to speak a message with great wisdom from God, and he makes another person able to pass on to others some knowledge from God. ⁹ To another believer the Spirit gives the gift of trusting God for wonderful things. To still another person he gives the ability to pray to God for him to heal people. ¹⁰ The Spirit makes some believers able to do powerful deeds so that people will praise God. As for certain other believers, he makes them able to speak messages from God. The Spirit makes still other believers able to tell spirits who honor God from spirits who do not. To still others, the Spirit gives various kinds of languages in which to speak messages from God, and he makes others able to interpret those messages into our language. ¹¹ Again and again we see the many different gifts, but it is the same Spirit who gives these gifts to individuals, as he chooses.

¹² As the human body is a union of many parts, and every part of the body makes the whole, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For it is by the Spirit of Christ that, when we were baptized, we were each joined together into the body of Christ. It made no difference what our background was, either Jew or Greek, slave or free, but each of us received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴ Remember, the body is not just one part, but many parts work together to make up the entire body. ¹⁵ If your foot spoke to you and said, "I am not the hand, therefore, I am not part of your body," it would not be less a part of your body because it was not like your hand. ¹⁶ And if your ear said to you, "I am not an eye. For that reason, I have no place in the body," it would not be less a part of your body because it was not an eye. ¹⁷ If your whole body were an eye, there would be nothing with

which to hear. If your whole body were an ear, there would be nothing with which to smell. ¹⁸ But God fitted each part of the body together, and it works just as he designed it. Every part is needed. ¹⁹ If each of us were exactly like all the other parts, we would not have a body at all. ²⁰ We are all many members, but only one body. ²¹ In your body, the eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you"; it surely does need the hand. Nor would the head say to the feet, "I do not need you." ²² Even the parts that are weak are all still essential to the body as a whole. ²³ The parts that we would be ashamed for others to see, we take more care to cover them. In this way we show more respect for them. ²⁴ but God has joined the distinguished parts with the less important ones. And God gives honor to those less presentable parts, because they are part of the body. ²⁵ God honors the entire body in this way so there is no division in the church, and that members of the body of Christ might care for every member of the body with the same affection, no matter what their purpose or role, gifting or abilities. ²⁶ Because we are one body, when one member suffers, we all suffer. When one member is given honor for something they accomplished for Christ, the entire body rejoices together.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and individually, you are all members of it.

²⁸ God has also given people as gifts to the church. He gave to the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then those who do powerful deeds, those who perform healing, those who provide helps, those who do work of administration, and those who have various kinds of languages that the Spirit has given them.

²⁹ Not all of us are apostles. Not all are prophets. Not all are teachers. Not all do powerful deeds. ³⁰ Not all of us can heal the sick. Not all of us can speak in special

languages. Not all of us can interpret messages into other languages.³¹ But I want you to eagerly seek after the greater gifts. And now, I will show you a more excellent way.

Chapter 13

¹ If I could speak so that I could amaze and persuade people to do what I wanted, or if I could speak the language of angels—but if I did not love people, all my talking would be worth less than a noisy gong or a cymbal that only clangs.² If I could proclaim messages for God, and if I could explain secret truths about God, and if I trusted in God so much that I could move a mountain—but if I did not love people, I would be worth nothing.³ If I gave away all I own to feed the poor, or if I sacrificed myself to be burned to rescue someone else—but if I did not love people, I would gain nothing.

⁴ If you truly love others, you will endure hardships with joy. If you truly love, you will be kind to others. If you truly love, you will not resent that other people possess things you do not have. If you truly love, you will not boast about yourself or be proud.⁵ If you truly love others, you will not abuse them. You will not live to please yourself. No one will be able to make you angry quickly. You will not keep track of the wrong things people have done.⁶ If you truly love others, you will not be happy if anyone does wicked things; instead, you will be happy when people are faithful to God.⁷ If you truly love others, you will endure everything that happens. You will trust that God will do the best things for people. You will trust in God regardless of what happens. You will obey God regardless of what hardships you are facing.

⁸ If you truly love, you will not stop loving. Those who are able to speak God's messages, speak in strange languages, or know hidden truths, do these things only for a while. One day they will stop doing these things.⁹ Now, in this life, we know only a small part of all there is to know. Those who proclaim God's messages do so only partially.¹⁰ But when things are complete, everything that is partial or incomplete will end.¹¹ When I was a small child, I talked as a child talks, I thought as a child thinks, and I made decisions as a child makes decision. But when I became an adult, I stopped acting like a child, and I started acting like an adult.¹² What we understand about Christ now, we understand very imperfectly, not well at all. But when Christ returns, we will see him face to face. Now we know only part of what is true. But then we will know him fully, just as he knows us fully.¹³ It is important that we trust in Christ now. It is important that we are certain that he will do for us everything that he has promised. And it is important that we love him and each other. But the greatest of these three things is love.

Chapter 14

¹ Strive for how to love others and for gifts that strengthen your fellow believers. Especially strive to be able to proclaim his messages that he gives you to say.² When a person speaks in a language given by the Spirit, he is not speaking to people, because no one can understand him, but he is speaking to God. He is saying things to him as the Spirit leads him.³ On the other hand, the prophet who proclaims the messages from God speaks directly to people. He does this in order to help them by making them stronger, to help them be unshakable, and to give them comfort so

they can be happy even in hardship. ⁴ A person who speaks in a language given by the Spirit builds himself up and gives himself help, but a person who proclaims the messages of God builds up everyone and helps everyone in the church to be stronger in their faith.

⁵ Now I wish that all of you spoke in such languages, but it would be far better for the entire church if more and more of you had the gift of speaking God's messages. Anyone who speaks messages from God is helping to strengthen his fellow believers. For this reason, he is doing work that is more important than those who proclaim messages in various other languages—unless someone is able to interpret those messages.

⁶ If I come to you and am only speaking in languages given by the Spirit, how can that help you? That cannot help you unless I speak to you and help you know matters that were hidden from you, or unless I help you understand facts you did not know, or unless I proclaim to you some message you did not hear before, or unless I teach you some rule that you had never learned before. ⁷ If someone is playing the flute or harp (they are not living things), and if the notes on the flute or harp sounded no different from each other, no one would be able to tell which tune I was playing. ⁸ And if a soldier blew the trumpet poorly, the army would not know whether to get ready for battle. ⁹ This is what it is like when you say words that no one can understand: No one will know what you have said. ¹⁰ There are certainly many languages in the world, and all of them give meaning to those who understand them. ¹¹ But if I do not understand someone's language, I will be like a foreigner to him, and he will be like one to me. ¹² So because you want very much for the Spirit to work in you, try to help

the believers in the church to trust Christ and obey him.

¹³ For that reason, pray that God will enable you to interpret what you say in a language that God has given you. ¹⁴ If anyone prays in such a language, his spirit certainly prays, but his mind does not. ¹⁵ Therefore, we should pray with our spirit, but also pray with our mind. And it is the same if we sing praise to God. ¹⁶ If you insist on praising God only in your spirit, the outsider will never understand what you are saying, and will never be able to agree with the message. ¹⁷ For if you give thanks in your spirit, that is well and good for you, but you are not helping the other believers. ¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you do. ¹⁹ But to the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, words with which I can teach others, than say ten thousand words in a strange language.

²⁰ Brothers and sisters, you should think like adults. But when you think about evil things, you should think like small children. Your thinking should be sensible. ²¹ In the law it is written that God says,

"I will speak to my people Israel
by foreigners, men who speak in strange
languages;
but my people will still not understand
me."

²² So if a believer speaks in a language that God has given him, this impresses the unbelievers who might be listening. But if a believer speaks a message from God, this impresses the other believers. ²³ You can see how confusing it would be if all the believers met together and spoke in different languages. Any unbeliever who heard them would call them all crazy. ²⁴ But if you were all taking turns speaking true messages from God, any unbeliever would realize that he was guilty of sinning

against God.²⁵ This unbeliever would become aware of what was deep in his consciousness. He would fall down with his face to the ground in wonder and fright, and he would praise God and say that God is truly with you.

²⁶ Brothers and sisters, it should be this way when you worship God together. Each of you should come with a psalm to sing, or something to teach from the scriptures, or something that God has told you, or with a message in a language that God has given, or with an interpretation of such a message. Everything you do together should encourage each other, for you are Christ's church.²⁷ If there are any who wish to speak a message in a language from the Spirit, there should be no more than two or three such persons. They should speak one at a time, and someone should interpret the messages.²⁸ However, if there is no one able to interpret those messages, then those who speak in languages from the Spirit should keep silent and speak only to God.

²⁹ If there are any who want to speak a message from God, there should be only two or three such persons; and everyone else should judge those messages according to what the scriptures say.³⁰ But if God allows someone seated in the assembly to understand a message, then the one speaking the message should stop speaking. In this way, all the believers can listen to the meaning of the message.³¹ For each of those who proclaim the messages of God should do so. But they must do so one by one, in order, so that all the believers can learn and receive courage to love God better.³² For those who truly speak God's messages control the spirit in which they do so.³³ For God does not create confusion; instead, he makes peace.

This next question is answered the same way in all the churches of God's people.

³⁴ Women should keep silent in church for they are not permitted to speak. They must not interrupt the one who is speaking God's message, but they should always obey their husbands, as also the law says.

³⁵ When women want to learn, instead of interrupting the worship, they should speak with their husbands at home. It dishonors her husband for a woman to interrupt the service.³⁶ Were you the people by whom God gave us his word? Or are you the only ones to whom it came?³⁷ Those of you who think you are prophets or spiritual should agree that the things I write are what the Lord has commanded and follow what I have written.³⁸ But as for those who do not acknowledge what I have written, you should not acknowledge them in your assembly.

³⁹ So, brothers and sisters, with earnest desire speak God's messages to the church; and do not forbid anyone from speaking in languages that God gives.⁴⁰ All that you do in the worship of the church, do it in a pleasant and orderly way.

Chapter 15

¹ And now I wish to remind you, brothers and sisters, about the good news I proclaimed to you. You believed this message and now you live according to it.² This good news saved you, as long as you hold firmly to it—unless you did not truly believe it.

³ For I have passed on to you what others first told me, that Christ died for our sins, as the scripture foretold he would;⁴ also that they buried him, and that God raised him to life on the third day, all just the way the scriptures said it would happen.⁵ Then Christ appeared to Cephas (known as Peter), and then he appeared to the rest of the apostles.⁶ He later ap-

peared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters in the Lord when they were all together. Some of them have since died, but most are still alive and can verify this.⁷ Then he appeared to James, and then again to all the apostles.⁸ Last of all he appeared to me, although I am very unlike the other apostles.⁹ For I am the least of the apostles. I made the church of Christ suffer greatly, so I do not deserve to be an apostle.¹⁰ But God has been very kind to me, so I am an apostle, and he has done much good through me. Really, I have worked harder than all the other apostles. Still, it was not really I who worked, but God, who gave me the strength.¹¹ So whether it is the other apostles or I who preached to you, we proclaimed the good news about Christ, and you believed us.

¹² Now some of you are saying that those who are now dead will not rise anymore. This cannot be true, because we have announced to you that Christ rose from the dead.¹³ If no one rises from the dead, then God certainly has not raised Christ.¹⁴ And if he has not raised Christ from the dead, then what we preach makes no sense at all, and what you believe about Christ can do nothing for you in your life or in your death.¹⁵ In addition, people will see that we have told lies about God, if the dead really do not rise again.¹⁶ Again I say, if no one rises from the dead, then God has not even raised Christ.¹⁷ And if he has not raised Christ, then what you believe is useless, and God still condemns you because you have sinned.¹⁸ If that is the case, then all those who have died trusting in Christ have also died with no hope of resurrection.¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, and we expect him to do nothing for us after we die, then of all people we most deserve the pity of others, for we have believed in a lie.

²⁰ But in fact, God has raised Christ from the dead, and he is only the first of the many people that he will raise.²¹ For everyone in the world dies because of what one man, Adam, did. However, those who have died will live again—also because of what one person has done; that is, the man Christ Jesus.²² Because, just as all die because Adam sinned, in the same way, all will live again because of what Christ has done.²³ But they will rise from the dead in a certain order: Christ is the first to have risen from the dead; then those who are joined to Christ will live again when he returns to earth.²⁴ Then the world will come to an end, when Christ will present all the world to God the Father, for him to rule. This is when Christ will bring to an end all who have the status of rulers, and everything that has reigning authority and all seats of power in this world.²⁵ For Christ must rule until God has conquered every one of his enemies, and placed them under Christ's feet to show that they have no more power.²⁶ The final enemy that God will destroy is death itself.²⁷ For the scriptures say, "God has placed everything under his feet," that is, Christ's feet. But it is clear that this does not include God himself.²⁸ After God has placed all things into Christ's power, then the Son also will place himself in the power of God the Father, so that God may be the same in relation to everyone and everything.

²⁹ If there is no resurrection from the dead, as some say, then there is no reason for people to receive baptism for the sake of those who have died, as some do. If God does not bring any dead people back to life, then here is no reason for living people to receive baptism for the sake of those who have died.³⁰ And we apostles would have no reason to risk our lives every day, as we do, to proclaim the good news if there is no resurrection from the dead.³¹

My brothers and sisters, I am so proud of you; you are like my possessions that I show off to Christ Jesus our Lord. Every day I am in danger of dying! ³² If God will not raise the dead, then I fought with those wild animals at Ephesus for nothing. What the poets wrote would in that case be true: "Let us eat food and drink wine today, because we will die tomorrow." ³³ Do not be tricked: "If you have bad friends, you will not care to live any longer in the right way." ³⁴ Sober up! Live in the right way and do not keep sinning. Some of you do not know God at all. I say this to shame you.

³⁵ Someone may ask you, "How can the dead rise? What kind of body could they ever have?" ³⁶ You know nothing! You do not think about the fact that any seed you plant in the ground will not start to grow until it dies. ³⁷ And what a farmer plants does not look the same as what will come up. It is only a bare seed; it will change into something entirely different. ³⁸ God will give it a new body just as he chooses, and to each seed put into the ground he will give a different body. ³⁹ Not all living creatures are the same. There are human beings, and there are animals on the land of many kinds, and there are the birds and fish. All of them are different. ⁴⁰ There are also different kinds of things in the heavens. The nature of those bodies in the sky is different from the nature of the things on this world. ⁴¹ There is one kind of the nature for the bright sun, and another kind for the softer moon. There is still another kind of nature for the stars, but the stars all differ one from another in many ways.

⁴² It is the same way when people rise from the dead. What goes into the ground has died, but what rises will never die again. ⁴³ When it goes into the ground, it is in the dirt, but when God raises it again,

it grows with honor and power. ⁴⁴ What goes into the ground belongs to this earth, but what rises from the dead has God's power. So, there are things that belong to this earth, and there are things that have God's power, which lasts forever.

⁴⁵ So the scriptures say, "The first man, Adam, was a living being who gave his children and descendants life." But Christ, the second Adam, gave people God's power to live forever. ⁴⁶ What belongs to the earth came first, the natural, and then came what belongs to God, that is the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man, Adam, belonged to the earth, for he was made from dust. But the second man, Christ, belongs to heaven.

⁴⁸ All those who are made from dust are just like Adam, the one who was made from dust. All those who belong to heaven are just like Christ, the man from heaven.

⁴⁹ Just as God made us like the man who was made from dust, so he will also make us be like the man from heaven.

⁵⁰ Now I say this, brothers and sisters, human beings who will die cannot obtain the things that God promises to give all those whom he rules. It is just as the things that die cannot become things that do not die. ⁵¹ Look! I tell you something that God has hidden from us. Not all believers will die, but God will change all of us.

⁵² He will change us in an instant, as fast as one can blink his eye, when God's angels blow the final trumpet. For they will blow that trumpet and then God will raise the dead so as to never die again.

⁵³ For it is these bodies that will die, but God will make them live forever, never to die again, and it is these bodies that now can be destroyed, but God will make them new, never to die again. ⁵⁴ When this happens, then it will come true, what the scriptures say:

"God has totally defeated death."

⁵⁵ "Death will never win again!"

The pain of dying has been taken away!"

⁵⁶ It is sin that brings such pain to us when we are dying. And sin's power comes into our lives because of the law. ⁵⁷ But now we thank God because he gives us victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ!

⁵⁸ Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be solid in your faith, unmoveable in your life, doing more and more in the Lord's work. You know that whatever you do for him will last forever.

Chapter 16

¹ Now I wish to answer your questions about the money that we are collecting for the people in Jerusalem who belong to God. You should do exactly what I told the believers in the churches in Galatia to do. ² Every Sunday, each of you should put some money aside, as you are able, so you will not need any more collections when I come. ³ You must choose people, whomever you wish, to take your gifts to Jerusalem. And when I arrive, I will send letters with them about your gift. ⁴ If it is the right thing to do, they will travel together with me to Jerusalem.

⁵ I am planning to come to you when I travel through the region of Macedonia.

⁶ Perhaps I will stay with you, and perhaps all through the winter, so that you can help me along the way in my trip. ⁷ I do not want to see you for only a short time. I hope that the Lord will allow me to spend enough time together that we can help each other. ⁸ I want to stay in Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost, ⁹ because the Lord has opened a door for me there, although there are still many who oppose us.

¹⁰ Now when Timothy comes, treat him

kindly and see to it that he has nothing to be afraid of, for he is doing the Lord's work, just like I am doing. ¹¹ Do not let anyone treat him as unimportant. Help him on his way as much as you can; send him away in peace so that he may join me. I am expecting him to travel with other brothers who are coming my way.

¹² You asked about our brother Apollos. I urged him strongly that he should visit you when the other brothers came to you. He decided not to come now, but he will come to you later when he has opportunity.

¹³ Be on guard, do not wander from your faith. Work for the Lord like grown men, and be strong. ¹⁴ Do everything through the power of love.

¹⁵ You know the people in the house of Stephanas. You know that they were the first ones in the province of Achaia to believe, and they are determined to help those who belong to the Lord. I urge you, brothers and sisters, ¹⁶ obey people like them who help in the work and who work hard with us. ¹⁷ I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus arrived here from Corinth, because they made up for the fact that you were not here. ¹⁸ They encouraged and helped me in my spirit, and they helped you as well. Tell others about how much they helped you.

¹⁹ The churches in Asia send greetings. Aquila and Priscilla send you greetings as you do the work of the Lord, and the other believers that meet in their home do so as well. ²⁰ The rest of the brothers and sisters greet you, too. Greet one another with a kiss of affection.

²¹ I, Paul, am writing this sentence with my own hand. ²² If anyone does not love the Lord, let a curse be on him. O Lord, come! ²³ May the kindness we do not de-

serve that comes from the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴ I send you this reminder that I love all of you, as you all are joined together in Christ Jesus.

2 CORINTHIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, together with Timothy our brother, write this letter to you. Christ Jesus sent me to serve him and to obey God's will. We are sending this letter to those who come together as God's people in the city of Corinth; we are also sending it to the all Christians who live in the region of Achaia—people whom God has set apart for himself. ² May God give you the free gifts of his love and peace—these things that come from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ May we always praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—he is the one who does us acts of kindness and who always comforts us. ⁴ God comforts us when we go through any painful trial. His comfort heals our lives so we can give away that very same comfort to other people who are suffering. ⁵ Just as we experience the sufferings of Christ which are beyond all measure, we also experience through Christ comfort that cannot be measured. ⁶ So whenever we experience sufferings, it is so God may comfort you and rescue you from danger. Whenever God comforts us, it is so you can be comforted even more, so he can teach you to wait for God, when you suffer in the same way we suffered. ⁷ We are certain about what will happen to you; because you suffer like we suffer, God will also comfort you, as he does us.

⁸ Brothers and sisters in Christ, we want you to know about the trouble we had in the province of Asia. That trouble gave us such pain that we could not bear it. We were almost certain that we were going to die. ⁹ They pronounced the sentence of death on us; we were waiting to be killed.

That sentence of death taught us not to rely on our own strength but on God, who raises the dead and brings them back to life. ¹⁰ But God rescued us from those terrible dangers, and he promises to rescue us in the future. ¹¹ He will do this as you help us by praying for us. Now many thank God because he has been so kind to us, since many have prayed for us.

¹² We can very happily say that we have lived toward all people in an honest and sincere way. We lived in the world as God's own people and we have deep trust in God, that was a gift from him. We do not live in any way that the world values. We do not listen to the world's wisdom when we choose what we will do. Instead, God has made us honest and holy in how we live. ¹³ You have read my letters. I have written them so you can understand them.

¹⁴ You know a little about us already, but on the day when the Lord Jesus returns, I hope that you will be very proud of us in his presence, and we will be very proud of you.

¹⁵ I am so sure that this will be the case that I have wanted to come to you first, so I could visit you twice. ¹⁶ I planned to see you both when I was on my way to Macedonia and then when I was coming back from there, so you could send me on my way to Judea. ¹⁷ My mind was made up that this would be the plan. I was not telling you "Yes" and then telling you "No." I was not making my plans like unbelievers often make plans. ¹⁸ But God is faithful in guiding us, and we do not confuse you, either. We are making our plans and staying with them. ¹⁹ Our "Yes" comes from the Son of God, Jesus Christ—the one we proclaimed to you; and there has never been any confusion in him—with him there is no "Yes and then No." Instead, it has always been simply "Yes" in him. ²⁰ For the promises of God are "Yes"

because they come from him. And we add our confirmation to his “Yes.” And we say about God’s honor: “It is True! Yes!”²¹ God makes the bond between us Christians strong because we both are joined to Christ, and he is the one who sends us out to tell people the good news.²² He put his official seal on us, so people will know he approves of us. And he gave us the Spirit who lives within us, as an unbreakable promise that he will do even more things for us.

²³ May God himself assure you about my reason for not coming to you, Christians in Corinth: It was so that you would not have to face me giving correction to you.

²⁴ We are not like masters who give you orders about how you must trust in God. However, we want to work with you, so you can learn to trust God no matter what happens, and have joy in trusting him.

we should do about this man and his sin. He has now been punished and his punishment was fair.⁷ So this is where we are now: He suffered through his punishment, but now it is time to forgive him for what he did and to love him so that he might not be discouraged by feeling too sad.

⁸ In front of all the believers, tell him how much you love him.⁹ I wrote you to see if you would obey God and deal with this problem.¹⁰ So the man you forgave, I also forgive. Whatever I have forgiven—even the smallest matters—I have forgiven out of my love for you, and I forgive as though Christ were standing in front of me.¹¹ By forgiving this man, we made it so Satan could not trick us into doing something worse. We know all about his tricks and his lies.

¹² Even though the Lord opened many ways for us to share the good news in the city of Troas,¹³ I was worried about our brother Titus, because I did not find him there. So I left the believers in Troas and returned to Macedonia to look for him.¹⁴ We thank God that we are joined together with Christ, and Christ always leads us in his march of victory. Through our lives and our message, everywhere we go, we are like those who have been near burning incense; but our fragrance does not come from real incense, but it comes from knowing Christ, and because we know him we have his fragrant aroma.¹⁵ God smells this same fragrance, and it reminds him of Christ. And those who God rescues smell this same fragrance in us. Even the people whom God does not rescue smell that aroma that reminds them of Christ.¹⁶ To those people that God does not rescue, that aroma of Christ is like the smell of a dead person dying once again. But to those whom God is rescuing—they smell Christ, who is alive, coming to make them

Chapter 2

¹ In the last visit I made to Corinth I know that I hurt you very much by what I said to you. I decided this time that I would not make another painful visit to you.² I caused you much pain on my last visit, and the people who could cheer me up the most would be the same people whom I hurt when I was there.³ I wrote that letter to you so when I came to you, you would not make me feel sad again—you, who should actually make me rejoice! I was sure that we all have the reasons to be joyful.⁴ I wrote to you then because I still had much hurt and pain in my heart—I cried many tears for you, and I did not want to hurt you anymore. I want you to know how much I love all of you.

⁵ This person who fell into sin—he did not just make me sad by what he did; his sin made all of you sad.⁶ We all agree what

alive, too. Indeed, no one is able by himself to spread this fragrance! ¹⁷ You know that many people go from city to city selling the word of God for money. But we are not like them. We work hard to please God and we do what he wants. And we speak about Christ because we know God sees everything we do, and we announce Christ because we are joined to him.

Chapter 3

¹ You know us well, and you should trust us. A stranger might need someone you know to write you a letter to introduce him to you, but you know us very well. ² You yourselves are like a letter that introduces us to other people, because everyone who knows you can see how much you trust us. ³ The way you live is like a letter that Christ himself has written and that we brought to you. Of course, it is not a letter written with ink or on stone tablets. No, it is a letter that the Spirit of the true God has written on your own hearts.

⁴ This is how we trust God, because we are joined to Christ. ⁵ We are not able to do anything for God in our own strength, so we cannot claim to be able to. Instead, it is God who gives us all we need to serve him. ⁶ God gave us what we needed to be servants of the new covenant. This covenant does not get its strength from the law that was written down, but from the Spirit of God. The written letter of the law brings death, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷ God's law brings death, and he wrote it on stone tablets, and he gave it to Moses. It came with the brilliant light that always shines where God is. And that glory shined on Moses' face; his face shined so brightly that the Israelites could not look at his face. That bright light slowly faded

from his face. ⁸ How much more brightly does the ministry of the Spirit shine! ⁹ Even the law shined with God's brilliant light. But that brilliant light of the law can only bring death to everyone. So how very much more does his brilliant light shine in us when God makes us right with himself! ¹⁰ When the brilliant light of the law is compared with God's work of putting us right with himself, it is as if the law is not wonderful at all, because what replaced it is so much more wonderful! ¹¹ So you can see that the law, which is passing away, was wonderful, but you can also see that what is replacing it will be even more wonderful; and it will last forever.

¹² Since we apostles trust in God for the future, we have great courage. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the children of Israel would not have to look at the fading light from God. ¹⁴ Long ago, the children of Israel refused to believe God's message. Even today, when the old law is read, they wear that same veil. Only when we are joined with Christ does God take the veil away. ¹⁵ Yes, even today, whenever they read the law of Moses, it is as if they had a veil over their minds. ¹⁶ But when a person turns to the Lord, God removes that veil. ¹⁷ Now the word "Lord" here means "the Spirit." Where the Spirit of the Lord is, people become free. ¹⁸ But for all of us who believe, we look at him with no veil over our faces, and we reflect his brilliant light more and more. This is what the Lord does; and he is the Spirit.

Chapter 4

¹ God gave us this responsibility to carry out, and he also had mercy on us. So we are not downhearted. ² We are careful not to do anything we would be ashamed

of doing, and we have nothing to hide from anyone. We do not promise something that God will not give, and we do not twist God's message to make it say what we want. We proclaim only the truth. In this way, we present ourselves for you to judge us as we stand before God.³ If the good news is hidden with a veil, it is hidden from those who are dying apart from God.⁴ For them, the god of this world has made them blind to the truth because they do not trust the good news about the wonderful honor of Christ—for it is Christ who shows us what God is like.⁵ We do not proclaim ourselves to you as people who can rescue you from any evil. Instead, we proclaim Christ Jesus as our Master, and we are your servants because we are joined to Jesus.⁶ For God is the one who said, "Light will shine out of the darkness." He has shone his light into our hearts, so that when we trust in Jesus Christ, we can learn how wonderful God is.

⁷ Now we carry these precious gifts from God in our bodies, which are fragile like clay pots. There can be no mistake about where our strength comes from: It comes only from God.⁸ We have suffered many different kinds of trouble, but they have not destroyed us. We may be confused about what we should do, but we never give up.⁹ Some people try to harm us, but we are never alone; it is as if some people knocked us down, but we always get up again.¹⁰ We are often in danger of dying, as Jesus died, but our bodies will live again, because Jesus is alive.¹¹ For those of us who are alive, God is always leading us to face death because we are joined to Jesus, so that when people look at us, they can know that Jesus is alive.¹² So you can see that death is doing its work in us, but that life is working in you.

¹³ We trust in God, just as the scriptures say: "I trust in God; this is why I speak."

We also trust in God, and we also speak about what he has done for us.¹⁴ We know that God, who raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead, will also raise us up from the dead with him, and that Jesus will take us along with you, and take us to be where God is.¹⁵ All that I have suffered is to help you, so that more and more people can know how God loves them freely, and so that they may praise him more and more.

¹⁶ We are not discouraged. When our bodies are dying a little each day outwardly, God is making us new every day on in the inside.¹⁷ For these short, easy times of suffering are getting us ready for the day when God will make us wonderful forever, wonderful in ways that no one can measure or explain.¹⁸ For we are not waiting for things that we can see, but for the things we cannot see. The things that we can now see are temporary, but the things we cannot see, they last forever.

Chapter 5

¹ We know that these bodies are only temporary dwelling places, like tents that do not last very long. But we know that when we die, God gives us a permanent place in which we will live, a body that lasts forever, a body that God has made.² While we live in our physical bodies, we groan with longing for the bodies we will have when we will live with God—³ because when God clothes us in our new bodies, that will be our covering, like clothing.

⁴ For we live in these bodies that one day will die, and we long for the day when we lay aside these bodies. Not that we are eager to die, but we are eager to be clothed with our eternal bodies, just like the saying that says, "All that dies, will be swallowed up by life."⁵ God himself prepares our new bodies for us, and he guarantees

that we will receive them by giving us his Spirit.

⁶ So you should always be certain that as long as we live in our bodies on the earth, we are away from Lord, who is in heaven

⁷ (we live our lives by trusting in him, and not by trusting in what we can see). ⁸ Because we have put our trust in him, we would much rather give up our present bodies so we could be at home with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we make it our goal to obey him, whether we are here or in heaven. ¹⁰ For we will all stand before Christ when he sits as the judge of all. He will judge what we did when we were in this life. Christ will give us what we deserve, and he will judge what was good or bad.

¹¹ Therefore we know what it is to honor the Lord, so we make sure to tell people what kind of God he is. God knows what kind of people we are, and I expect that you also understand whether we are doing good or evil. ¹² We are not trying to prove again that we are genuine servants of God. We only want you to know what kind of people we are, and to give you a reason to be proud of us. We do this, so that you can answer those who praise their own actions, but do not care about what they really are in their inner being.

¹³ If people think we are crazy, well, we are serving God. But if we are in our right minds, it is to help you. ¹⁴ Our love for Christ drives us on. We are sure of this: Christ died for all, therefore we all have died with him. ¹⁵ Christ died for all, so that those who live should not live for themselves, but should live for Christ, who died for their sins; and he is the one whom God raised from the dead.

¹⁶ Since we live no longer for ourselves, we judge no one according to the way the unbelievers judge. We once even viewed Christ by these human standards. But as

Christians, now we judge no one like this. ¹⁷ When anyone is joined with Christ and trusts in him, he becomes a new person. Everything from the past is gone—See!—God makes everything in you new. ¹⁸ All these gifts come from God. He made peace with us so that we are no longer enemies of God. Now we have peace with God through the cross of Christ. Also, God has given us the responsibility of announcing that he is bringing people and himself together. ¹⁹ That message brings God and people together and is how God made peace with the world by what Christ did. God is not applying their sins to their account. Instead, Christ has taken our sins away and has given us this message that makes peace and brings God and people together. ²⁰ So God has appointed us to represent Christ. God pleads with you through us. So we plead with you on Christ's behalf: Through Christ, let him make peace with you and bring you to himself. ²¹ God made Christ the offering for sin—the one who never sinned—so that when we trust in Christ and believe in him, God makes us right with himself.

Chapter 6

¹ We work together, and we beg you not to receive the gift of God's love in a way that makes no difference for you. ² For God said,

"At a time when I displayed my loving mercy, I listened to you,

And when I completed the work of my salvation, I helped you."

Look, this is the day when God is having mercy on you; this is the day that he is rescuing you.

³ We certainly do not want to give anyone reason to do wrong, because we want

no one to accuse us of preaching the good news in order to encourage evil doing.⁴ We have proved again and again that we are God's true servants. We endure great suffering, we face with courage people who hurt us, and we live through hard times.⁵ People have beaten us very badly; others have locked us up in prisons; we were the cause for people to riot; we have done hard physical labor; we have passed many long nights without sleep, and we have often gone with very little food.⁶ But in all this, our lives are pure, our knowledge is deep, and we are able to wait until God ends our suffering. We know how kind Christ is to us; we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and we love others.⁷ We live according to God's true Word, and we have God's power. By means of Christ, God has put us right with himself. This is the truth that we continuously believe; it is like armor that a soldier wears, and like weapons for both of his hands.⁸ Sometimes people honor us; at other times, they dishonor us. Sometimes they say many evil things about us; at other times, they praise us. They accuse us of lying, even though we tell the truth.⁹ We live like persons whom nobody knows, but some people know us very well. Some try to kill us for announcing the message about Christ, even though no one legally ever condemns us to death.¹⁰ We live with great sorrow but we always rejoice. We live as some of the poorest people, but we have the treasure of the good news that makes many rich. You can see that we own nothing, but the truth is that all things belong to us.

¹¹ We have spoken to you very openly and honestly, fellow believers at Corinth. We have freely shown you that we love you.

¹² We are not the ones holding back, but you seem to be reluctant to show that you love us.¹³ It would be a fair exchange—I am speaking as to children—for you to

love us in return.

¹⁴ Do not work in unsuitable ways with people who do not trust Christ. What do people who live by God's measure and rules have in common with those who break his laws and do what they want? Darkness and light cannot be together.¹⁵ How can Christ agree in any way with the demon Beliar? What does a person who trusts in God have in common with another person who does not trust in God?¹⁶ How right would it be to bring pagan idols into the temple of God? For we are the temple of the living God, just as God said:

"I will have my home among my people.
I will live my life among them.
I will be their God
and they will be my people."

¹⁷ The scriptures therefore say:

"Come out from among the unbelievers
and be separate from them," says the Lord,

"Do not handle anything that makes you filthy and unable to worship me;
and I will open my arms and welcome you,¹⁸ and I will be your Father,
and you will be my sons and daughters."
says the all-powerful Lord.

Chapter 7

¹ Dear ones, since God has promised to do these things for us, we should stop doing anything with our bodies or minds that keeps us from worshiping God. Let us keep trying to avoid sinning; let us keep honoring God and trembling in his presence.

² Open your hearts to us! No matter what you may have heard about us, we have not wronged anyone. And we have never taken advantage of anyone. ³ I do not scold you to condemn you. We love you with all our hearts! We are united in purpose and we will live with you and die with you. ⁴ Moreover, I not only love you, I praise you to others—and I am filled up to overflowing with such joy because of you, even when we are going through severe afflictions.

⁵ When we came to you in Macedonia, we were exhausted. We had troubles on every side—we faced hardships that other people caused, and we feared many things. ⁶ But God always comforts us when we are discouraged, and he comforted us at that time by sending Titus to be with us. ⁷ Titus's coming was a great comfort, but you also comforted him when you were with him. When he came to us, he told us of your deep love for us, and how you were sorry for us in our sufferings. He also told us about how you were deeply concerned for me, so I rejoiced even more because of you.

⁸ I know the letter I wrote to you made you sad, but I had to write it. I did regret it when I wrote it, but what I wrote to you was necessary to help you deal with the problems in the church. I knew that your sorrow would last only for a short time. ⁹ And so now I can rejoice, not because you were sad when you read my letter, but because your sorrow turned you away from the sin that was hurting you so much, and it changed your sadness into a sorrow that God brought to you, a sorrow that gave you so much more than you had lost. ¹⁰ This kind of sorrow turns a person away from sin so that God can rescue him; people are glad, in the end, to have had this kind of sorrow. On the other hand, worldly sorrow, a sadness for

your sins only because you were caught in them, can lead only to death. ¹¹ Now think about how much good you wanted to do because you had this sorrow that God gave you. You wanted to show me you were innocent. You were so concerned about that accusation of sin, and you were so worried about how that person had sinned. You wanted justice to be done. In sum, you showed that you were innocent. ¹² What I wrote to you was not intended for the wrongdoer, and it was not written either for the one who suffered the wrong, but it was written for you to understand how much you are faithful to us. God knows that you are faithful to us. ¹³ By all of this we are very encouraged!

We were so happy about what Titus told us, and we were also happy because you had given him rest and helped him. ¹⁴ I told him very good things about you, how proud I was of you, and you did not put me to shame when he came to you. We praised you so much to Titus, and you proved it was all true! ¹⁵ Now his love for you has grown because he has seen for himself how much you follow God, and he knows how you welcomed him among yourselves—you welcomed him with fear, because God is holy, and with trembling, because you know God is great. ¹⁶ I am filled with joy because in everything, I have confidence in you.

Chapter 8

¹ We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about how God has been kindly working in wonderful ways among the churches in the province of Macedonia.

² Although the believers there were suffering very much, they were rejoicing so much that, although they are poor, they gave much money for the collection for

the believers in Jerusalem. ³ They gave as much as they were able—and I testify it is true—and some sacrificed and gave so much they suffered need themselves, but they still gave. They wanted to give, ⁴ and they begged us over and over and pleaded with us to allow them to give to this collection, so they could help those believers whom God has set apart for himself. ⁵ We did not think they could give like that. But they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then they gave themselves to us. ⁶ Titus had already begun encouraging you to contribute money, so we urged him to guide the collection to its end. ⁷ As you do better than others, not only in your trust in God, in your encouraging words, in what you have learned, in taking a task to completion, and in your love for us—make sure you do very well by completing this collection also.

⁸ I am not giving you an order, but I want you to prove how much you love the Lord by comparing how you give to how others give to people in need. ⁹ I say this, because you know how kind Jesus Christ has been to you. Although he possessed everything, he gave it all up and became poor. He did this in order to make you rich. ¹⁰ And in this I have some encouragement to give you: You started this ministry of help a year ago, and when you began it you were eager to do it. ¹¹ In the same way, you should finish this work. Just as you were eager to begin this work, you should be eager to end it, and to do this as quickly as you can. ¹² God will accept what you do in this task, if you are eager to do it. You must finish the work by giving money from the money that you have. You cannot give what you do not have. ¹³ We are not taxing you because we do not want others to have to support themselves. But it is fair for you to help them. ¹⁴ You have more than you need at this time; what you have left over will be enough for them, too. In

the future, they will have more than they need, and perhaps then, they will be able to help you. That is fair for everyone. ¹⁵ This is like the scriptures say:

"The one who had much did not have anything left to share;

but the one who had only a little did not need anything more."

¹⁶ We thank God because he has caused Titus to care for you as much as I do. ¹⁷ When we asked him to help you, he agreed to do so. He was so eager to help you that he decided to visit you himself. ¹⁸ We have sent Titus along with another Christian brother. All the believers in the churches praise him because he preaches the good news very well. ¹⁹ The believers in the churches asked him to go with us to Jerusalem to help us take to the believers there what you and the others are giving to them. We all want to contribute this money in order to honor the Lord and to show everyone how much we believers help each other.

²⁰ We are doing everything we can to keep anyone from asking why we are asking for this money that you are giving so generously. ²¹ We are careful to do all this in an honest and open way. We want everyone to know how we are doing this, and we know that the Lord sees us, too. ²² And with these brothers we are sending to you, we are adding still one more brother. We have seen that this brother does important work in a very faithful manner. He now desires even more to help you because he trusts you very much. ²³ As for Titus himself, he is my partner; he works alongside me. The other brothers—it is the churches in our region who have chosen them to go with us to Jerusalem. When other people see them, they will praise Christ very much because of them. ²⁴ So show these brothers how you love them; show them why we spoke so well

about you, and why we could not stop telling all the churches how proud we are of you.

Chapter 9

¹ Now about this collection of money for the believers in Jerusalem—all those people whom God has set apart for himself, I really do not need to write anything more to you. ² I already know that you want to help, and I praised you for this to the believers of Macedonia. In fact, I told them that you, and the other people of the province of Achaia, have been preparing for this collection since last year. Your enthusiasm is an example that has moved the believers of Macedonia to take action. ³ For I am sending the brothers ahead of me, so that when they meet you, they will see that we did not praise you for nothing; I also sent them ahead of me so that you would be ready to finish the work, as I promised others you would be. ⁴ I am afraid that some Macedonians might come with me when I come a little later, and that they might find that you are not ready to give all that you want to give. If that happens, we will be ashamed that we spoke so well about you—and you would be ashamed, too. ⁵ I decided it was necessary to make every effort to send the brothers to you, so they could set in order everything necessary to receive the money you have promised to give. In this way, this money will be something you freely offer, rather than a tax that we make you pay.

⁶ The point is, anyone who sows very little seed will also have a small crop to harvest, but anyone who sows a great amount of seed will gather a great harvest. ⁷ First decide in your heart how much money to give, so when you give it you will not re-

gret doing it. You should not feel that anyone is forcing you to give, because God loves a person who is happy to give. ⁸ God can give you all kinds of gifts more and more, so that you will always have what you yourselves need, and also enough to do good things with. ⁹ As it is written in the scriptures:

"He gives good things to people everywhere,

and he gives to the poor what they need.

He does these things forever.

¹⁰ God gives seed to the one who sows, and he gives bread to one who bakes it. He will also supply your seed and increase what you are able to give away to others. ¹¹ God will make you rich in many ways, so that you can be generous. As a result, many others will thank God for what they receive through the work that we apostles have done.

¹² We receive this money, not only to help our Christian brothers and sisters in need; we also do it so that many, many believers will thank God. ¹³ Because you began this task, you have shown what kind of people you are. You honor God by obeying him and believing what he says in the good news about Christ. You also honor him by giving generously. ¹⁴ The ones to whom you will give will greatly desire to see you; they will pray for you, because of the wonderful way in which God has been kind to you. ¹⁵ We give thanks to God for this gift from him—his gift is so great we cannot express it in words.

Chapter 10

¹ Now I, Paul, beg of you—and I am humble and gentle as I do so, because Christ has made me that way: I, who was shy when I was in front of you, but forceful

when I am writing you a letter from far away: ² I beg of you that, when I come, I will not have to be harsh with you. I am afraid, however, that I will have to be, in order to speak against the people who think that we work with human standards. ³ For though we now are living in our physical bodies, we are fighting like armies fight. ⁴ And we are fighting with weapons, but these weapons are not designed by human beings, but by God. These weapons are powerful, so powerful that they can tear apart any false arguments. ⁵ In this way we can tear apart every false argument and all those who rise up against God. Those are the ones who try to keep people from knowing him. We keep and hold every thought that people have and we take those thoughts as our prisoners. God would work in those who did not obey him, and they will turn to him, and one day they will obey Christ. ⁶ When you completely obey Christ yourselves, we will be ready to punish any who remain disobedient to him.

⁷ You should look at the clear facts. If anyone has faith that he belongs to Christ, remind him that just as he belongs to Christ, so do we! ⁸ When I praised myself about our authority as apostles, that may have been too much for you. But the Lord gave that authority to me not to destroy you, but to help you and make you strong. So I am not ashamed of the authority the Lord gave me. ⁹ Though my letters seem strong when you read them, I do not want you to be afraid when you read them. That is not why I have written them to you. ¹⁰ Some people who know me and read my letters say, "We should take his letters seriously because they say powerful things, but when Paul is with us, he is physically weak and he is not worth listening to." ¹¹ Let those who criticize me know that what we write to you in our letters are the very things we do when we are with you.

¹² We will not even try to compare ourselves with those who praise themselves. When they compare themselves to one another, it proves only that they are foolish. ¹³ We will praise ourselves only about what God has given us to do. And we will work only as he has told us to work; our work, however, includes you also. ¹⁴ When we reached out to you, we did not go beyond where God assigned us to work. He assigned your region to us, and we were the first to tell you the Good News about Christ.

¹⁵ We are not boasting about the work God gave to others, as if we had done that work. Instead, we hope that you will trust God more and more, and that in the same way, God will assign us a larger region to work in. ¹⁶ We hope for this, in order that we may share the good news with people beyond where you live. We will not take credit for work that any other servants of God are doing, in their own regions where they serve him. ¹⁷ The scriptures say,

"Let the one who is proud, be proud of the Lord."

¹⁸ When a person praises himself for what he has done, God does not reward him for doing that. Instead, he rewards those whom he approves.

Chapter 11

¹ It is foolish for a person to praise himself, but that is what I am doing. Please allow me to continue a little. ² For I want to guard you carefully. I want to guard you the way God himself would guard you. I am like a father who promised you in marriage to only one husband and who wants to be the one who presents you, as a pure virgin bride, to Christ. ³ But as I think about you, I have become afraid that someone has tricked you, like

the devil tricked Eve. I am afraid that someone has convinced you to stop loving Christ with an honest heart.⁴ I say this because you do not seem to mind if someone else comes and tells you different things about Jesus than what we told you, or if he wants you to receive a different spirit from the Spirit of God, or a different kind of good news.⁵ People call those teachers “super-apostles,” but I do not think they are greater than I am.⁶ It may be true that I never studied how to give wonderful speeches, but I certainly know many things about God, as you learned when I spoke to you.

⁷ Was I wrong to serve you as a humble person in such a way that others praised you instead of me? Was I wrong to preach the good news to you without charging any money?⁸ Yes, I allowed believers in other churches to give me money so I could serve you. Maybe you will say that I was robbing them. But I asked you for nothing.⁹ There was a time when I was with you that I needed many things, but I did not ask you for any money at all. The brothers who came from Macedonia provided all I needed, instead. I have done everything I could for you not to be in hardship because of me, and this I will continue to do.¹⁰ I am telling the complete truth about Christ and how I have worked for him. So I will continue to let everyone in all the region of Achaia know about this.¹¹ You do not really think that I refused your money because I did not love you, do you? Far from it! God knows I love you.

¹² I will continue to serve you in this same way, so that I stop those who say that they are equal to us. They will have no excuse to offer for how they boast.¹³ Such people are false apostles claiming that God has sent them. They are workers who always tell lies, and they are pretending to be apostles of Christ.¹⁴ They should not

surprise us. Even Satan pretends to be an angel shining with the light of God’s presence.¹⁵ His servants also pretend to serve God; they pretend to be good. God will punish them as they deserve.

¹⁶ No one should think I am a fool. But if you really do think of me as a fool, then I will go ahead and continue to praise myself a little more.¹⁷ When I speak in this way, this is not the way the Lord speaks of me; it is simply me speaking like a fool.¹⁸ Many have been proud about who they are in this life. Well, I can be that way, too.¹⁹ You will certainly gladly put up with my foolishness, since you are so wise yourselves!²⁰ I say this because you have tolerated leaders who treated you like slaves; you followed those who created divisions among you; you let your leaders take advantage of you; you permitted your leaders to imagine themselves to be better than others; and you permit them to slap you in the face but you do nothing about it. And do you really call yourselves wise?²¹ I could be ashamed, because when we were with you, we were too timid to treat you like that.²² Are those people Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.²³ Are they servants of Christ?—I speak like a man who is out of his mind! I worked harder than any of them; I have been in more prisons than they; I have had more severe beatings than they, and I have faced death more times than they have.²⁴

Five times the Jews punished me with the thirty-nine lashes, beating me each time until I nearly died.²⁵ Three times I was beaten by my captors with wooden rods. Once they threw stones at me to kill me. Three different ships I was on were lost to the storms, and I have spent a night and a day in the open ocean hoping for rescue.²⁶ I have been on many journeys and I have known dangers in rivers, I have been

in danger from robbers, danger from my own people, the Jews, danger from the non-Jews, danger in cities, danger in the wilderness, danger in the ocean, danger from false brothers who betrayed us.²⁷ I have worked hard and been in hardship, often gone without sleep; I have been hungry and thirsty with nothing to eat. I have been cold and without enough clothing.²⁸ In addition to all that, I worry every day about how well the churches are doing.²⁹ There is no fellow believer who is weak, without me being weak with him. There is no fellow believer who has led another person into sin, without me being very angry about it.

³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast only about things like these, things that show how weak I am. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ—may everyone and everything give him praise!—he knows I am not lying!

³² At the city of Damascus, the governor under King Aretas put a guard around the city, hoping to arrest me. ³³ But my friends put me in a basket and let me down me out of the city, through a window in the wall, and I escaped from him.

Chapter 12

¹ Even though it does no good, I must continue to defend myself, so I will continue by boasting about some visions that the Lord gave me. ² Fourteen years ago God took me, a man who is joined to Christ, up to the highest heaven—although only God knows whether he took me up only in my spirit or in my body, too. ³ And I—whether in my body or only in my spirit, God alone knows—⁴ I was taken up into a place in heaven called paradise. There I heard things that were so holy and that I am not able to tell them to you. ⁵ I can

boast about that—but God made all that happen, not I. For myself, I can be proud only about how God works in me, a weak man. ⁶ Even if I kept on boasting about myself, I would not be foolish, because I would be saying only what was true. However, I will boast no more, so that you can judge me only by what you hear me say, or by what you already know about me. ⁷ So I will leave the subject of the amazing visions that God gave me; except that I should tell you that God sent me something very difficult to bear, a device from Satan, in order to cause me to suffer. God did this so that I would not become proud about the visions I saw. ⁸ I prayed three times to the Lord about this matter; each time I begged him to take this away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “No, I will not take this away from you. All you need is for me to love you and be with you, because I do my most powerful work in you when you are weak.” That is why I would rather be proud of my weakness, so that Christ’s power can come and make me strong. ¹⁰ I can face anything because Christ is with me. It may be that I must be weak, or that others might treat me with scorn, or that I must have great hardships, or that others will try to kill me. It may be that I will continue to suffer hardships of various kinds. In any case, when my power is gone, then I am at my strongest.

¹¹ When I write this way, I am praising myself. But I had to do so, because you should have had confidence in me. I am just as good as these “super-apostles,” even though I am really nothing at all. ¹² I gave you the true signs of being an authentic apostle—miracles that I did very patiently among you: Wonderful miracles that proved that I truly serve Jesus Christ. ¹³ You certainly were just as important as all the other churches! The only way you were different was that I received no money from you as I did from them. For-

give me that I did not ask this from you!

¹⁴ So listen to this! I am now ready to visit you for a third time, and on this trip, as on all the others, I will not ask you for any money. I do not want anything you have. What I want is you! You know the principle that we all follow in our families: The children should not pay the expenses of their parents, but the parents save up to pay the expenses of the children. ¹⁵ I will most happily do everything I can for you, even if it means losing my life. If this means that I love you more than ever, surely you should love me more than ever as well.

¹⁶ And so, someone might say that although I did not ask you for money, I tricked you into letting me myself pay for everything I needed. ¹⁷ Well, I never cheated you by using someone else I sent to you, did I? ¹⁸ For example, I sent Titus and the other brother to you, but they did not ask you to support them, did they? Titus never made you pay his expenses, did he? Titus and the other brother treated you the same as I did, is this not so? We lived our lives in the same way; you never had to pay anything for us.

¹⁹ You do not really think that I have been trying to defend myself in this letter, do you? God knows that I am joined to Christ, and that I have written everything in order to strengthen you in trusting him. ²⁰ But when I come to you, I may not find you as I wished. When I come you may not want to listen to me. I fear that you are arguing a lot among yourselves, that some of you are jealous of one another, and that some of you become very angry with each other. I fear that some of you are putting yourselves first, that you are talking about each other, and that some of you are very selfish. ²¹ I am afraid that when I come to you and see you, God will humble me. I am afraid that I will have to mourn for

many of who disobeyed God earlier and have not stopped sinning in various sexual ways.

Chapter 13

¹ This is the third time I am coming to you to deal with these matters. The principle in dealing with these issues is what the scripture says: "Every accusation against another must be based on the testimony of two or three persons," not just one. ² When I was there on the second visit I said to those who had sinned and who had been charged before the church, and to the entire church, and I will say it again: I will not overlook these charges. ³ I tell you this because you are looking for proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you; instead, he is working in you by his great power. ⁴ We learn from Christ's example, because they crucified him when he was weak, yet God has made him alive again. And we, too, are weak as we live and follow his example, but with him, God will strengthen us as we talk with you about these sins that some of you have committed.

⁵ It is yourselves whom you must examine and see how you live. You must look for evidence that you trust in how God loves you and has mercy on you. It is you whom you must put yourself to the test and ask if Jesus Christ lives within you? He lives in every one of you, unless, of course, you fail this test. ⁶ And I hope that you will find that we pass the test and Christ lives in us. ⁷ Now we pray to God that you may not do anything that is wrong. We pray for this, not because we want to seem better than you by passing that test. Instead, we want you to know and do the right things. Even if we seem to have failed, we want you to succeed. ⁸ The truth controls what

we do; we cannot do anything against the truth. ⁹ We have joy when we are weak and you are strong. We pray that you may always trust and obey God completely. ¹⁰ I am away from you now as I write this to you. When I come to you, I do not have to deal harshly with you. Because the Lord made me an apostle, I prefer to encourage you and not to make you weaker.

¹¹ The last thing, brothers and sisters, is this: Rejoice! Act and behave better than you have been acting, and allow the Lord to give you courage. Agree with each other and live in peace together. If you do these things, God, who loves you and brings you peace, will be with you. ¹² Welcome each other in a way that tells everybody how much you love each other. ¹³ All of us here, whom God has set apart for himself, greet you. ¹⁴ May the Lord Jesus Christ act kindly toward you, may God love you, and may the Holy Spirit be with you all.

GALATIANS

Chapter 1

¹⁻² I, Paul, am writing to my dear brothers and sisters in the province of Galatia. I am Paul, the apostle. No group of people made me an apostle, and God did not tell anybody to make me one. Instead, I am an apostle because Jesus Christ and God the Father have sent me as one—yes, God the Father, who made Christ live again after he had died! I and all the fellow believers who are here with me greet you all in the churches in the province of Galatia. ³ I pray that God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ will kindly help you and give you peace. ⁴ Christ sacrificed himself to God for our sins, in order to take us away from this world in which people act in such evil ways. He did this because God, our Father, wanted him to. ⁵ Because that is true, let us now praise God forever and ever.

⁶ As you know, Christ called you in his kindness to trust in him. But now I am amazed that you have stopped trusting in him! Now you believe a different message, which some people say is the true good news about God. ⁷ Christ never told us another good news, but other people are confusing you. They want to change the good news about Christ; they want you to believe that Christ actually said something different. ⁸ But even if we apostles or an angel from heaven should tell you a good news that is not the same as what we told you before, God should punish that person forever. ⁹ As we have already told you, so now I say to you again that someone is telling you a form of the good news that he says is good, but it is not the same as what you believed. So I ask God that he condemn that person forever. ¹⁰ I do

not need people to like me, because it is God who approves of me. I am not trying to please people. If I were still trying to please people, then I would not really be serving Christ.

¹¹ My fellow believers, I want you to know that the message about Christ that I proclaim to people is not one that some person created. ¹² I did not learn this good news from any ordinary human being, and no such person taught it to me. Instead, it was Jesus Christ himself who taught me.

¹³ People have told you about what I did in the past when I worshiped God in the Jewish way. I never stopped doing the worst things to the groups of believers that God had established. I tried to destroy those believers and their groups. ¹⁴ I honored God in the Jewish way more thoroughly than any other Jew my own age. I was very angry when I saw other Jews neglecting to obey the traditions that our ancestors had kept. ¹⁵ However, I was still in my mother's womb when God chose me to serve him, and he did this because it pleased him to do so. ¹⁶ He showed me that Jesus is his Son; he did this so that I would tell others the good news about his Son in regions where the non-Jews live. But I did not immediately go to any mere humans in order to understand that message better. ¹⁷ And I did not immediately leave Damascus and go to Jerusalem to see the apostles there, the men who had become apostles before I became one. Instead, I went away into the region of Arabia, a region of wilderness. Later I returned once more to the city of Damascus. ¹⁸ It was actually three years after God revealed this good news to me that I went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter. I stayed with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹ I also saw James, the half-brother of our Lord Jesus and the leader of the believers in Jerusalem, but

I did not see any other apostle. ²⁰ God knows that what I am writing to you is completely true! ²¹ After I left Jerusalem, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² At that time believers in the Christian congregations who were in the province of Judea still had never seen me. ²³ They only heard others keep saying, "Paul, the one who in the past was doing violent things to us, is now proclaiming the same good news that we believe and he had been trying to stop!" ²⁴ So they kept praising God because of what had happened to me.

Chapter 2

¹ After fourteen years passed, Barnabas, Titus, and I went up again to Jerusalem.

² We did this because God had told me we should go. I explained privately to the most important leaders of the believers the content of the good news that I had been proclaiming in the regions of the non-Jews. I did this because I wanted to make sure that they approved of what I had been preaching. I wanted to make sure that I had not been working uselessly.

³ But those leaders did not even require Titus, who was with me and was an uncircumcised Gentile, to be circumcised. ⁴ The people who would have required him to be circumcised were not true believers, but they pretended that they were fellow believers. They watched us closely to see how we obey God without following all the Jewish laws and rituals, since we know that Christ Jesus has freed us from those things. These false believers would like to make us like slaves to the law. ⁵ But not even briefly did we agree with them about circumcision. We resisted them in order that the true good news about Christ might continue to benefit you. ⁶ But those who others said were the leaders did not add anything to

what I proclaim. Those leaders are important men, but they do not matter to me, because God does not favor certain persons more than others. ⁷ Instead, the leaders understood that God was trusting me to proclaim the good news to the non-Jews, just as Peter was proclaiming the good news to the Jews. ⁸ That is, just as God had empowered Peter to go as an apostle to take God's message to the Jews, he also empowered me to go as an apostle to take his message to the non-Jews. ⁹ Those leaders understood that God had kindly given to me this special mission. So James, Peter, and John, the leaders of the believers in Christ, leaders who many people knew and honored, shook hands with us because we were fellow workers with them. We agreed that God had sent us to the non-Jews, who were not circumcised, and that God had sent them to Jews, who were circumcised. ¹⁰ They only urged us to still remember to help the poor among the fellow believers who live in Jerusalem. That is exactly what I have been eager to do.

¹¹ But later while I was in the city of Antioch, after Peter came there, I looked into his eyes and told him that what he was doing was wrong. ¹² This is what happened. Peter went to Antioch and started eating regularly with non-Jewish believers there. Later there were certain Jewish believers who came to Antioch who claimed that James, the leader of the believers in Jerusalem, had sent them. And when those men came, Peter stopped eating with the non-Jewish believers and would not associate with them. He was afraid that the Jewish believers from Jerusalem would criticize him for associating with non-Jews. ¹³ Also, the other Jewish believers in Antioch joined in Peter's hypocrisy by separating themselves from the non-Jewish believers. Even Barnabas thought he had to stop associating with

the non-Jews! ¹⁴ But when I realized that they were not following the truth of the good news about Christ, and when all the fellow believers had come together, I said to Peter in front of them all, “You are Jewish, but you have been living like a non-Jew who does not follow the law. So how can you possibly persuade the non-Jews to live like Jews?” ¹⁵ We were born as Jews, not as non-Jewish sinners who know nothing about God’s law. ¹⁶ But we now know that it is not because a person obeys the law that God gave to Moses that God makes a person right in his sight. God does that only if that person trusts in Jesus Christ. Even some of us Jews have trusted Christ Jesus. We did that so God would declare us good in his sight, because we trust Christ, and not because we try to obey the law that God gave to Moses. God has said that he will not declare anyone good in his sight just because they obey the law. ¹⁷ But when we asked God to make us right in his sight by trusting in Christ, we stopped trying to obey the law, so the law proved us to be sinners for doing that. But this certainly does not mean that Christ is in favor of sin. Certainly not!

¹⁸ If I again believed that God would make me right in his sight because I obey his law, I would be like a man who rebuilds a shaky old building that he had once torn down. Everyone would see that I was breaking God’s law. ¹⁹ As I was trying to obey God’s law, I became like a dead man; it was as if the law had killed me. This happened so that I might live to worship God. ²⁰ It is as though my old way of life ended when Christ died on the cross. I no longer direct my life. Christ who lives in my heart now directs how I live. And whatever I do now while I live, I do it trusting in God’s Son. He is the one who loved me and offered himself as the sacrifice to provide God’s forgiveness to me. ²¹ I do not set aside God’s kindness, as if keep-

ing the law could make us right with God. Otherwise, Christ would have died on the cross for nothing.

Chapter 3

¹ You fellow believers there in Galatia are very foolish! Someone must have bewitched you with their evil eye! I told you exactly how they had crucified Jesus Christ, did I not? ² So I want you to tell me only one thing: When the Holy Spirit came to you, did he come because you were obeying the law of Moses? Or did the Spirit come to you because you had heard the good news and trusted in Christ? Certainly this is what happened. ³ You are very foolish! You first became Christians because God’s Spirit enabled you. But now you think you will continue until you die by trying as hard as possible to obey the law. ⁴ All the difficult things you have experienced after you believed in Christ would have been of no value at all if you had not been trusting in him. ⁵ When God now generously gives to you his Spirit and performs mighty deeds among you, do you think that it is because you obey God’s law? Surely you know it is because when you heard the good news about Christ, you trusted in him!

⁶ What you have experienced is just as Moses had written in the scriptures about Abraham. He wrote that Abraham trusted God, and as a result God declared Abraham good in his sight. ⁷ You should realize, therefore, that it is those who trust in Christ to save them whom God has made into descendants of Abraham. ⁸ Even before God began to make non-Jews good in his sight when they trusted in him, men wrote in the scriptures that he would do this. God announced this good news to Abraham, as we read in the scriptures,

“Because of what you have done, I will bless all the people groups in the world.”⁹ So, we know by this that it is all those who trust in Christ whom God blesses along with Abraham, who also trusted in God.¹⁰ God curses all those who think they can please God by obeying his law. It is just as you can read in the scriptures, “God will eternally punish everyone who does not continuously and completely obey all the laws that Moses wrote in the book of the law.”¹¹ But God has said that if he declares any people good in his sight, it will not be because they obeyed his law. You can read in the scriptures, “Every person whom God declares to be good will live because he trusts God.”¹² Whoever tries to obey the law is not trusting in Christ, “Whoever starts to do the things in the law must obey them all.”

¹³ Christ stopped God from having to curse us as they wrote in the law he must. This happened when God cursed Christ in our place. You can read in the scripture, “God curses everyone whom they hang on a tree.”¹⁴ God cursed Christ in order to bless the non-Jews who believe in Christ just as he blessed Abraham. And he blessed the non-Jews so that we might receive the Spirit, whom he promised to all who trust in Christ.

¹⁵ My fellow believers, God’s promise is like a contract between two people. After they sign it, no one can cancel it, nor can they add anything to it.¹⁶ God promised to bless Abraham and his special descendant. The scriptures do not say, “your descendants,” that is, many people, but instead “your descendant,” meaning just one person, Christ.¹⁷ This is what I am saying. God established an agreement with Abraham that the law which he gave to Moses 430 years later could not cancel.¹⁸ This is because if what God is giving to us forever comes because we keep his law, then

he would not be giving it because he had promised to do so. In reality, however, God gave Abraham this gift because he had freely promised to give it.

¹⁹ So why did God later give his law to us? God gave his law to teach us that we all deliberately break it. And looking forward, God gave the law for the time when a descendent of Abraham would come. That descendent is the one who receives the promise that was made before to Abraham. The angels protected and applied the law by the authority of the one who would stand between God and people.²⁰ Now, when one person speaks directly with another, there is no mediator. And God himself made his promises directly to Abraham.

²¹ So do the words of the law speak against what God promises? Certainly not. If we could obey the law and then live forever with God, then he certainly would have regarded us as good in his sight.²² But that was impossible. Instead, because we sin, the law in the scriptures controls us—and all things—just as if we were in prison. So when God promised to free us from that prison, he was speaking about anyone who believes in Jesus Christ.²³ Before God revealed the good news about how people should trust in Christ, his law was like a soldier who kept us in prison, unable to move about.²⁴ Like a father protects his small child by telling a slave to take care of him, God was supervising us by his law until Christ came. He did this so that he might now declare us good in his sight, if we trust in Christ.²⁵ But now that we can trust in Christ, we no longer need God’s law to supervise us.

²⁶ I say this because you are all God’s children because you have trusted in Christ Jesus.²⁷ All of you who trust in Christ and were baptized so that you are joined to him, have taken on the characteris-

tics of Christ's life. ²⁸ If you are believers, it does not matter to God if you are Jews or non-Jews, slaves or free persons, males or females, because all of you are together joined to Christ Jesus. ²⁹ Furthermore, since you belong to Christ, he makes you into descendants of Abraham, and you will receive everything that God has promised him and us.

Chapter 4

¹ Now, I will further discuss children and heirs. An heir is a son who will later possess all that his father has. But as long as that heir is a child, he is like a slave whom others control. ² Until the day that his father has previously determined, other persons supervise the child and manage his property. ³ Likewise, when we were like young children, we were under the evil rules that everyone in this world lives by. Those rules controlled us like masters control their slaves. ⁴ But when the time that God had determined arrived, he sent Jesus, his Son, into the world. Jesus was born to a human mother, and he had to obey the law. ⁵ God sent Jesus to rescue us from the law controlling us. He did this to adopt us as his own children. ⁶ Because you are now God's sons, he sent the Spirit of his Son to live in each of us. It is his Spirit who enables us to call God, "Father, our dear Father!" This shows that we are God's sons. ⁷ So, because of what God has done, no longer is each of you like a slave. Instead, each of you is a child of God. Since each of you is now God's child, God will also give you all that he has promised. God himself will do it!

⁸ When you did not know God, you worshiped gods that really did not really exist. You were their slaves. ⁹ But now you do know God as your God. Perhaps it would

be better, however, to say that now God knows each of you. So why are you returning again to follow the weak and worthless evil rules of this world? You do not really want to become their slaves all over again, do you? ¹⁰ It actually seems that you do! You are once more obeying what others insist you should do on certain special days and at special times in certain months, seasons, and years. ¹¹ I worry about you! I worked so hard for you, but it seems that it was all for nothing. ¹² My fellow believers, I strongly urge you to become like me, because I do not let the law control me. I became like you non-Jews when I became free from the law, so you too should free yourselves from the gods. When I first went to you, you did not harm me at all, but now you are making me worry about you very much.

¹³ You remember that the first time I told you the good news, I did it because I was sick. ¹⁴ Although you might have despised me because I was sick, you did not reject me. Instead, you welcomed me like you would welcome an angel that came from God. You welcomed me like you would welcome Christ Jesus himself! ¹⁵ But now you are no longer happy! I know for certain that you would have done anything to help me. You would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me, if that would have helped me! ¹⁶ That is why I have become so sad now. You seem to think that I have become your enemy because I have continued to tell the truth about Christ to you. ¹⁷ Those who are insisting on obeying the Jewish laws are trying to get you to follow them, but they are not doing it for your good. They want to keep you away from me, because they want you to follow them, not me. ¹⁸ Well, it is good to insist on doing the right things; you should do this always, and not only when I am with you. But make sure it is the right people who are teaching you

what to do! ¹⁹ You who are like my children, once again I am very worried about you, and I will continue to be worried until you become like Christ. ²⁰ But I do wish that I could be with you now and that I might talk more gently with you, because right now I do not know what to do about you.

²¹ Let me try to explain this again. Some of you desire to obey all the law of God, but do you really pay attention to what the law says? ²² In the law we read that Abraham became the father of two sons. His female slave, Hagar, bore one son, and his wife Sarah, who was not a slave, bore the other. ²³ Ishmael, the son born by Hagar, the female slave, was conceived naturally. But Isaac, the son born by Sarah, who was not a slave, was conceived miraculously because God had promised Abraham that he would have a son. ²⁴ Now these two women symbolize two covenants. God made the first covenant with the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. That covenant requires the Israelites to live like a slave to the law. So Hagar, the female slave, symbolizes this covenant. ²⁵ So Hagar symbolizes Mount Sinai, in the land of Arabia. But Hagar also symbolizes the city of Jerusalem as it is today. This is because Jerusalem is like a slave mother: She and all her children—that is, her people—are like slaves, because they all must obey the law that God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai. ²⁶ But there is a new Jerusalem in heaven, and that city is like a mother of all us who believe in Christ, and that city is free! ²⁷ That new Jerusalem will have many more people than the old Jerusalem. This is because the prophet Isaiah wrote,

"You who live in Jerusalem, you must rejoice!"

Now you have no children,
like a woman who cannot have children!

But one day you will shout with joy
even though you have no children
now.

Like a woman who cannot give birth to
children,
and you feel deserted.

You will have more children than
any woman with a husband could
have borne."

²⁸ Now, my fellow believers, you have become children of God because you believed in what God promised to give to us. You are like Isaac, who was born because Abraham had believed in what God promised to give to him. ²⁹ But long ago Abraham's son Ishmael, who was born naturally, caused trouble for Abraham's son Isaac, who was born because the Holy Spirit made it happen. It is the same way now. The people who are slaves to God's law persecute those of us who trust in what Christ has promised to give us. ³⁰ But these are the words in the scriptures: "The son of the woman who was not a slave will inherit what his father owns. The slave boy will inherit nothing. So send away from this place the female slave and her son!" ³¹ My fellow believers, we are not children who have a slave woman as our mother, but we are the children who are born from a woman who was free, and so are we are free too!

Chapter 5

¹ Christ set us free from the law so that it may control us no longer. So stop anyone who says you are still slaves to the law, and do not let the law control you like slaves again. ² Consider very carefully what I, Paul, an apostle, now tell you. If you let anyone circumcise you, what

Christ has done for you will not help you at all! ³ Once again I solemnly declare to every man whom they have circumcised, that he must obey the law perfectly, for God to declare him good in his sight. ⁴ If you expect God to declare you good in his sight because you try to keep the law, you have separated yourself from Christ; God will no longer act kindly toward you. ⁵

We whom God's Spirit enables us to trust in Christ are confidently waiting for the time when God will declare us good in His sight. ⁶ God is not concerned whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. Instead, God is concerned about whether we trust in Christ, with the result that we love others because we trust in him.

⁷ You were following Christ so well! Who stopped you from obeying his true message? ⁸ God, the one who chose you, is not the one who is persuading you to think like this! ⁹ This false teaching that someone is teaching you is in danger of spreading to all of you, just like a little yeast in the dough causes it all to swell up. ¹⁰ I am certain that the Lord Jesus will keep you from believing in anything else except his true good news. God will certainly punish anyone who is confusing you by teaching this false message, whoever he is. ¹¹ But, my fellow believers, maybe someone is saying that I still teach that you must let them circumcise you. I certainly taught that before I followed Christ, but I am not teaching that any longer. But what they are saying cannot be true; otherwise, no one would be persecuting me now. No, I tell you that if people think they have to be circumcised to follow Christ, then the fact that Christ died on the cross no longer make any difference to them. ¹² I wish that those who are confusing you would go all the way and castrate themselves!

¹³ My fellow believers, God has called you to set you free. But do not think he set you

free so you could sin. Instead, love and serve each other, because you are now free to do that! ¹⁴ Remember something that Jesus said. He said all the law means this: "Love each person like you love yourself." ¹⁵ So if you attack and harm each other like wild animals, you might completely destroy each other.

¹⁶ So I tell you this: Always let God's Spirit lead you. If you do that, you will not sin, as normal human beings want to do. ¹⁷ When you want to sin, you go against God's Spirit. And God's Spirit goes against what normal humans want. These two are always fighting against each other. The result is that you do not always do the good things that you truly desire to do. ¹⁸ But when God's Spirit leads you, the law does not control you.

¹⁹ Now what normal human beings want to do is easy to see. They commit evil sexual actions, sexual actions that even go against what is natural, and they desire things that are against good laws. ²⁰ They also worship false gods and things that represent those gods. They try to get evil spirits to act for them. People are hostile to others. People quarrel with each other. People are jealous. People behave angrily. People try to get others to think highly of them and do not consider what others want. People do not associate with others. People associate only with those who agree with them. ²¹ People want what others have. People get drunk. People get drunk and riot. And they do other things like these. I warn you now, just like I warned you previously, that the ones who constantly act and think like this will not receive what God has for his own people when he reveals himself to everyone as king. ²² But as we grow in trusting Christ, God's Spirit starts causing us to love others. We are joyful. We are peaceful. We are patient. We are kind. We are good. We

are ones whom others can trust. ²³ We are gentle. We control our behavior. There is no law that says people should not think and act in such ways. ²⁴ Furthermore, we who belong to Christ Jesus have stopped allowing ourselves to do the evil things that we did in the past. It is as though we had nailed them to a cross and killed these evil things!

²⁵ Since God's Spirit has enabled us to live in a new way, we should behave as the Spirit leads us. ²⁶ We should not be proud about ourselves. We should not make each other angry. We should not envy each other.

will harvest exactly the kind of crop that he plants, God will pay back people according to what they have done. ⁸ God will punish eternally those who commit the sins that they wish to. But those who please God's Spirit will live forever with God because of what God's Spirit does for them. ⁹ But we should not tire of doing what pleases God, because eventually, at the time that God has determined, we will receive a reward, if we do not stop doing the good things that we have been doing. ¹⁰ So whenever we have opportunities, we should do what is good to all people. But especially we should do what is good to all our fellow believers.

Chapter 6

¹ My fellow believers, if you discover that a brother or sister is doing wrong, those of you whom God's Spirit is directing should gently correct that person. Furthermore, as you correct another person, you should be very careful so that you do not sin either. ² When there are brothers or sisters who have problems, you should help each other. By doing that, you will do what Christ commands. ³ I say this because people who think more highly of themselves than they should merely fool themselves. ⁴ Instead, each of you should constantly test and decide if you can approve what you yourself are doing and thinking. You can be proud because what you yourself have done is good, and not because what you have done is better than what anyone else has done. ⁵ I say this because you must each perform your own individual tasks.

⁶ If fellow believers teach you the truth about God, then you should share your possessions with them. ⁷ You should not deceive yourselves. Remember that no one can deceive God. Just like a farmer

¹¹ I am now writing this last part of this letter to you in my own handwriting. Notice the large letters with which I am now writing. ¹² Some Jewish believers want to circumcise you so that the other Jews will think highly of them for making converts to Judaism. But they are doing this just so that the others will not persecute them for believing that Christ died on the cross to save us. ¹³ The reason that I say this is that not even those people keep the law of God; instead, they want to circumcise you so they can boast that they have made more converts to the Jewish faith. ¹⁴ I myself, however, desire very much never to boast about anything like that. The only thing I will be proud about is our Lord Jesus Christ and his dying on the cross. When he died on the cross, he made everything the unbelievers wish for to be nothing in my sight, and he made what I wish for to be nothing in their sight. ¹⁵ I will be very proud about that, because God does not care whether people are circumcised or not. Instead, he cares only that he changes them into new people. ¹⁶ May God give peace and act kindly toward all who live like this. These believers are the true nation of Israel that belongs to God!

¹⁷ I say that people have persecuted me for declaring the truth about Jesus, and as a result I have scars on my body, unlike your new teachers. So let no one trouble me about these matters again!

¹⁸ My fellow believers, may our Lord Jesus Christ kindly be good to all of you. Amen!

EPHESIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, write this letter to my dear fellow believers whom God has set apart for himself, and who are loyal to Christ Jesus—I am writing to the fellow believers who are living in the city of Ephesus. I am Paul, whom God chose and whom God sent to you as an apostle of Christ Jesus. ² I pray that God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord will give you his kindness and peace.

³ Praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has caused us great joy through every kind of heavenly spiritual blessing that Christ gives to us. ⁴ Before God created the world he chose us to be his people through Christ, who set us apart for God to live blamelessly in his sight. ⁵ Because he loves us, God planned long ago to adopt us as his own children because of what Jesus Christ has done. He planned to adopt us because it pleased him to have us as his children, so he did what he wanted to do. ⁶ Because of this we now praise God for his amazing kindness given to us by his Son whom he loves, kindness that we did not deserve.

⁷ Jesus has freed us as if he purchased us out of a slave market. He freed us by his death; that is, God has forgiven us of our sins, because he has been very, very kind to us. ⁸ He has been very kind to us, and he has given us every kind of wisdom. ⁹ God has now explained the secret of his plan. He has helped us to know the great work of Christ that he had planned. He did that because he chose to do it in that way, and he showed us what Christ would do for us. ¹⁰ God planned that at the time that he appointed he would unite all things in heaven and all things on earth,

and Christ would be the one who will rule them. ¹¹ Long ago God chose to unite us to Christ. He planned to do this, and he always does exactly what he wishes to do. ¹² God did that so that we who believe in Christ would live to give praise to God's glory. We were the first ones to trust in Christ. ¹³ It was in Christ that you also, after you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation—it was in him that you also have believed and were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. ¹⁴ The Holy Spirit is proof that we will receive all that God has promised. All this is great reason to praise him!

¹⁵ Because God has done so much for you, and because I heard how you trust in the Lord Jesus and love all whom God has chosen for himself, ¹⁶ I have not stopped thanking God for you and praying for you often. ¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father who lives in shining light, may help you think wisely and understand everything about what he reveals to you. ¹⁸ I pray that God may teach you about what he wants to do for us, and why we know he is speaking the truth. I pray that we may know how great are the things he promises to give to us and to everyone whom he will choose to belong to himself. ¹⁹ And I pray that you will know how very powerfully God acts for us who are trusting in Christ. He works powerfully for us, ²⁰ just like he acted powerfully for Christ when he caused Christ to become alive again after he died, and raised him to the place of highest honor in heaven. ²¹ In that place, Christ rules as supreme over every powerful spirit on every level of authority and over every name that exists. Jesus is much higher than any other being, not only now, but forever. ²² God has put all beings under the rule of Christ, as if they were all under his feet. And God has appointed Christ as the ruler over everything among

all believers everywhere. ²³ It is as if all believers together were Christ's own body. He fills all believers everywhere with his power, just as he fills all the universe with his power.

Chapter 2

¹ Before you trusted Christ you were powerless to obey God. You were as helpless as a person who is dead. ² You were like most people in the world today, and you, too, did what Satan wants—Satan is the ruler the evil spirits who have such power over the world. Satan is the evil spirit who is at work in the lives of people who disobey God. ³ We were at one time among those who disobeyed God; we did the evil things that we desired, things that would bring pleasure to our bodies and our minds. So God was very angry with us, just as with the others.

⁴ But God acts very mercifully, and he loves us very much. ⁵ We were like dead people, powerless to obey God, but then he made us live again by joining us to Christ. God has saved us because he has been very, very kind to us. ⁶ He raised us up from among those who are like dead people, and he gave us seats of honor to rule with Christ Jesus in heavenly places. ⁷ He did this to show in future times how kind he has been to us, for we are joined to Christ Jesus.

⁸ For God has saved you from his punishment by his extreme kindness given to you because you trust Jesus. You have not saved yourselves; this is a gift from God—⁹ a gift that no one can earn, so no one can boast and say that he has saved himself.

¹⁰ So God has created us as new people joined to Christ Jesus, so we can do good things—things that God planned long ago for us to do.

¹¹ Do not forget that you non-Jewish believers were previously called Gentiles because you were not born as Jews. The Jews insulted you by calling you “uncircumcised pagans.” They call themselves “the circumcision”; by this they mean that they, not you, are God's people, although circumcision is something that only humans do, not God. ¹² At that time, you did not have any part of Christ and you were not part of his people Israel. You did not know God's promises and law. You did not have confidence in the future that God promised you, and as you lived your lives, you did not know God. ¹³ But now because of what Christ Jesus has done, you have been able to trust in him because Christ agreed to die on the cross.

¹⁴ Christ has brought peace and unity between Jews and non-Jews by destroying the barrier between us, as if he had destroyed a wall of hate that separated our peoples from one another. ¹⁵ He made it no longer necessary for us to obey all the Jewish laws and commandments. He made Jews and non-Jews into one people instead of two because he made peace between us. ¹⁶ Jesus caused Jews and non-Jews together to both become friends with God in one new group of believers. By dying on the cross, Jesus made it possible for them to stop hating each other. ¹⁷ Jesus came and proclaimed the gospel that brings peace with God; he proclaimed it both to you non-Jews, who did not know about God, and to us Jews, who did know about God. ¹⁸ Through Jesus both Jews and non-Jews now can speak with the Father because God's Spirit lives in all believers.

¹⁹ Therefore now you non-Jews are no longer strangers and foreigners to God's people, but instead you are fellow members with those whom God has set apart for himself, and you belong to God's fam-

ily for whom God is the Father. ²⁰ You are like stones that God has made to be part of his building, and the building is built on what the apostles and prophets taught. The most important stone, the cornerstone, of the building is Christ Jesus himself. ²¹ Jesus is increasing his family of believers and fitting them together like a temple of stones is built and fit together, increasing as the Lord joins new believers to himself. ²² Jesus is building you up together, both Jews and non-Jews, into one family in which God lives by means of his Spirit.

Chapter 3

¹ Because God has done all this for you non-Jews, Christ Jesus has put me, Paul, in prison for your sake. ² I assume that you know that God has honored me by giving ³ me a certain task to do for your sake. He gave me this task because of the secret truth about which I wrote to you briefly; ⁴ when you read what I have already written briefly about that, you will be able to understand that I clearly understand the truth about Christ. ⁵ Formerly, God did not fully reveal the good news that was to come to anyone. It was something that no one understood, but now his Spirit has revealed the good news to his apostles and prophets whom the Spirit called to serve God. ⁶ This hidden truth is that the non-Jews now share together with Jews the spiritual riches of God, and belong to the same group of God's people, and will share all the things God has promised them because they are joined to Christ Jesus—this is the gospel. ⁷ I am now God's servant to spread the good news, a work I did not deserve to do, but which God gave me working in me with his power.

⁸ Although I am the least worthy of all God's people, God has enabled me by his

kindness and mercy to proclaim to non-Jews the good news about what Christ has done for us, which is so much that no one can learn all about it. ⁹ My mission is to explain to everyone what God's plan is, something that God has kept hidden from long ago, from the time when he created everything. ¹⁰ What God has wisely planned, he has even shown to powerful angels in heaven through his people who trust in Christ. ¹¹ That is what God had always planned for eternity, and it is what he accomplished through the work of Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² So now when we pray, we can come to God confidently and without being afraid, because we trust in Jesus, who has fulfilled God's plan. ¹³ So I ask that you do not be discouraged because of my suffering many things for you here in prison, which actually end up honoring you.

¹⁴ Because God has done all this for you, I kneel and pray to God our Father. ¹⁵ He is the one who gives every family in heaven and on the earth their name. ¹⁶ I pray because of his great power that God will give you power and will strengthen you by his Spirit who lives in your spirits. ¹⁷ I pray that Christ may live in your hearts because you trust in him, and that you will be like a firmly rooted tree and a building founded upon stone, ¹⁸ so that you may be fully able to understand, along with the all those set apart for God, how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. ¹⁹ For this love is so great that we cannot understand it, but because of this love, I pray that God may fill you all with himself.

²⁰ God is able to do much greater things than we usually ask him to do, or even that we might think that he can do, because of his power that is working within us. ²¹ May all believers assembled to worship God, and Christ Jesus himself, honor God more than they honor anything else.

May all believers from all generations of history praise him forever and ever! So let it be done.

Chapter 4

¹ Therefore, from this prison where I am because I proclaim the Lord Jesus, I urge you whom God has chosen to live in a way that honors Jesus, who called you. ² Humbly and gently and patiently serve the needs of one another because you love each other. ³ Do all you can to remain united with one another by peacefully living together with each other. ⁴ All believers form one group, and there is only one Holy Spirit, and you were chosen to confidently wait for God to fulfill His promises to you. ⁵ There is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, and there is one faith, that is the trust we have in God; and there is only one true Christian baptism. ⁶ There is one God, the true Father of all. He rules over everyone, and he is working through all events, and he is working within everything that happens.

⁷ God has generously given to each believer spiritual gifts that Christ has measured out to us as he wishes. ⁸ This is similar to what the psalmist said about God receiving tribute money from those whom he had conquered,

When he ascended to his city at the top of the mountain,

he led the captives into captivity
and gave their gifts of tribute to his people.

⁹ The words “he ascended” certainly make us know that Christ had also previously descended to the earth from heaven, like God’s anointed king coming down from Jerusalem to fight. ¹⁰ Christ, who descended to earth to conquer evil, is also

the one who was crucified for our sins, came back to life, and ascended to the most exalted position in heaven, in order that he might control everything. ¹¹

He appointed some believers to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some to lead and others to teach the groups of believers. ¹² This was to prepare God’s people to do God’s work and serve others, so that all the people who belong to Christ might become spiritually strong

¹³ He wants all of us believers to be united together as we all trust in him and grow to fully understand him. He wants us to become mature believers, together, growing to become perfect, as he himself is perfect.

¹⁴ Once we are mature, we will no longer be ignorant of what is true, like little children. We will no longer follow every new teaching, like a boat is blown around by the wind and waves. We will not allow people who teach what is false to trick us and deceive us. ¹⁵ Instead, we will live by loving God and trusting his true teachings, and we will become more and more like Christ in every way. He controls his people like a person’s head controls his body.

¹⁶ He enables all believers everywhere to grow together and love each other, like a person’s body fits together and holds together by the joints that connect the body together, which allows the body to grow and build itself up because the parts of body depend upon each other.

¹⁷ By the authority of the Lord Jesus, I strongly affirm that you must no longer live like the unbelieving non-Jews do. The futile way they think directs them how to live. ¹⁸ They are unable to think clearly about what is right or wrong. They cannot comprehend obeying God because they refuse to listen to his message, and so they do not have the eternal life that Jesus gives us. ¹⁹ They have chosen to do shameful things their bodies desire without stopping. They commit all kinds of immoral

acts and are obsessed with them more and more, and they are greedy for anything they desire.

²⁰ But when you learned about Christ you did not learn to live like that. ²¹ Now that you have heard about Jesus and he has taught you, you know that his way is the true way to live. ²² Jesus taught that you must stop living the way you used to live. You were like corpses that were decaying because you were deceiving yourselves with what you desired. ²³ You must let God change your spirits and how you think. ²⁴ You must start living like new persons. God has created you as new persons. You are set apart for him. He created you to live in the right way, to be truly dedicated to God.

²⁵ Therefore, quit lying to one another. As the scripture says, “Speak truthfully to one another because we now are each other’s fellow believers.” We now belong to one another in God’s family. ²⁶ If you get angry, do not let your anger become sin. Before the end of the day, stop being angry ²⁷ so that you will not allow the devil to attack you. ²⁸ Those who have been stealing must not steal any longer. Instead, they must work hard to earn their living by their own efforts, so that they may have something to give to those who are needy. ²⁹ Do not use foul language. Instead, say good things that will help people when they need help, things that help those who hear. ³⁰ Do not make the Holy Spirit of God sad by how you live. He has promised that God will one day rescue us from this world of evil. ³¹ Do not be resentful at all toward others. Do not become angry in any way or shout abusively at others. Never slander others. Never plan evil toward others. ³² Be kind to one another. Act mercifully toward each other. Forgive each other, just like God forgave you because of what Christ has done.

Chapter 5

¹ Imitate God because he loves us, because you are his children. ² Live by loving others just like Christ loved us when he gave himself up on the cross as the offering and sacrifice to God for our sins, which was very pleasing to God. ³ Do not suggest any kind of immoral act and do not desire what others have or wrong things others do. Such sins can cause people to say bad things about God’s people, who are together set apart for God, not for sin. ⁴ Do not tell obscene stories to others or say foolish things or joke about committing sins. Such things are not what people who belong to God talk about. Instead, thank God for his love when you talk to others.

⁵ You can be sure of this: No person who is sexually immoral or indecent, or who is greedy (for this is the same as worshiping idols) will be among God’s people over whom Christ rules as king. ⁶ Do not let anyone deceive you with false arguments. Because they do these sinful things, God will be angry with the people who disobey him.

⁷ So do not join with those who do these kinds of sins. ⁸ Before you believed in the Lord Jesus, you were living in sinful disobedience, as if a dark night surrounded you all the time. But now live in the light of the Lord. ⁹ Like light produces good things, so also those who live in the light of Jesus know and do what is good, right, and true. ¹⁰ Test and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Do not participate together with those who are doing the worthless deeds done in spiritual darkness. Instead, just say, “Those sinful acts are worthless,” ¹² because the evil things people do in the secret of darkness are too shameful to describe in the light. ¹³ Everything that light exposes can then be clearly seen and better understood ¹⁴ because the light shows

what it truly is. It is like when God's word explains the sins that destroy people and Jesus who forgives and renews people. So believers say,

"Wake up from your sleep
and arise from living like dead people.
Christ will enable you to understand
his forgiveness and new life."

¹⁵ So be very careful how you live. Do not behave as foolish people do. Instead, behave as wise people do. ¹⁶ Use the time you have on earth wisely because the days here are filled with evil. ¹⁷ So do not be foolish. Instead, understand what the Lord Jesus wants you to do, and do it!

¹⁸ Do not become drunk by drinking alcoholic drinks, which can ruin your life. Instead, let God's Spirit control what you do at all times. ¹⁹ Sing to each other Psalms, and sing songs about Christ, and sing songs that God's Spirit gives you. Sing these Psalms and other songs from your hearts to praise the Lord Jesus. ²⁰ At all times thank God the Father for everything because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you. ²¹ Humbly submit yourselves to each other because you honor Christ.

²²⁻²³ Wives should submit to their own husband's leadership as they do to the Lord Jesus, because the husband is the leader of the wife as also Christ is the leader of the worldwide assembly of believers. He is the Savior who has saved all believers from being condemned for their sins. ²⁴ Just as all believers submit themselves to the authority of Christ, the women must submit themselves completely to the authority of their husbands.

²⁵ Each of you husbands, love your wife as Christ loved all believers and gave up his own life for us on the cross, ²⁶ so that he might set us apart for himself. By the

power of his word Jesus purified believers by removing the punishment for our sins, as if he had washed us with water. ²⁷ Now Christ can present all believers to himself as a completely clean, forgiven, faultless group, without sin. ²⁸ Each man should love his wife as he loves his own body. When men love their wives, it is as though they loved themselves, ²⁹⁻³⁰ because no one ever hated his own body. Instead, he feeds his own body and cares for it, just like Christ also cares for all us believers in his worldwide assembly. We have become one group of believers that belongs to him. ³¹ The scriptures say this about people who marry:

"When a man and a woman marry, they should permanently leave their fathers and mothers. They should be joined as husband and wife, and the two of them will become as though they were one person."

³² It is difficult to understand the meaning of these things that God has now revealed, but I am telling you about Christ's love for his worldwide assembly of believers. ³³ However, as for you, each man must love his wife just as he loves himself, and each woman must respect her husband.

Chapter 6

¹ You children, because you belong to the Lord Jesus, obey your parents, because it is right for you to do that. ² God commanded in the scriptures,

"Greatly respect your father and mother." That is the first law that God commanded in which he also promised something. He promised,

³ "If you do that, you will prosper, and you will live a long time on the earth."

⁴ You parents, do not treat your children

so severely that they become angry. Instead, bring them up well by instructing them and by disciplining them in the manner that the Lord Jesus wants you to do.

⁵ You slaves, obey those who are your masters here on the earth. Obey them very respectfully and sincerely just like you obey Christ. ⁶ Obey them not only when they are watching you. Instead, obey them as though you were slaves of Christ, not slaves of your masters. Do enthusiastically what God wants you to do. ⁷ Happily serve your masters, as you would serve the Lord Jesus, not as you would serve ordinary people. ⁸ Do this because you know that one day the Lord Jesus will reward each person for whatever good deeds that person has done. It makes no difference whether that person was slave or free.

⁹ You masters, just like your slaves should serve you well, you must treat them well. Stop threatening them. Do not forget that the one who is their Lord and your Lord is in heaven. He judges whether you have done right without preferring one person over another.

¹⁰ Finally, rely completely on the Lord Jesus to strengthen you spiritually by his own mighty power. ¹¹ Just like a soldier puts on all his armor, you should use every resource from God to successfully resist the devil when he cleverly schemes against you. ¹² We are not fighting against other humans, but instead we are battling against all kinds of demonic rulers and evil spirits who live in spiritual darkness.

¹³ Therefore, just as a soldier puts on all his armor, so also you must put on all of the armor of God so that you can stand against evil in this time of evil on earth. With God's armor, you can fight against attacks of evil and live for God.

¹⁴ Stand firm as a soldier is on guard. Wear truth like the soldier fastens his belt around his waist; and as he puts on a

breastplate, you put on your breastplate by doing what God has commanded you to do.¹⁵ Just as soldiers put on their boots, be ready to go anywhere you are needed for the sake of the gospel. You carry the gospel with you everywhere you go, and you bring peace with you everywhere.¹⁶ As the soldier takes up a shield for protection, so you take up the shield of faith, and that shield will put out the flaming darts that the evil one will shoot at you. Your shield will protect you.¹⁷ As the soldier puts on a helmet to protect his head, your helmet of protection is your salvation. The soldier has a sword, but your sword is the word of God, which is "the sword of the Spirit."¹⁸ And let God's Spirit direct you in how you pray and what you pray for. Keep praying to God at all times and keep asking God to meet the needs that other people have. If you are going to be effective in your prayers, you must keep spiritually alert. Take special care to pray for all God's holy people.¹⁹ And pray for me. Pray that God will tell me what I should say whenever I speak, in order that I may boldly tell others the good news about Christ. People did not know that message before, but God has now revealed it to me.²⁰ I am a representative of Christ because of that, here in prison. Pray that when I tell others about Christ, I may speak without being afraid, because that is how I ought to speak.

²¹ In order that you may know about what is happening to me and what I am doing, I am sending Tychicus to you with this letter. He will tell you everything that is happening here. He is a fellow believer whom we all love very much, and he serves the Lord Jesus faithfully.²² That is the reason that I am sending him to you; I want you to know how my companions and I are. I want him to comfort and encourage you.

²³ I pray that God our Father and the Lord

Jesus Christ may cause all of you fellow believers to have inner peace, to love each other, and to have faith in God. ²⁴ May God give his grace to all people who love our Lord Jesus Christ without ceasing.

PHILIPPIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, am writing this to the dear fellow believers who live in the city of Philippi. We, Paul and Timothy, are sending this letter to all of you in Philippi whom God has set apart for himself, you who are joined to Christ Jesus. We are also sending this letter to the overseers and deacons who are serving there. ² We pray that God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord will be kind to you and give you peace.

³ I thank my God as I pray to him, whenever I think about you. ⁴ I am constantly praying for you with joy ⁵ and thanking God because you are working with Timothy, me, and others in proclaiming the good news from the first day you believed until now. ⁶ I know that God is doing very good things among you. I am completely confident that he will finish those things at the time when Jesus Christ returns. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you because I love you from my heart. You have been partners with me in carrying out the work that God kindly gave me to do, whether now as I am in prison, or when I speak in public about the good news and show people that it is true. ⁸ God sees how deeply I desire to be with you, just as I deeply love you all, just as Christ Jesus tenderly loves us all.

⁹ I am praying for you, that you might love each other more and more, and that you might know and understand why God wants you to do so. ¹⁰ I also pray that God will enable you to know what you should believe and the best ways in which you should act. I pray for this so that you might be honest and blameless at the time when Christ returns. ¹¹ I also pray that you will always do the things that you can do

because God has declared you good in his sight because of Jesus Christ. Then other people will see how you honor God.

¹² My fellow believers, I want you to know that the hard things I have suffered have not prevented me from proclaiming the good news to people. Instead, my hardships have enabled even more people to hear the good news about Christ. ¹³ In particular, all the military guards here in Rome and many other people in this city now know that I am a prisoner because I proclaim the good news about Christ. ¹⁴ Also, most of the believers here now proclaim the good news about Jesus more courageously and fearlessly because they trust the Lord more firmly to help them. They speak about Jesus more confidently because they have seen the Lord help me in prison to speak the good news.

¹⁵ Some people are proclaiming the good news because they are jealous and they want believers to honor them rather than me. But others are proclaiming the good news because they love Christ and they want people who have not heard the good news to hear it. ¹⁶ Those who proclaim the good news because they love Christ know that God appointed me to speak in public and explain why the good news is true. ¹⁷ But those who are proclaiming the good news about Christ for selfish reasons do not have good reasons for doing so. They believe they are causing me more suffering while I am here in prison. ¹⁸ But it does not matter! People are proclaiming the good news about Christ, either for good reasons or for bad reasons. So I am rejoicing that people are spreading the message about Jesus Christ! And I will continue to rejoice in that!

¹⁹ I will rejoice because I know that God will free me from prison. He will do this because you are praying for me and because the Spirit of Jesus Christ is helping

me. ²⁰ I eagerly and confidently expect that in no way will I fail to do what I should do. Instead, I will have courage now, just as in the past. I will honor Christ with my body, whether I live or die.

²¹ As for me, I live to honor Christ. But if I die, it will be even better for me. ²² On the other hand, if I continue to live here in my body in this world, I will be able to serve Christ here. So I do not know whether I prefer to live or to die. ²³ I cannot choose which I prefer, living or dying. I long to die and leave this world and go to be with Christ, because to be with Christ would be very much better for anyone. ²⁴ But it is more necessary that I remain alive here on earth because you still need me to help you. ²⁵ Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain alive with you all to help you rejoice and trust Christ more. ²⁶ So you should be happy about me because of Christ Jesus when I am once again with you.

²⁷ Most importantly, behave in front of the people who live around you in a way that shows that you honor the good news about Christ. Do this so that whether or not I come and see you, how you live will make me happy. They should tell me that you together are doing your best to believe and live as the good news teaches us. ²⁸ Do not let any of those people who are against you frighten you! When you are courageous and resist them, this will show them that God will destroy them but will save you. ²⁹ God is kind to you: He is allowing you to suffer for Christ as well as to trust in him. ³⁰ You are having to resist those who oppose the good news, just like you saw that I had to resist such people there in Philippi, and just like you hear that I still have to resist such people here now.

Chapter 2

¹ Since Christ encourages us, since he loves us and comforts us, since God's Spirit fellowships with us, and since Christ is very merciful to us, ² make me completely happy by doing the following things: Agree with one another, love one another, act together as one person, and try to accomplish the same things. ³ Never try to make yourselves more important than others nor boast about what you are doing. Instead, be humble, and in particular, honor one another more than you honor yourselves. ⁴ Each one of you should not only be concerned about your needs. You should also be concerned about other people and help them when they have needs.

⁵ Think the same way as Christ Jesus thinks:

⁶ Although he is deserving of all the honors that God should receive,

he took his honors and laid them down, and did not hold on to them.

⁷ Instead, he gave up everything, taking on the qualities of a servant, and he became a human being.

⁸ And he humbled himself by taking on human form,

and in his humility he obeyed God even though obedience to God meant he had to die,

and he died a terrible death, the death of a criminal, death on the cross.

⁹ Because of Christ's obedience to him, God honored him very much;

he honored him more than anyone else who has ever lived,

¹⁰ so that when everyone hears the name "Jesus"

everyone will bow down to honor him, people who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth;

¹¹ so that everyone will say the same praises,

that Jesus Christ is Lord,
and they will praise God the Father because of him.

¹² My dear friends, as you always obeyed God when I was with you, now that I am apart from you, obey him even more. Honor God together, be humble, and do your best to live as those whom God is saving. ¹³ For God is working in your hearts so that you will want to do and then actually do the good things that please him.

¹⁴ Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you neither do nor think of anything wrong as you live among unbelievers, since many of these are wicked people who call evil good. Among these wicked people you should be like the stars at night that shine in the midst of darkness. ¹⁶ Keep trusting in the message that can make you live forever. If you do this, I will rejoice at the time when Christ returns, because then I will know that I did not work among you uselessly.

¹⁷ And I will greatly rejoice with you all, even if they kill me, and my blood pours out like something I offer to God. It will be in addition to what you sacrifice to God because you trust in him. ¹⁸ In the same way you, too, should rejoice together with me!

¹⁹ I am trusting in the Lord Jesus to be able to send Timothy to you soon. I hope that when he returns, he will encourage me by telling me about what God is doing in your lives. ²⁰ I have no one else like Timothy who genuinely cares for you. ²¹ All the others whom I might send to you are concerned only about their own matters. They are not concerned enough

about what Jesus Christ considers important. ²² But you know Timothy's proven character, because as a son with a father he served me in the gospel. ²³ I confidently expect to send Timothy to you as soon as I know what will happen to me. ²⁴ And because I believe that the Lord wants this to happen, I am confident that they will soon release me, and that I will come to you myself.

²⁵ I believe that I must send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a fellow believer and my fellow worker and soldier for Christ, and your messenger and servant whom you sent to help me in my need. ²⁶ When Epaphroditus learned that you heard he was sick, he became very worried and began longing to be there with all of you at Philippi. ²⁷ Indeed, he was so sick that he almost died, but he did not die. Instead, God was very kind to him and also to me, so that I would not have a reason to grieve much. ²⁸ So I am sending him back to you as quickly as possible. I will do this in order that you may rejoice when you see him again, and that I might grieve less. ²⁹ Welcome Epaphroditus with the great joy we have because the Lord Jesus loves us. Honor him and other believers like him. ³⁰ As he was working for Christ, he almost died. He ran the risk of dying in order to supply the things that I needed, something you could not do because you are far away from me.

Chapter 3

¹ Finally, my fellow believers, continue to rejoice because you belong to the Lord. Though I will now write to you about those same matters that I mentioned to you before, this does not make me tired, and it will protect you from those who would like to harm you.

² Beware of those people who are as dangerous to you as wild dogs. They just mutilate men's bodies so they will become Jews. ³ But as for us—the Spirit of God enables us to truly worship God; we rejoice because we trust in Christ Jesus; and the rituals or ceremonies that people perform mean nothing to us. Therefore we ourselves are what it truly means to be circumcised. ⁴ If anyone could have done enough things to please God, it would have been me.

⁵ They circumcised me seven days after I was born. I was born as one of the people of Israel. I am from the tribe of Benjamin. You cannot find a person more Hebrew than myself! My ancestors were all Hebrews. And it was as a Pharisee that I obeyed all the laws of Moses and what our ancestors taught about them. ⁶ I was so passionate to make people obey the law that I caused believers in Christ to suffer. No one could say that I ever disobeyed the law.

⁷ But everything that I then considered to be important I now consider to be worthless, because Christ has changed me. ⁸ Instead, even more I now consider all things as not only worthless, but as useless garbage to throw away, compared to how great it is to know Christ Jesus my Lord. I have removed from my life everything worthless, in order to benefit from Christ. ⁹ I now belong completely to Christ. I know that I cannot make myself good in God's sight by keeping the law. Instead I trust totally in Christ, so God has declared me good in His sight. ¹⁰ When God declared me good in his sight, he did this so that I could begin to know Christ; so that God could begin to work in me with the same power with which he raised Christ from the dead; so that I could begin to suffer along with Christ as he suffered; and so that Christ could make me more like him

when he died. ¹¹ All of this is because I fully expect that God will cause me to live again, as he has promised.

¹² I do not claim that all of these things have fully happened to me yet. But I keep trying to receive these things, because these things are why Christ Jesus took possession of me. ¹³ My fellow believers, I certainly do not yet think that all these things have completely happened to me. But I am like a runner, because I do not look backward as I run toward the finish line. ¹⁴ Instead, I keep running toward the finish line, in order to win the prize, which is to live forever with God. This is what God has called me for, and what Christ Jesus has made possible. ¹⁵ So all of us who have become strong believers should think this same way. But if any of you do not think this same way, God will reveal this to you. ¹⁶ Whatever is true about us now, however far we have come, let us trust Christ more and more in the same way we have done until now.

¹⁷ My fellow believers, join with me and imitate me, and observe closely those people who live as I do, and imitate our example. ¹⁸ There are many people who say that they believe in Christ, but they really oppose what he did on the cross for us. I have told you about those people many times before, and now I am sad, even crying, as I tell you about them again. ¹⁹ God will destroy them in the end because their god is their desire to eat, and they live shamefully and think about things of the earth. ²⁰ As for us, we are citizens of heaven. It is from heaven that we are eagerly awaiting our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to return. ²¹ He will change the bodies we have now, weak and humble bodies, into bodies like his own powerful body. He will do this with the same power with which he controls all things.

Chapter 4

¹ My fellow believers, I love you and I long for you. You give me joy; you will be the reason for which God will reward me. Dear friends, continue to believe firmly in the Lord, as I have described to you in this letter.

² I urge you, Euodia, and I urge you, Syntyche, to again have a peaceful relationship with each other, because you are both joined to the Lord Jesus. ³ And I also urge you, my faithful partner, please help these women. They have faithfully proclaimed the good news and worked with me, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow laborers, whose names are in The Book of Life in which God has written the names of all those people who will live forever.

⁴ Always rejoice for the Lord Jesus! I say again, rejoice! ⁵ All people must see that you are gentle because the Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything. Instead, in every situation pray to God, tell him exactly what you need, and ask him to help you. And thank God for all he does for you. ⁷ Then God's peace, which is much greater than we can understand, will be like a soldier that is guarding how you feel and how you think, as we are joined to Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, my fellow believers, whatever is true, whatever is worthy for people to honor, whatever is right, whatever no one can find fault with, whatever is pleasing, whatever people should admire, whatever is good, whatever deserves people to praise it: These are the things that you should always be thinking about. ⁹ Those things that I have taught you and that you have received from me, those things that you have heard me say and that you have seen me do, those are the things that you yourselves should always do. Then God,

who gives us his peace, will be with you.

¹⁰ I rejoice greatly and thank the Lord because now, after some time, you sent money to me, and so you have once again shown that you are concerned about me. Indeed, you were concerned about me all the time, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I need certain things. In fact, I have learned to be content with whatever I have. ¹² I am able to be needy or to have plenty. I have learned how to be satisfied in all circumstances. I know the secret of how to be happy at all times. ¹³ I am able to do everything because Christ makes me strong. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, you did the right thing to share with me in my hardship.

¹⁵ My friends there at Philippi, you yourselves know that during the time I first proclaimed the good news to you, when I left there to go away from the province of Macedonia, no assembly of believers sent me funds or helped me in any way except you only! ¹⁶ Even when I was in the city of Thessalonica, you sent money more than once to supply what I needed. ¹⁷ I say this, not because I desire that you give me money now. Instead, I want to see you do even more things that God will praise you for.

¹⁸ I have plenty of things now. I have so many things that you sent me through Epaphroditus. These things are like when priests burn an animal sacrifice to God and it smells good to him. ¹⁹ God, whom I serve, will supply everything you need because you belong to Jesus Christ, who owns the splendor and wealth of heaven. ²⁰ So people should praise God our Father, who will rule forever and ever in brilliant light! Amen!

²¹ Greet for me all the believers. They all belong to God! The believers with me greet you, as well. ²² All of God's people here send their greetings to you. Espe-

cially the fellow believers who work in the palace of Caesar, the emperor, send their greetings to you.

²³ My desire is that our Lord Jesus Christ will continue to act kindly toward you all.

COLOSSIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, write this to the dear fellow believers in the city of Colossae. This is from Paul, whom God chose to send to you as an apostle of Christ Jesus, and this letter is also from Timothy, our fellow believer joined to Christ. We are sending this letter to all of you. ² We send this letter to those God has set apart for himself—those who are faithful believers who belong to Christ. We pray that God our Father will give you his kindness and peace.

³ We often thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, while we are praying for you. ⁴ We give God thanks because we have heard that you trust in Christ Jesus and that you love all those whom God has set apart for himself. ⁵ You love our fellow believers because you confidently are waiting for the things God is reserving for you in heaven. You first heard about these things when you heard the true message, the good news about Christ. ⁶ Believers are proclaiming this good news that you heard in Colossae to everyone in the world. It is just as it has worked in you also, from the first day you heard it and understood how truly kind God is. The good news is like a field planted with crops that are growing and will give a very large harvest. ⁷ Epaphras taught you the good news. We love him because he serves Christ together with us and works for Christ faithfully in our place. ⁸ He told us that you love all God's people because God's Spirit has empowered you to love God and others.

⁹ Since the time we heard about how you love, we have always been praying for you. We ask God to show you everything he wants you to do, and to make you wise

so that you will understand what God's Spirit is teaching you. ¹⁰ We pray that you will live in a way that will help others honor the Lord also, so that he will approve of you. We pray that you will grow to understand God more and do every good thing that he tells you to do. ¹¹ We pray that God will strengthen you with all his mighty power, so that you will patiently endure every difficulty. ¹² We pray that you will be rejoicing and thanking God our Father, because he has declared you worthy to be with the others whom he has set apart for himself; this is so he can give you all the things that he is keeping for you when you are with him in the light of his presence.

¹³ God our Father has rescued us from the evil that controlled us; he has made his Son, whom he loves, to rule over us now.

¹⁴ By means of his Son he has set us free from that evil; that is, he has forgiven our sins. ¹⁵ When we know the Son, we know what God is like, even though we cannot see him. The Son has first place over everything that he has created. ¹⁶ For the Son created all things, as the Father desired him to do: Everything in the sky and everything on earth, everything that we can see and everything that we cannot see, such as angelic beings of all kinds and powers and authorities, all things exist because the Son created them because the Father wanted him to. And they exist for him. ¹⁷ The Son himself existed before anything else, and he holds everything together. ¹⁸ He rules all believers—the church—like a person's head rules his body. He rules over the church because he started it. He was the first person to come back to life with a perfect body. So he is greater than every thing. ¹⁹ God the Father was pleased to make everything he is to live in Christ. ²⁰ It also pleased God to bring everything back to himself in peace through Jesus. God offered peace to all

people and all things everywhere on earth and in heaven. He did this by causing the Son to die on the cross as a sacrifice, shedding his blood as he died.

²¹ Before you believed in Christ, God considered you his enemies, and you were unfriendly to God because you thought evil thoughts and because you did evil deeds.

²² But now God has offered peace between yourselves and himself and has made you his friends. He did this when Jesus gave up his body and life for us by dying. This made it possible for us to belong to God; he finds nothing wrong in us now, nothing to blame us for. ²³ But you must continue to trust Christ completely; then you will be like a house that they built on solid rock. Do not for any reason stop believing in what God has promised to do for you in the good news that people all over the world have heard. This is the same good news that I, Paul, am serving God by proclaiming to people.

²⁴ Now I rejoice that I am suffering for your benefit. Yes, in order to help the church, which is like Christ's body, I suffer things that must still happen. ²⁵ God

made me his servant and gave to me special work to do, which is to proclaim the full message of God to non-Jewish people like you. ²⁶ From ancient times, for generations, God did not tell this good news, but now he has revealed this mystery to those whom he has set apart for himself.

²⁷ It is to these people—Jews and non-Jews like yourselves just as much—that God planned to tell this wonderful secret. It is this: Christ will live in you and make you confidently expect to share in God's glory!

²⁸ We are wisely warning and teaching every person about Christ so that we might bring into God's presence each one as knowing God completely, joined to Christ. ²⁹ It is to do this that I work my hardest, because Christ is giving me

strength.

Chapter 2

¹ I want you to realize that I am doing my best to help you and those in Laodicea, and also the believers who have never seen me personally. ² I do this so that I might encourage them and you yourselves to love each other and unite yourselves together. I desire that you all confidently and completely understand this secret truth about God and that this truth is Christ! ³ It is only by means of Christ that we can know what God is thinking and how wise he is. ⁴ I am telling you this in order that no one may deceive you. ⁵ Even though I am absent from you physically, I am very much concerned about you, just as if I were indeed with you. Yet I am rejoicing because I know that you follow Christ in a way that no one can stop you, that you trust in Christ without giving up.

⁶ You began to believe in Christ Jesus the Lord by trusting in him, so also live by trusting him. ⁷ You should rely completely on Christ Jesus the Lord, just like a tree spreads its roots deep into the ground. You learned to trust Christ very much in this way, like men build a house on a good foundation. And you should always give thanks to God.

⁸ Do not believe anyone who says that you must obey what people have taught about how to honor God or that you must obey what they worship in this world. Instead, obey Christ, ⁹ because the man Jesus Christ is fully God. ¹⁰ Now God has given you everything you need because he has joined you to Christ, and he rules over every other person, spirit, and angel. ¹¹ It is as if God has also circumcised you. But this was not as though

a piece of human being cut flesh from your body. Instead, Jesus took away the power of sin that was within you, and this “circumcision” is the one that Christ does when he conquered your sinful nature and took it away from you.¹² Because they have baptized you, God considers that when men buried Christ, they buried you along with him. He considers that when he made Christ come alive again, he made you come alive also, because you trusted that he could make you live again.¹³ God viewed you as being dead, because you were sinning against him, and because you were not Jews, so you did not worship him. But he made you come alive together with Christ; he forgave us of all our sins.¹⁴ We have all sinned so much, but God has forgiven our sins. It is like a man might forgive people who owe him money, so he tears up the papers they signed when he loaned them the money. But as for God, it is as if he had nailed those papers on which he had written all our sins and all the laws that we had broken to the cross on which Christ died.¹⁵ Moreover, God defeated the evil spirit beings who rule people in this world, and he let everybody know that he had defeated them. It was just as if he had paraded them around in the streets as prisoners.

¹⁶ So disregard anyone who says that God will punish you because you eat certain foods and drink certain drinks or because you do not celebrate special yearly festivals or when the new moon appears or weekly Sabbaths.¹⁷ These kinds of rules and events only picture what is truly coming. What is truly coming is Christ himself.¹⁸ Those same people pretend to be humble, and they love to worship angels. Do not let them convince you to do the same. If you do, you will lose what Christ has promised you. These people are always talking about visions they say

God has made them see. They boast about these things because they think like people everywhere think who do not honor God.¹⁹ Such persons are not joined to Christ. Christ is the head of the body, and that body is all those who believe in him. The whole body depends upon the head. The head takes care of each part and puts together all the bones and ligaments so they work together, and it is God who makes it grow.

²⁰ God considers that you died with Christ when he died. So now the spirits and all the rules that people make for how to please God—none of these things rule you anymore. So why are you still living as if these things were real? Why do you still obey those things?²¹ These rules are such as: “Do not handle certain things. Do not taste certain things. Do not touch certain things.” Do not think you still have to obey such regulations.²² These rules are all about things that perish in this world as people use them, and they were made up and taught by men, not by God.²³ These rules may seem to be good. But people made them because they were trying to honor God in their own way. That is why those people often look so humble; that is why they often hurt their own bodies. But if we obey these rules, we do not really stop wanting to sin.

Chapter 3

¹ God considers that he made you alive again when he made Christ alive after he died. And Christ is in heaven and is sitting at God’s right side, the place for the person of greatest honor and power. You also should try to live here as if you were already there.² Desire what Jesus is keeping in heaven to give you; do not desire the things here on earth.³ For God considers that you have died and no longer

belong to this world. He considers that he has hidden you with Christ to keep you safe.⁴ When God reveals Christ to everyone on earth in his shining light, then he will also reveal you in that same light, because Christ makes you live!

⁵ Therefore, think of the desires you have to do evil things in this world as enemies that must die. You must execute them; Do not try to do sexually immoral or impure acts. Do not think in lustful or evil ways. And do not be greedy, because that is the same as worshiping idols.⁶ It is because people do things like these that God is angry with them and will punish them, for they do not obey him.⁷ You yourselves also formerly lived like that when you were participating with those who behaved like that.⁸ But now you must stop doing these things. Do not be angry at each other; do not try to make trouble for each other. Do not insult each other or talk in shameful, disgusting ways.⁹ And do not lie to one another. Do not do any of these things, because you have become a new person now, a person who does not do these evil things any more.¹⁰ You are a new person, and God is always making you to know him better and better and to be like him, as he created you to be.¹¹ God has made us into new persons joined to Christ, and he is always making us new. So it is no longer important whether anyone is a non-Jew or a Jew, or whether anyone is circumcised or is not circumcised, or whether anyone is a foreigner, or even uncivilized, or whether anyone is a slave or not a slave. But instead what is important is Christ, who is all things in all of you.

¹² Because God has chosen you and set you apart as his people, and because he loves you, serve others compassionately and mercifully and with kindness. Humbly and gently care for one another with pa-

tience¹³ and bear with each other. If anyone complains against someone else, forgive one another. Just as the Lord Jesus has forgiven you, so also you must forgive each other.¹⁴ And what is most important is to love one another, because by doing that you will tie yourselves together perfectly.

¹⁵ Christ is the one who makes you to live in peace with God and one another, so always behave so as to remain at peace. This is why he has called you to be together. And always thank God for everything.¹⁶ As you live and serve God, always obey together what Christ has taught you. Teach and instruct each other with wisdom; praise and thank God sincerely as you sing psalms, hymns, and songs that honor him.

¹⁷ Whatever you say, and whatever you do, do it all to honor the Lord Jesus, and do it while you give thanks to God for what Christ has done for you.

¹⁸ Wives, obey your husbands; this is right and according to what the Lord Jesus has commanded.¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in every way, because the Lord God is pleased when you do that.²¹ Fathers, do not cause anger in your children, so they do not become discouraged.

²² Slaves, obey your masters in this world in every way. Do not obey your masters only when they are watching you, like those who merely want their masters to think they always obey. Instead, obey your masters sincerely from the heart because you honor the Lord Jesus.²³ Whatever work you do, work wholeheartedly for the Lord Jesus rather than for people. Do not work like those who are working merely for their human masters,²⁴ because you know the Lord will repay you;

you will receive your share of what the Lord has promised you. Jesus Christ is the real master whom you are serving.²⁵ But God will judge each person in the same way; he will punish those who do wrong as they deserve.

Chapter 4

¹ Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly supply what they need, because you know that you also have a master who is in heaven.

² Keep praying without stopping. Do not be lazy, but instead keep praying and thanking God. ³ Pray together for us too, so that God will make it possible for us to freely explain the good news, the secret about Christ that God is now revealing everywhere. It is because we proclaimed this good news that I am now in prison.⁴ Pray that I might be able to fully explain the good news.

⁵ Live wisely around those who are not believers, and make each moment valuable by using it wisely. ⁶ Always speak graciously and in a pleasant and interesting way to those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus. Then you will know how to speak to each person about the Lord.

⁷ Tychicus will tell you everything that has been happening to me. He is a fellow believer whom I love, who helps me faithfully, and who serves the Lord Jesus together with me. ⁸ The reason that I am sending Tychicus to you with this letter is that you might know about us and that he might encourage you. ⁹ I am sending him to you with Onesimus, who is a faithful fellow believer, whom I love and who is your fellow townsman. They will tell you all about what has been happening here.

¹⁰ Aristarchus, who is in prison with me,

and Mark, who is Barnabas' cousin, greet you. I have instructed you about Mark, so if he comes to you, welcome him.¹¹ Jesus, who is also named Justus, greets you, too. These three men are the only Jewish believers working with me to proclaim God as king through Christ Jesus. They have greatly helped and encouraged me.¹²

Epaphras, who is your fellow townsman and a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He prays earnestly for you very often, that you might be strong and believe everything that God teaches us and promises us.¹³ I can say that he has worked very hard for you, for those who live in the city of Laodicea, and for those who live in the city of Hierapolis.¹⁴ Luke the doctor, whom I love, and Demas greet you.

¹⁵ Greet the fellow believers who live in Laodicea, and greet Nympha and the group of believers that meets in her house.

¹⁶ After someone reads this letter among you, have someone also read it to the assembly in Laodicea. And read the letter from Laodicea, too.¹⁷ Tell Archippus to make sure that he completes the task that God gave him to do.

¹⁸ I, Paul, greet you now in my own handwriting. Remember me and pray for me in prison. I pray that our Lord Jesus Christ would continue to act graciously toward you all.

1 THESSALONIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, am writing this letter. Silas and Timothy are with me. We are sending this letter to you who are the group of believers in the city of Thessalonica who are joined to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May God be kind to you and give you peace.

² We always thank God for you all when we mention you while we pray. ³ We continually remember that you work for God, who is our Father, because you trust in him and you earnestly help people because you love them. You have a solid confidence in the future, because you know our Lord Jesus Christ! ⁴ My fellow believers whom God loves, we also thank him because we know that he chose you to become his people. ⁵ We know that he chose you because when we told the good news to you, it was much more than words only. The Holy Spirit powerfully worked among you, and he strongly assured us that our message to you was true. In the same way, you know how we spoke and how we conducted ourselves when we were with you, in order that we might help you. ⁶ We have now heard that you are living like we live and are following our example. But more important, you are also living like our Lord lived. You received the message of God's love with great joy that only comes from the Holy Spirit, even though you had to go through many trials and difficulties. ⁷ All the believers who are in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia are learning how they should trust God just like you have learned and as you are trusting him. ⁸ Other people have heard you tell the message from the Lord Jesus. Then they also proclaimed the good news

to people who live throughout Macedonia and Achaia. Not only that, but people who live in many faraway places have heard that you trust in God. So we do not need to tell people what God has done in your lives. ⁹ People who live far from you are telling others how warmly you welcomed us when we came to you. They also report that you stopped worshiping false gods and that now you worship and serve the God who alone is the living God, and he is the real and only God. ¹⁰ They also tell us that now you wait expectantly for his Son to return to earth from heaven. You firmly believe that God caused him to live again after he died. You believe also that Jesus will rescue all of us, who trust in him, when God punishes all the people of the entire world.

Chapter 2

¹ My fellow believers, you know that our time with you was very worthwhile. ² Although people in Philippi city previously mistreated us and insulted us, as you know, God caused us to be courageous. As a result, we told you the good news that God sent us to tell you, even though some people in your city opposed us very much. ³ When we encouraged you to obey God's message, we did not speak to you something false. And we do not want to get something for ourselves by immoral means. We do not try to deceive you or anyone else. ⁴ On the contrary, God trusted us to tell you the good news, because he had examined us and considered us to be the right people to do this work. As we teach people, we do not say what they like to hear. Instead, we say what God wants us to say, because he judges everything that we think. ⁵ You know that we never praised you in order to get anything from you. And we never said

anything to you to convince you to give us things. God knows that this is true! ⁶ We never tried to get you or anyone else to honor us, although we could have demanded that you give us the things we needed to live while we were with you, because Christ had sent us to you. ⁷ On the contrary, we were gentle when we were among you, as a mother gently takes care of her own children. ⁸ So, because we love you, we were delighted to personally tell you the good message that God gave us. But also we were delighted to do all that we could do to help you because we began to love you very much. ⁹ My fellow believers, you remember that we worked hard during the day and also at night. This is how we earned money, so that we would not have to ask any one of you to give us what we needed. We did this while we proclaimed to you the good news about God. ¹⁰ Both you and God know that we lived toward you believers in a very good and right way—in a way that no one could criticize. ¹¹ You know also that we behaved toward each one of you as a father who loves his children behaves toward them. ¹² We kept strongly exhorting and encouraging you to live like God's people should, because he has called you to become his people to whom he will show himself as king with the most wonderful power.

¹³ This is why we always thank God, because when you heard the message that we told to you, you accepted it as the true message, the good message that God gave to us. We ourselves did not invent it. We also thank God that he is changing your lives because you trust this message. ¹⁴ We are certain about these things, because you acted just like the groups of believers in Judea acted. They also are joined to Christ Jesus, and, just as they endured it when their fellow countrymen mistreated them because of Christ, in the same way you have endured it when your

own fellow countrymen mistreat you. ¹⁵ Those Jews had killed the Lord Jesus and many prophets, too. Other unbelieving Jews forced us to leave many towns. They really make God angry, and they work against what is best for all human beings! ¹⁶ For example, they try to stop us from telling the good news to non-Jews; they do not want God to save them! They have sinned almost as much as God will allow them to before he punishes them at last!

¹⁷ My fellow believers, when we had to be away from you for a short time, we felt like parents who had lost their children. We strongly desired to be present with you. ¹⁸ Indeed I, Paul, tried to return several times to see you. But each time Satan prevented us from returning. ¹⁹ Indeed, it is because of you that we hope to do God's work well; it is you who make us proud; it is because of you that we hope to succeed in serving God. It is because of you as well as others that we hope that the Lord Jesus will reward us when he returns to earth. ²⁰ Indeed, it is because of you that even now we are pleased and are joyful!

Chapter 3

¹ As a result of that, when I could no longer endure worrying about you, I decided that Silas and I would stay behind alone in the city of Athens, ² and we sent Timothy to you. You know that he is our close associate and also works for God by proclaiming the good news about Christ. Silas and I sent him in order that he would urge you to continue to strongly trust in Christ. ³ We did not want any of you to turn away from Christ in fear because of what you were suffering. You well know that God knew that others would mistreat us because of Christ. ⁴ Remember that when

we were present with you, we kept telling you that others would mistreat us. And that is what happened, as you know.⁵ This is why I sent Timothy to you, because I could wait no longer to know whether you were still trusting in Christ. I was afraid that Satan, the one who tempts us, had caused you to stop trusting in Christ. I was afraid that everything we had done with you was useless.

⁶ But now Timothy has just returned to Silas and me from being with you, and he has told us the good news that you still trust in Christ and that you love him. He told us also that you always happily remember us and that you want very much us to visit you, just as we want to visit you.⁷ My fellow believers, even though we are suffering very much because of what people are doing to us here, we have been comforted because Timothy told us that you still trust in Christ.⁸ Now it is as if we are living in a new way, because you are trusting very much in the Lord Jesus.⁹ We cannot thank God enough for what he has done for you! We greatly rejoice over you when we pray to our God!¹⁰ We constantly and fervently ask God that we will be able to visit you, and that we will be able to help you to trust in Christ more strongly!

¹¹ We pray to God, our Father, and to our Lord Jesus, that they will enable us to return to you.¹² As for you, we pray that the Lord Jesus will help you to love each other and other people more and more, just like we continue loving you more and more.¹³ We pray that our Lord Jesus will make you want to please him more and more. We pray that God our Father will enable you to become more like him, and that no one can criticize. We pray this, so that when Jesus comes back to earth and all those who belong to him come with him, he will be pleased with you.

Chapter 4

¹⁻² Now, my fellow believers, I want to write about some other matters. I urge you—and when I urge you, it is the same as the Lord Jesus himself urging you—to conduct your lives in a way that pleases God. We taught you to do that because of what the Lord Jesus had told us to say. We know that you are conducting your lives that way, but we strongly urge that you do that even more.

³ God wants you to do no sin, living in a way that will show that you completely belong to him. He wants you to avoid doing any sexually immoral acts.⁴ That is, he wants each one of you to know how to live with your wife, in a way that honors her and you do not sin against her.⁵ You must not use her to satisfy your lustful desires (as non-Jews do because they do not know God).⁶ God wants each one of you to control your sexual desires, in order that no one of you sin against your fellow believer and take advantage of him or her by doing things like that. Remember that we strongly warned you previously that the Lord Jesus will punish all people who commit sexually immoral acts.⁷ When God chose us believers, he did not want us to be people who behave in a sexually immoral way. On the contrary, he wants us to be people who do not sin.⁸ So I warn you that those who disregard this teaching of mine are not just disregarding me, a human being. On the contrary, they are disregarding God, because God commanded it. Remember that God sent his Spirit, who does not sin, to live in you!

⁹ I want to urge you again that you should love your fellow believers. You do not really need that anyone write to you about that, because God has already taught you how to love each other,¹⁰ and because you already are showing that you love your

fellow believers who live in other places in your province of Macedonia. Nevertheless, my fellow believers, we urge you to love each other more and more.¹¹ We urge you also to try hard to attend to your own affairs and to not meddle with the affairs of others. We urge you also to work at your own occupations to earn what you need to live. Remember that we taught you previously to live like that.¹² If you do these things, unbelievers will acknowledge that you behave decently, and you will not have to depend on others to supply what you need.

¹³ My fellow believers, we also want you to understand what will happen to our fellow believers who now are dead. You must not be like the unbelievers. They grieve deeply for people who die because they do not expect to live again after they die.¹⁴ We believers know that Jesus died and that he rose to live again. So we also know well that God will cause those joined to Jesus to live again, and that he will bring them back with Jesus.¹⁵ I write this because the Lord Jesus revealed to me what I am now telling you. Some of you may think that when the Lord Jesus comes back, we believers who are still living will meet Jesus sooner than those who have already died. That is certainly not true!¹⁶ I write this, because it is the Lord Jesus himself who will descend from heaven. When he comes down, he will command all of us believers to rise. The chief angel will shout with a loud voice, and another angel will blow a trumpet for God. Then the first thing that will happen is that the people who are joined to Christ will live again.¹⁷ After that, God will take up into the clouds all of us believers who are still living on this earth. He will take us and those other believers who have died, in order that we all might together meet the Lord Jesus in the sky. As a result of that, we all will be with him forever.¹⁸ Because all this is

true, encourage each other by sharing this teaching with each other.

Chapter 5

¹ My fellow believers, I want to tell you more about the time when the Lord Jesus will come back. Really, you do not need that I write to you about that,² because you yourselves know accurately about it already! You know that the Lord Jesus will return unexpectedly. People will not expect him, just as no one expects a thief when he comes at night.³ At some time in the future many people will say, "All is peaceful and we are safe!" Then suddenly God will come to punish them severely! Just as a pregnant woman who experiences birth pains cannot stop those pains, those people will have no way to escape from God.⁴ But you, my fellow believers, you are not like people who live in darkness, because you know the truth about God. So when Jesus returns, you will be ready for him.⁵ You belong to the light, to the daytime. You are not like those who belong to the darkness, to the nighttime.⁶ So we believers must be aware of what is happening. We must control ourselves and be ready for Jesus to come.⁷ It is at night when people sleep and do not know what is happening, and it is at night when people become drunk.⁸ But we believers belong to the day, so let us control ourselves. Let us be like soldiers: As they protect their chests with breastplates, let us protect ourselves by trusting in Christ and loving him. As they protect their heads with helmets, let us protect ourselves by expecting Christ to rescue us completely from evil.

⁹ When God chose us, he did not plan for us to be people whom he will punish. On the contrary, he decided to save us

because we trust in what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. ¹⁰ Jesus died to atone for our sins in order that we might live together with him, whether we are alive or whether we are dead when he returns to earth. ¹¹ Because you know that this is true, continue to encourage each other, as indeed you now are doing.

¹² My fellow believers, we ask that you recognize as leaders those people who work hard for you. This means that you must respect these leaders as fellow believers—you see how hard they work to help you grow in faith. These leaders guide you and they teach you how to live for the Lord. ¹³ We ask that you honor them because you love them and because of the work they do. We also urge you to live peacefully with each other.

¹⁴ My fellow believers, we urge that you warn believers who want to live off what others give them instead of working. Also encourage believers who are fearful, and help all people who are weak in any way. We also urge you to be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ Make sure that none of you does evil deeds to anyone who has done evil to you. On the contrary, you must always try to do good deeds to each other and to everyone else.

¹⁶ Be joyful at all times, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ and thank God in all circumstances. God wants you to behave like that because of what Christ Jesus has done for you.

¹⁹ Do not keep God's Spirit from working among you. ²⁰ For example, do not despise anything that the Holy Spirit tells someone. ²¹ On the contrary, evaluate all such messages. Accept the parts that are good and obey them. ²² Do not obey any kind of evil message.

²³ May God give you peace and make you without fault so that you do not sin. May he keep you from sinning in any way until

our Lord Jesus Christ comes back to earth. ²⁴ Because God has called you to be his people, you can certainly trust him to keep on helping you in that way.

²⁵ My fellow believers, pray for me, for Silas, and for Timothy. ²⁶ When you gather together as believers, greet each other affectionately, as fellow believers should. ²⁷ Make certain that you read this letter to all the believers who are among you. When I tell you this, it is the same as if the Lord were speaking to you! ²⁸ May our Lord Jesus Christ continue to act kindly toward you all.

2 THESSALONIANS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, and Silas and Timothy are writing this letter to you in the city of Thessalonica, who are a group of believers joined to God our Father and to Jesus Christ our Lord. ² We pray that God our Father, and Jesus Christ our Lord, will continue to act kindly toward you and that he will continue to give you peace.

³ Our fellow believers, we are always thanking God, and we should do this, because you are trusting in the Lord Jesus more and more, and because every one of you is loving each of the others more and more. ⁴ As a result, we keep proudly talking about you to the other groups of believers belonging to God. We tell them how you are being patient and how you continue trusting in the Lord Jesus, even though other people frequently cause you much trouble.

⁵ Since you are enduring all that trouble, we clearly know that God will judge all people justly. In your case, he will declare to everyone that you are worthy for him to rule forever, because you are suffering as you trust in him. ⁶ God will certainly cause trouble for those people who are troubling you, because it is right for him to do so. ⁷ He also considers that it is right that he should reward you by bringing you through your hardships. He will do that for both you and us when our Lord Jesus shows himself to everyone when he returns from heaven with his powerful angels. ⁸ Then with blazing fire he will punish those people who are not loyal to him, those who refuse to accept the good news about our Lord Jesus. ⁹ Our Lord Jesus will drive them far from himself, where he will destroy them for-

ever, far from where he rules with very great power. ¹⁰ The Lord Jesus will do this when he comes back from heaven at the time that God has decided. As a result, all we who are his people will praise him and marvel at him. And you will be there, too, because you believed what we solemnly told you.

¹¹ In order that you might praise Jesus like this, we are also always praying for you. We pray that God will make you worthy to live in the new way he has called you to live. We pray also that he will make you able to do good in every way that you desire, and that since he is so powerful, he will also make you able to do every kind of good thing because you trust in him. ¹² We pray this because we want you to praise our Lord Jesus, and we want him to honor you. This will happen because God, whom we worship, and our Lord Jesus Christ keep acting kindly toward you.

Chapter 2

¹ Now I want to write to you about the time when our Lord Jesus Christ will return and when God will gather us together with Jesus. My fellow believers, I urge you ² to think calmly about any message that may have come to you. It does not matter if it is a message that someone claims God's Spirit revealed to him, or if it comes from some person, or if it is a letter that someone claims that I wrote: I do not want you to believe that the Lord Jesus has already returned to earth. ³ Do not allow anyone to persuade you to believe such a message.

The Lord will not come immediately. First, many people will rebel against God. They will accept and obey a certain man who will sin very greatly against God, the one whom God will destroy. ⁴ He will be the

supreme enemy of God. He will proudly work against everything that people consider to be God and everything that people worship. As a result, he will even enter God's temple and sit down there to rule! He will publicly proclaim that he himself is God! ⁵ I am sure that you remember that I kept telling you these things while I was still with you there in Thessalonica.

⁶ You also know that there is something that is preventing this man from showing himself to everybody now. He will not be able to show himself until the time that God will allow him to. ⁷ Although Satan is already secretly causing people to reject God's laws, the one who is preventing this man from revealing himself now will continue to prevent him until God removes him. ⁸ It is then that God will allow this man, who rejects God's laws completely, to show himself to everyone in the world. Then the Lord Jesus will speak a single command that will destroy him. Just by showing himself to everyone when he returns, Jesus will cause that man to become completely powerless.

⁹ But before Jesus destroys him, Satan will give that man very great power. As a result, he will do all kinds of supernatural miracles and amazing deeds, and many people will believe that God was making him able to do those things. ¹⁰ And by doing wicked deeds, that man will completely deceive those who are doomed to perish. He will be able to deceive them because they did not agree to love the true message about how Jesus could save them. ¹¹ So God will enable this man to easily deceive them, so that they will believe what this man falsely claims that he is. ¹² The result will be that God will judge and condemn all those who refused to believe the truth about Christ, people who instead enjoyed doing everything that is wicked.

¹³ Our fellow believers, you whom our

Lord Jesus loves, we should always thank God for you. We should do this because he chose you to be among the first people to believe in the truth about Jesus, among the first people that God would save, and to set you apart for himself by means of his Spirit. ¹⁴ We thank God that he chose you as a result of our proclaiming the message about Christ to you, in order that God might honor you in some of the same ways that he honors our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ So, our fellow believers, continue to strongly believe in Christ. Continue believing the true things that we have taught you when we spoke to you and wrote a letter to you.

¹⁶ We pray that our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God, our Father—he who loves us and will encourage us forever and who kindly makes us expect to receive good things from him—¹⁷ may God and Jesus Christ together encourage you! And may they cause you to continue doing and saying good things.

Chapter 3

¹ As for the other matters, our fellow believers, pray for us that more and more people will soon hear our message about our Lord Jesus and honor it, just as you have done. ² Pray also for us that God will keep wicked and evil people from harming us, for not everyone believes in the Lord.

³ Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus is trustworthy! So we are sure that he will cause you to continue to be strong. We are also sure that he will protect you from Satan, the evil one. ⁴ Because we are all joined to our Lord Jesus, we are confident that you are now obeying what we have commanded you, and that you will obey what we are commanding you in this letter. ⁵

We pray that our Lord Jesus would continue to help you know how much God loves you and how much Christ has endured for you.

⁶ Our fellow believers, we command you—and it is as if the Lord Jesus Christ himself were saying this—that you stop associating with every fellow believer who is lazy and refuses to work. That is to say, you must stay away from those who are not conducting their lives in the manner that others taught us and that we in turn taught you. ⁷ We tell you this because you yourselves know that you should behave like we behaved. We did not merely sit around without working while we were living among you. ⁸ That is to say, we did not eat anyone's food if we did not pay for it. Instead, we worked very hard to support ourselves during the day and the night, in order that we would not have to depend on any of you for what we needed. ⁹ We have always had the right to depend on you for money because I am an apostle, but instead, we worked hard in order to be good examples for you, in order that you should behave like we behaved.

¹⁰ Remember that when we were there with you, we kept commanding you that if any fellow believer refuses to work, you should not give him food to eat. ¹¹ Now we tell you this again, because someone has told us that some of you are lazy and not working at all. Not only that, some of you are interfering with what other people are doing.

¹² We command those fellow believers who are not working, and urge them, just as if the Lord himself were speaking, that they should mind their own business, earn what they need to live on, and support themselves.

¹³ Fellow believers! Do not ever get tired of doing what is right!

¹⁴ If any fellow believer does not obey

what we have written in this letter, publicly identify that person. Then do not associate with him, in order that he may become ashamed. ¹⁵ Do not think of him as though he were your enemy; instead, warn him as you would warn your other fellow believers.

¹⁶ I pray that our Lord Jesus himself, who gives peace to his people, will give peace to you always and in every situation.

I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to help you all. ¹⁷ Now I have taken the pen from my scribe, and I, Paul, am sending this greeting to you as I write this myself. I do this in all my letters in order that you may know that it is truly I who have sent this letter. This is how I always end my letters. ¹⁸ I pray that our Lord Jesus Christ will continue to act kindly to you all.

1 TIMOTHY

Chapter 1

¹⁻² I, Paul, am writing this to Timothy. God our Savior and Christ Jesus are those in whom we have confidence for the future, and Christ commanded me to be an apostle. You became a Christian when I told you about Jesus Christ, and you are my true son in the Lord. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord be kind to you, have mercy upon you, and give you peace.

³ The reason that I urged you to remain in Ephesus while I traveled to Macedonia was so that you would command certain men not to teach what is different from what we teach. ⁴ And command them not to give their time and attention to old useless stories and lists of ancestors that people never stop thinking about. These things only cause people to argue with each other, but do not help them to know God's plan to save us—a plan that we believe by faith. ⁵ Instead, the purpose of what we command you to teach is to love God from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from faith that is sincere. ⁶ Some men have stopped trying to do these good things; instead, they are now saying useless things. ⁷ They want to teach about the law, but they do not understand it. Yet they insist that what they teach is true.

⁸ But we know that law is good if we know how to use it according to what the law says. ⁹ We know that the law is not made to control good people, but to control rebellious people and those who do not honor God, for sinners, and disrespectful persons, for murderers and for those who even murder their own parents. ¹⁰ It is made also to control homosexuals and all people who practice improper sexual

behavior, to control those who steal others and sell them as slaves, to control liars and false witnesses in courts of law, and to stop whatever is different from our good and healthy teaching. ¹¹ All of this agrees with the wonderful good news that God, whom we praise, has taught us, and that he trusts me to announce to others.

¹² I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, because he gave me the strength to serve him. He also relies on me to serve him. ¹³ In past times, I insulted and persecuted the believers. I did violent deeds, but God had mercy on me because I did not believe, and I did not know what I was doing. ¹⁴ God was extremely kind to me, for he made me able to believe in Christ Jesus and love him because he united me to him.

¹⁵ Everyone should accept this fact, because we can count on it completely: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. It is true that I am the worst sinner of all.

¹⁶ But because I am the worst sinner, God had mercy on me before many others, so that they would see how patient he is. God is patiently waiting to give everlasting life to those who believe in him.

¹⁷ The eternal king cannot be seen, and he cannot die. He alone is God. It is he whom everyone will honor and praise forever and ever. Amen. ¹⁸ Timothy, my child, I command you: Remember what certain believers prophesied about you. Do this in order to follow those things as you work hard for the Lord. ¹⁹ Trust God and keep a good conscience. Some people have not paid attention to their own consciences. So what has happened to their faith is a disaster. ²⁰ Hymenaeus and Alexander are two men like this. I have handed them over to Satan for him to attack them, so that they may learn not to insult God.

Chapter 2

¹ Most importantly, because false teachers are dangerous, I urge all the believers to ask God and pray to him to help all people, and to thank him for them. ² Pray for kings and for everyone who has power over others, so that we may live quietly and peacefully in a way that we can honor God and other people. ³ God, who saves us, listens to us when we pray like this. He sees it as good. ⁴ He wants to save everyone. He wants everyone to learn what is true about him. ⁵ The truth is this, that there is one God, and there is only one person who can make us acceptable to him. Christ Jesus, the man, is this one person. ⁶ He gave himself to set all people free—and that was the proof of what God was doing through Christ's death. ⁷ To declare this truth, God made me a messenger and an apostle. I speak the truth; I am not lying. I teach the Gentiles the things that they should truly believe.

⁸ Therefore, I want men everywhere to pray and to lift up their hands to God in a way that he will accept. Believers should not pray to show anger or doubt about God. ⁹ I also want the women to dress themselves carefully. They should control themselves so that they do not dress to show themselves off to others. Instead of braided hair, gold, pearls, or expensive clothing, ¹⁰ women should dress themselves in what is right for women who do good works and who say that they honor God. ¹¹ When men are teaching the believers, women should listen quietly, and they should give respect to their teachers and do all they can to learn from them. ¹² I do not allow women to teach or to tell men what to do. Women who honor God keep quiet when the believers come to learn. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve after him. ¹⁴ And it was not Adam that the snake

deceived. It was the woman whom he completely deceived, so that she sinned. ¹⁵ But God will save women as they bear children, if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

Chapter 3

¹ You should rely on what I tell you here: If someone desires very much to oversee believers, he wants to do something really excellent. ² For that reason, however, an overseer must be someone whom no one accuses of anything bad. He must have only one wife. He must not do anything to excess; he must think in wise ways. He must behave well, and he must welcome strangers. He must be able to teach others. ³ He must not be an alcoholic and not quick to fight. Instead, he must be patient and peaceful with others. And he should not be greedy for money. ⁴ He should control the people in his own home well. His children should obey him with respect. ⁵ I say this because if a man does not even know how to control the people in his own house, how can he care for an assembly of God's people? ⁶ A new believer should not be be an overseer, because he might think that he is better than other people. If that happened, God might punish him like he punished the devil. ⁷ Those outside of the church must also think well of him. Otherwise he might be shamed and the devil might persuade him to sin.

⁸ Deacons, in the same way, should be people whom others respect. They should be sincere when they speak. They should not drink too much wine, and they must not be greedy for money. ⁹ They should believe in the true things that God has told us, and at the same time know what is right, and then do it. ¹⁰ Find these qualities in them first, and then choose

them to serve because no one can find anything wrong with them. ¹¹ In the same way, other people should respect deacons' wives. Their wives should not talk badly about other people. They must not do anything to excess, and they must be honest in everything they do. ¹² A deacon must have only one wife and must control his children and his possessions well. ¹³ Good deacons are men whom the other believers highly respect. They come to trust in Christ Jesus very much.

¹⁴ As I write to you these things, I hope to come to you soon. ¹⁵ But if I do not come soon, I am writing to you now so that you may know how to act in the family of God, which is the group of those who believe in God, who gives life to all things. It is these who teach the truth and witness that it is true. ¹⁶ And we say together that the truth that God has revealed to us is very great, and we honor him for it:

"Christ was God revealed in a human body.

The Holy Spirit proved that he was genuine.

Angels saw him.

Believers announced him among the nations.

People in many parts of the world believed in him.

God took him up to himself and gave him his power."

Chapter 4

¹ Now the Spirit clearly says that in later times, some people will stop believing the truth about Christ and pay attention to spirits who deceive believers and demons who teach false things. ² These people will say one thing but do any evil thing

they wish, as if a hot iron had burned and ruined their minds. ³ They will try to stop believers from marrying. They will tell them not to eat certain things, even though God has created them, so that believers who have come to know the truth can share them with each other while thanking God for them. ⁴ I say this because everything that God has made is good. We reject nothing that we receive from God while thanking him for it. ⁵ For by praying to God and by believing his word we set it apart for him. ⁶ If you keep speaking this truth to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ. You will serve him well, because the message that we believe is strengthening you, as the good things God has taught you and that you have followed. ⁷ But do not listen to the things that mean nothing and to the stories that only old women tell. Instead, train yourself to honor God. ⁸ Physical exercise helps only a little, but if you honor God, this will help you with everything as you live now on earth and as you live in the future with God. ⁹ What I have just written is something that you can rely on. It is worth believing completely. ¹⁰ For this reason we work very hard, as hard as we can, because our hope is in God who lives, the savior of all humanity, but especially the savior of those who believe. ¹¹ Declare and teach these things to the believers.

¹² Do not allow anyone to say that you are useless because you are young. Instead, show other believers how to live. Show them this by how you speak, by how you live, by how you love, by how you trust God, and by how you keep from committing evil deeds. ¹³ Until I come to you, see to it that you read God's word to the believers in public, and that you explain and teach it to the believers. ¹⁴ Be sure to use the gift that is in you, what God gave to you when the elders laid hands on you

and spoke God's messages to you. ¹⁵ Be sure to do all these things and live according to them. In this way, all the believers will see that you are doing them better and better.

¹⁶ Control yourself very carefully and do everything that we teach. Keep doing these things. If you do so, you will save yourself and the people who listen to you.

Chapter 5

¹ Do not speak harshly to a man older than yourself. Instead, encourage him as if he were your father. Do the same to younger men as if they were your brothers. ² Encourage older women as mothers, and younger women as if they were your sisters. Act toward them in a way that no one can criticize.

³ Respect the widows if they are true widows. ⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should honor their mother at home and pay her back for everything she has done for them. If they do this, they will please God. ⁵ Now, a real widow is a widow who has no family members. So she depends on God and on what he gives her when she asks him and prays to him all day and night long. ⁶ But a widow who lives for how she can please herself is dead, even though she is still alive. ⁷ You should announce these things so that these widows and their families will not do anything wrong. ⁸ But anyone who does not try to help his own relatives, especially those who live in his own house, that person rejects what we believe. He is, in fact, worse than an unbeliever.

⁹ Put a woman on the list of true widows if she is more than sixty years old. She also must have had only one husband,

to whom she had been faithful. ¹⁰ People must know that she does good deeds: Perhaps she takes care of children; perhaps she welcomes strangers; perhaps she helps the believers or people who are suffering; or perhaps she is known for doing a large variety of good things. ¹¹ But do not put younger widows on the widows' list, because they often want to marry again when they change their minds and put married love ahead of Christ. ¹² When they do this, then they become guilty of going back on their commitment to being widows. ¹³ Also, they go from house to house and get into the habit of doing nothing. They also engage in foolish and trivial activities and say things that they should not say. ¹⁴ So I prefer that younger widows get married, have children, and run their households, so that Satan, the enemy, gets no opportunity to accuse them of doing wrong. ¹⁵ I write these things because some younger widows have already left the way of Christ to follow Satan.

¹⁶ If any believing woman has widows among her relatives, let her help them, so those widows will not be a burden to the church. In this way the church will be able to help real widows.

¹⁷ Let the believers give double honor to the elders who lead them well, and especially to the elders who preach and teach God's word. ¹⁸ For the scripture says, "You shall not keep the ox from eating the grain that he is treading out" and "The laborer deserves to get his pay."

¹⁹ Do not listen to anyone who accuses an elder of doing wrong, unless two or three people are testifying about the matter. ²⁰ Those who continue to sin, correct them where everyone can see you, so that the rest of the people will be afraid to sin.

²¹ God, Jesus Christ, and the chosen angels see me as I solemnly command you to do these things. Be sure that you do not judge

anyone before you should. Be sure that you do not favor one person over another when you lead the believers.

²² When you want someone to begin to serve the believers, make no decision too quickly, so you do not choose them too soon. And do not be a partner with anyone in sinning. You must keep yourself without fault. ²³ No longer drink only water, Timothy. Instead, drink a little wine for your many stomach sicknesses. ²⁴ The sins of some people are clear to everyone, and the church does not need much time to judge them. But the church does not discover some sins until later. ²⁵ In the same way, some good deeds are clear to everybody, but even the other good deeds will become clear at some time in the future.

Chapter 6

¹ As for believers who are slaves, they should honor their masters in every way, so that no one will insult God or what we teach.

² Slaves who have believing masters should not respect them less, for they are brothers. Instead, they should serve their masters even better, because the masters whom they serve are their brothers whom they should love. Teach and announce these things to the believers.

³ If anyone teaches false doctrines that do not agree with the reliable and true teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ that person is very proud and does not understand anything. They want to argue about unimportant matters and about certain words, and people who listen to them envy others. They quarrel with others and with one another. They say bad things about others. They suspect that others have evil motives. ⁵ Their whole way of thinking has become

completely wrong because they have rejected true things. As a result, they make the mistake of thinking that by doing religious things they will get a lot of money.

⁶ Well, we truly do gain great benefit when we behave in a way that honors God and when we are content with what we have.

⁷ Indeed, we brought nothing into the world when we were born, and we cannot take anything out of it when we die. ⁸ So if we have food and clothing, we should be satisfied with these. ⁹ But some people strongly desire to be rich. As a result, they do wrong things to get money, and this will cause them to be caught as animals get caught in traps. They foolishly desire many things, and so they get hurt. God will completely destroy them! ¹⁰ People do all sorts of evil things when they want to have a lot of money. Because some people longed for money, they have stopped believing the truth that all of us believe and they have caused themselves to be very sorrowful.

¹¹ But you, the man who serves God, keep completely away from such love of money. Decide that you will do what is right, and that you will honor God. Trust God, and love others. Endure difficult circumstances. Always be gentle with people. ¹² Fight a good fight for that faith that saves you! Take hold of this great gift of eternal life and cling to it through everything you experience, no matter where you go. Remember that God chose you to live with him forever. These gifts of God are in you, and you made a good confession about them when you stood before many people.

¹³ God, who gives life to all things, knows everything that you do. Christ Jesus also knows everything that you do. He strongly declared what was true when he was on trial before Pontius Pilate. ¹⁴ So as you remember those things, I command

you to hold tightly on to what Christ has commanded us in every way. Hold fast to those teachings in a way that our Lord Jesus Christ will not need to criticize you about what is wrong, until he comes again.

¹⁵ Remember that God will cause Jesus to come again at the proper time. God is awesome! He is the only Ruler! He rules over all other people who rule! ¹⁶ He is the only one who will never die, and he lives in heaven in light that is so bright that no one can approach it! He is the one whom no person has ever seen and whom no person is able to see! My desire is that all people will honor him and that he will rule powerfully forever! May it be so!

¹⁷ Tell the believers who are rich here in this present world that they should not be proud, and that they should not trust in their many possessions, because they cannot be certain how long they will have them. Instead, they should trust in God. He is the one who abundantly gives us everything we have in order that we may enjoy it. ¹⁸ Also, tell them to do good things. These are true wealth. Indeed, they should share with others very much of what they have. ¹⁹ If they do that, it will be as though they were storing up for themselves many things that God will give them. When they do this, they will have the life that is the real life.

²⁰ Timothy, faithfully proclaim the true message that Jesus has given to you. Avoid the people who want to chatter about things that are not important to God. Avoid the people who say that they have true knowledge but who say things that are against the true things we teach. ²¹ Certain men teach these things and so they stop believing the truth. May God be kind to you all.

2 TIMOTHY

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, am writing to Timothy. Christ Jesus sent me as an apostle to tell everyone that if they are united with him, God promises to make them live both now and forever. ² Timothy, I love you like my own son. May God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord act kindly and mercifully and peacefully toward you.

³ I thank God and I serve Him because I truly want to do what he wants, just as my ancestors did. I have always remembered to pray for you, Timothy, night and day. ⁴ I really want to see you because I remember how you cried for me. If I see you again, I will rejoice so much. ⁵ I remember that you truly believe in Jesus! First, your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice trusted their lives to Jesus Christ, and I am sure that you also trust in Jesus Christ just like they did!

⁶ Because you trust in Jesus, I remind you to start using again the gift God gave you when I put my hands on you and prayed for you. ⁷ When God's Spirit came to us, he did not cause us to be afraid; instead, he caused us to have power to obey God, to love him and others, and to control ourselves.

⁸ So do not think that you will have shame if you tell others about our Lord Jesus. And do not think you will have shame if you are my friend, because I am in prison because I trust in Jesus. Instead, be willing to suffer hardship as you tell others about the good news. God will make you able to suffer all hardships. ⁹ He will do this because he saved us and called us to be his own people. God did not save us because of any good works we did; in-

stead, he saved us because he planned to give us this gift! God caused the Messiah Jesus to pass this gift to us, even before the world began. ¹⁰ Now everyone can see that God can save them, because our Savior the Messiah Jesus came and destroyed death and showed everyone the Gospel, the truth that he causes people to live forever. ¹¹ It was for this reason that God decided to send me to be an apostle, preacher, and teacher. ¹² In these tasks I suffer, but I am not ashamed, because I know and have trusted Jesus Christ, and I am convinced that he is able to protect my faith in him until the final day.

¹³ As you trust in Jesus Christ and love him, follow the meaning of true words, which you heard from me. ¹⁴ God is relying on you, that you will preach the good message that he gave to you. Protect that message by relying on the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

¹⁵ You know that almost all the believers in Asia have stopped being friends with me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

¹⁶ But I pray that the Lord will be kind to the family of Onesiphorus. Often he helped me, and he was not ashamed that I am in prison. ¹⁷ On the contrary, when he came here to Rome, he kept searching for me until he found me. ¹⁸ May the Lord be kind to Onesiphorus on the final day. You know all the ways that he helped me in Ephesus.

Chapter 2

¹ You are like a son to me. So I urge also that you let God empower you as a result of Christ Jesus acting kindly toward you. ² Command and trust faithful men to teach the things you heard from me and from many others who have testified in the same way to others, too.

³ Endure as I do what we suffer for Christ Jesus, like a good soldier endures what he suffers. ⁴ You know that soldiers, in order to please their captain, do not become involved in civilian affairs. ⁵ Likewise, athletes competing in games cannot win unless they obey the rules. ⁶ And the farmer who works hard must receive his share of the crops first. ⁷ Think about what I have just written, because, if you do, the Lord will enable you to understand everything that you need to understand. ⁸ As you suffer hardships, remember Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David. God raised him from the dead, as I also preach in the gospel message. ⁹ For this gospel I suffer to the point of being imprisoned as a criminal. But the word of God is not in prison. ¹⁰ Therefore I willingly endure all that I am suffering for the sake of those whom God has chosen. I do this in order that Christ Jesus will save them, too, and that they will be forever with him in the glorious place where he is. ¹¹ You can depend on the words that we sometimes say:

"If we have died with Jesus, we will also live with him.

¹² If we endure, we will also reign with him.

But if we deny him, he also will deny us.

¹³ If we are unfaithful to Jesus, he continues to be faithful; for he cannot deny himself."

¹⁴ Those whom you appointed to teach others God's truth, keep reminding them about these things that I have told you. Warn them before God not to fight over foolish words, because doing so does not help anything and can ruin those who listen.

¹⁵ Do your best to cause God to approve you as a worker who has no need to be ashamed, who teaches the word of God

correctly, for everyone can depend on the fact that it tells the truth.

¹⁶ Stay away from people who talk in ways that insult God, because this kind of talk dishonors God more and more. ¹⁷ This kind of words will spread like an infectious disease. Hymenaeus and Philetus are two examples of men who talk like this. ¹⁸ These men have stopped believing. They say that the resurrection of the dead has already happened. In this way they convince some Christians to stop trusting in Christ. ¹⁹ However, the truth about God still exists. It is like a firm foundation of a building, on which someone has written these words: "The Lord knows those who belong to him" and "Everyone who says he belongs to the Lord must stop doing wicked deeds."

²⁰ In a wealthy person's house there are not only utensils made of gold and of silver, but also utensils made of wood and of clay. The gold and silver utensils are used on special occasions. But the wood and clay utensils are used in ordinary times.

²¹ Therefore, those who rid themselves of what is evil in their lives will be able to work well for the Lord. They will be like utensils ready to do any kind of good work. They will become very useful to the Master to do special work for him, every good deed, in fact. ²² Do not keep on wanting the sinful things that young people usually desire. Instead, try to do right things. Try to trust in God and love him. Try to live in peace. Stay together with the people who worship the Lord sincerely.

²³ Do not talk with anyone who foolishly wants to argue about matters that are not important. Do not talk with them, because you know that when people talk about foolish things, they begin to quarrel. ²⁴ But those who serve the Lord must not quarrel. Instead, they should be kind to all people, they should be able to teach God's

truth well, and they should be patient with people.²⁵ That is, they should gently instruct the people who argue against them. Perhaps God may give them the opportunity to repent and come to know the truth.²⁶ In that way they may think correctly and be like people who have escaped from a trap set by the devil. It is the devil who has deceived them in order to get them to do what he wishes them to do.

Chapter 3

¹ I want you to know this: In the final period of time before the Lord returns, it will be very dangerous.² People will love themselves more than anyone else. They will love money. They will boast about themselves. They will be proud. They will insult others. They will not obey their parents. They will not thank anyone for anything. They will not honor God.³ They will not love even their own families. They will refuse to be at peace with anyone. They will slander others. They will not control themselves. They will be brutal toward others. They will not love what is good.⁴ They will betray the ones they should protect. They will do dangerous things without thinking. They will be proud, and they will do what pleases them instead of loving God.⁵ They will seem to honor God, but they will refuse to accept the power that God truly wants to give them. Stay away from people like this.⁶ These men persuade foolish women to let them come into their houses. Then they deceive those women so that they control what they think. These are women who sin all the time, so they follow these evil men into doing all sorts of bad things that they enjoy doing.⁷ Even though these women are always wanting to learn new things, they are never able to learn what is actually true.⁸ In the same way that

Jannes and Jambres tried to stop Moses, so do these men now try to stop people from obeying the truth. These men are ruined in how they think. They are frauds in matters of the faith.⁹ Nevertheless, they will not succeed very much in what they do, because most others will clearly see that these people understand nothing. It is just like how the people of Israel saw that Jannes and Jambres were foolish.

¹⁰ Timothy, you have followed what I taught you. You have seen my way of living. You have seen how I want to serve God. You have seen how I trust in him. You have seen how I have peace even when I am suffering. You have seen how I love God and the believers. You have seen how I keep on serving God even when it is very hard to do so.¹¹ You have seen how people persecuted me. You have seen every way in which I suffered when I was in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. I suffered very much in those places, but the Lord has taken me out of all that suffering.¹² Indeed, they will make suffer every one who wants to live in a way that he honors Christ Jesus.¹³ Evil men and frauds will continue to become more evil. They will lead people away from what is true, and they will allow others to lead themselves away also.¹⁴ But as for you, keep on doing the things that you have learned to do, and the things that you have come to believe are right. Remember me, because I am the one who taught you these things.¹⁵ Remember also that even when you were a young child, you learned what God says in the scriptures. These can teach you how Christ Jesus saves us, when we trust in him.¹⁶ All the scriptures come from God's Spirit, so we should read them in order to teach the truth about God. We should also read them in order to persuade people to believe the truth. Also to correct people when they sin. Also to teach people how to do what is right.¹⁷

We should do these things so that God can train every believer and give him what he needs in order to do every kind of good thing.

Chapter 4

¹ When Christ Jesus comes soon to rule, he will judge those who still live and those who died. And now he and God are watching me as I command you² to proclaim the message about Christ. Be ready to do this when it is easy to do so and also when it is not easy. Convince people about what is right when they have done wrong. Warn them not to sin. Encourage them to follow Christ. Do these things as you teach them, and always be willing to wait for them to do better. ³ I tell you these things, because the time will come when people among us will not follow what God truly teaches. Instead, they will find many men who will teach that it is good to do anything they wish to do. In this way, they will always be looking for something new and different to learn. ⁴ They will stop listening to the truth, and they will pay attention to foolish stories. ⁵ But as for you, Timothy, control yourself no matter what happens. Be willing to endure difficult things. Do the work of preaching the Gospel. Complete the work you must do to serve the Lord.

⁶ I tell you these things, because soon I will die and leave this world. I will be like the cup of wine that they pour out on the altar and sacrifice to God. ⁷ I am like an athlete who has done his best in a contest. I am like a runner who has finished his race. I have done my best to obey God. ⁸ Now a prize is waiting for me because I have lived in the right way for God. The Lord will judge me in the right way. He will give that prize to me when

he comes again. And he will give it also to everyone who waits eagerly for him to come again. ⁹ Timothy, try to come to me soon. ¹⁰ Demas left me behind and went to Thessalonica, because he loves life in this world too much. Crescens went to Galatia, and Titus went to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is still with me. Get Mark and bring him with you. Do this because he can help me very much. ¹² I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the outer garment that I left at Troas with Carpus. Also bring the scrolls, especially those made from animal skins.

¹⁴ Alexander the metalworker acted very badly toward me. The Lord will punish him for what he has done. ¹⁵ You also should be on guard against him because he did everything possible to stop our preaching.

¹⁶ The first time I stood in court and explained my work, no believers stood by my side to encourage me. They all stayed away. May God not hold them responsible for this. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood with me and helped me. He made me strong, so that I fully spoke his word and so that all the Gentiles listened to it. In this way God saved me from dying. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil thing they do. He will bring me safely to where he rules in heaven. May people praise him forever. Amen.

¹⁹ Greet Priscilla and Aquila. Greet the people in the home of Onesiphorus. ²⁰ Erastus stayed in Corinth city. As for Trophimus, I left him in Miletus city because he was sick. ²¹ Try to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers. ²² May the Lord be with your spirit. May he be kind to all of you.

TITUS

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, write this letter to you, Titus.

I am a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. God sent me to teach the people whom he has chosen as his own to trust him more. I work to help his people to know what is true, so that they can live in a way that pleases God. ² His people can learn how to live like this because they are confident that God will cause them to live forever. God tells no lies. Even before the world began, he promised to cause us to live forever. ³ Then, at the right time, he communicated his plan through this message that he trusted me to preach. I do this in order to obey the command of God, who saves us. ⁴ I am writing to you, Titus, because you are like a son to me because we both believe in Jesus Christ. May God the Father and Christ Jesus who saves us continue to be kind to you and to give you peace. ⁵ I left you on the Island of Crete for this reason: that you do the work that is still unfinished and also appoint elders for the group of believers in every city, just as I told you to do. ⁶ An elder must be without blame, the husband of one wife, with faithful children not accused of reckless behavior or undisciplined. ⁷ You yourself must continually do what is good so that others will see what they should also be doing. When you teach the believers, make sure that everything you say is true and say it in a way that they will respect. ⁸ Rather than that, he must welcome strangers and love the things that are good. He must always act sensibly and treat other people in a fair and honest manner. He must always act in a way that is right for someone who is devoted to God and he must always con-

trol his emotions. ⁹ He must always believe the true things we have taught him, and he must live according to them. He must do this in order to persuade people to live like this too, and in order to correct people if they do not want to live like this.

¹⁰ I tell you these things because there are many people who refuse to obey those who are in authority over them. The people who are the most like this are the ones who tell all followers of Christ to become circumcised. ¹¹ You and the leaders whom you appoint should prevent such people from teaching the believers. They are teaching things that they should not teach, causing entire families to believe wrong things. They only do it so that people will give them money. This is very shameful!

¹² One man of Crete, someone his people thought was a prophet, said, “Cretans are always lying to one another! They are like dangerous wild animals! They are lazy and always eat too much food.” ¹³ What he said is true, so correct them forcefully so that they may believe and teach correct things about God. ¹⁴ They should stop living according to stories invented by the Jews and commandments that came from people, not God, people who have stopped obeying what is true.

¹⁵ If someone does not have sinful thoughts or desires, then for that person everything is good. But if anyone is wicked and does not believe in Christ Jesus, everything that he does makes him unclean. Such a person’s way of thinking has been ruined. He does not even feel guilty when he does what is evil.

¹⁶ Even though they claim to know God, what they do shows that they do not know him. They are disgusting. They disobey God and can do nothing good for him.

Chapter 2

¹ But as for you, Titus, you must teach

people what is appropriate behavior for people who believe the truth about God.

² Tell the older men that they must control themselves at all times, that they must live in a way that other people respect, and that they must act sensibly. Tell them that they must also firmly believe the true things about God, love others truly, and do all these things even when it is difficult.

³ Tell the older women, like the men, to live so that everyone knows that they respect God very much. Tell them that they must not say mean or false things about other people, and that they must not be addicted to drinking a lot of wine. Instead, they should teach others what is good.

⁴ In this way, they will be able to advise the younger women to love their own husbands and children.

⁵ The older women should also teach the younger women to control what they say and do, not to act in a bad way toward any man, to work well at home, and to do what their husbands tell them. They should do all these things so that no one can mock God's message to us.

⁶ As for the younger men, urge them likewise to control themselves well.

⁷ When you teach the believers, make sure that everything you say is true and say it in a way that they will respect.

⁸ Teach people what is right with messages that no one can criticize, so that if anybody wants to stop you, other people will shame them because they will have nothing bad that they can justly say about any of us.

⁹ As for those believers who are slaves, teach them that they should always submit to their masters. Tell them to live in a way that pleases their masters in every way, and to not be argumentative with them.

¹⁰ They must not steal even little things from their masters; instead, they should be faithful to them, and they should do everything in a way that leads people to admire all that we teach about God, who saves us.

¹¹ Titus, all that I have written adds up to this: Everyone is now able to know that God wishes to save them; this is his gift to them.

¹² This saving grace from God trains us, as if we were children, to say no to the desires that are found in this world. It helps us to think about things in the right way, to be honest, truthful, and fair to other people and to always keep God in our thoughts and actions while we live in this world.

¹³ At the same time, God teaches us to wait for what he will certainly do in the future, which is something that will make us very happy: That is, Jesus the Messiah, our Savior and powerful God, will return to us in great splendor.

¹⁴ He gave himself to die as the payment to free us from our lawless nature, to make us his cherished possession, a treasured people that he has made clean, a people whose greatest joy is to do what is good.

¹⁵ Titus, speak about these things. Urge those who hear you to live as I have described. And use your full right of command to correct our brothers and sisters when it is necessary. Let no one disregard what you say.

Chapter 3

¹ Titus, be sure to remind our people that, as much as possible, we should comply with the rules and laws that govern our society. We need to be obedient and ready to do good at every opportunity.

² We should not say disrespectful things about anyone or argue with people. It is good to let other people have their preferences instead of pushing to get our own way, and to treat everyone with gentleness.

³ We need to remember that there was a time when we ourselves were foolish and unpersuaded about these things. We were led astray and served various pas-

sions and pleasures as if we were their slaves. We spent our lives envying each other and doing evil. We caused people to hate us and we hated each other.⁴

But when God showed us that he was acting generously to save us because he loves us,⁵ he saved us by washing us clean on the inside, giving us a new birth, and making us new by the Holy Spirit. He did not save us because we do good things, but he saved us because he is merciful.⁶ God generously gave us his Holy Spirit when Jesus the Messiah saved us.⁷ By this gift, God has declared that everything is made right between him and us. And more than that, we will share in everything that the Lord Jesus has to give us, especially everlasting life with him.

⁸ This is a statement that can be trusted. I want you to continually emphasize these things so that those who have believed God may constantly devote themselves to doing those things that are good and that help others. These things are excellent and beneficial for everyone.⁹ But stay away from senseless debates, controversies about lists of Jewish ancestors, and arguments and disputes about religious law. Those kinds of discussions are a waste of time and they do not help you in any way.

¹⁰ If people insist on engaging in these divisive activities after you have warned them one or two times, then have nothing more to do with them,¹¹ because people like that have turned away from the truth; they live in sin and condemn themselves.

¹² When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at the town of Nicopolis, because I have decided to stay there for the winter. ¹³ Do everything you can to send Zenas the law expert, and Apollos on their journey, along with everything that they need. ¹⁴ Make sure that our people learn to occupy themselves with doing good things for people

who need help. If they do this they will be living in a useful way for God.

¹⁵ Titus, all those who are with me greet you! And please greet our friends there who love us as fellow believers. May God continue to show great kindness to all of you.

PHILEMON

Chapter 1

¹ I, Paul, am a prisoner who serves Christ Jesus. I am here with Timothy, our fellow believer. I am writing this letter to you, Philemon, our dear friend and fellow worker. ² I am also writing to Apphia, our fellow believer, and to Archippus, who is like a soldier who serves along with us. And I am writing to the group of believers that meets in your house. ³ I pray that God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ will continue to act kindly toward you all. I pray that he will continue to cause you to have peace.

⁴ When I pray for you, I always thank God, ⁵ because I keep hearing about how you trust in the Lord Jesus. I also hear about how you keep on loving and helping all the believers. ⁶ I pray that because you trust in Christ the same as we do, you may be able to know every good thing that we have to give you regarding Christ. ⁷ I have greatly rejoiced and have much courage because you, my dear friend, have been loving God's people and helping them.

⁸ So I want to ask you to do something. I am completely confident that I have the authority to command you to do what you should do, because I am an apostle of Christ. ⁹ But because I know that you love God's people, I request this instead of commanding you to do it. It is I, Paul, an old man and now also a prisoner because I serve Christ Jesus, who am requesting it. ¹⁰ I request that you do something for Onesimus. He is now like a son of mine because I told him about Christ here in prison. ¹¹ Although his name, as you know, means "useful," he was useless to you in the past. But now he is useful both to you and to me!

¹² Although he is very dear to me, I am sending him back to you. ¹³ I would like to have kept him with me, in order that he might serve me in your place. I need him because I am in prison because of my preaching the message about Christ.

¹⁴ However, because I had not yet asked you and you had not yet permitted me to keep him here with me, I decided not to keep him here. I decided that you should help me only if you really want to help me.

¹⁵ Perhaps the reason that God permitted Onesimus to be separated from you was so you could have him back forever! ¹⁶ You will no longer have him only as a slave. Instead, you will have him as someone who is more than a slave. You will have him as a fellow believer! He is very dear to me, but he certainly will be even more dear to you. This is because now he not only belongs to you as a slave, but he also belongs to the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you believe that you and I are doing God's work together, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has done you any kind of harm, or if he is in debt to you, let me take the responsibility for that. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am now writing this in my own handwriting: I will repay you what he owes you. I could say to you that you owe me even more than Onesimus owes you, because what I told you saved your own life.

²⁰ Indeed, my brother, let me benefit from you because of the Lord. Since we are both joined to Christ, make my heart glad.

²¹ I have written this letter to you, because I am sure that you will do what I am asking you to do. In fact, I know that you will do even more than what I am asking you to do.

²² Also, get a guest room ready for me to stay in, because I confidently expect that as a result of your prayers for me, I will be released from prison and will come to

you all.

²³ Epaphras, who is suffering with me in prison because he is joined to Christ Jesus, sends his greetings to you. ²⁴ Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, who are my other fellow workers, also send their greetings to you. ²⁵ I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will continue to be kind to you.

HEBREWS

Chapter 1

¹ Long ago God communicated frequently to our ancestors in various ways by what the prophets said and wrote. ² But now when this final age is beginning, God has communicated to us by his own Son. God has chosen him to possess all things. By him God also created the universe. ³ God's Son is the light of God's powerful brilliance. He shows exactly what God is truly like. All things that exist—he keeps them existing by giving powerful commands. After he had acted so that all sin should be forgiven, he rose into heaven and sat down at the highest place of honor, at the right side of God the Father, where he rules with him.

⁴ God has made his Son to be so much more important than the angels that he has far more honor and authority than they do. ⁵ In the scriptures no one ever reported that God said to any angel what he said to his Son:

"You are my Son!

Today I have declared to all that I am your Father!"

And he never said about any angel what he said in another scripture passage about his Son:

"I will be his Father,

and he will be my Son."

⁶ When God brought his honored Son, his only Son, into the world, he commanded:

"All my angels must worship him."

⁷ And in the scriptures it is written about the angels:

"God has made his angels to be spirits,

and his ministers who serve him to be like flames of fire."

⁸ But in the scriptures, it is also written about God's Son:

"You who are God will rule forever,
and you will reign justly over your kingdom."

⁹ You have loved people's righteous deeds and you have hated people's sinful deeds.

So God, whom you worship, has caused you to be more joyful than anyone else."

¹⁰ We also know that his Son is superior to angels because in the scriptures it is written about God's Son,

"Lord, it was you who created the earth in the beginning.

You also made the rest of the universe, the stars and everything in the sky.

¹¹ Those things will no longer exist, but you will keep on living forever.

They will wear out as clothing wears out.

¹² You will roll them up as if they were old clothes.

Then you will change all that is in the universe for something new,

like someone putting on new clothes.

But you stay the same, and you live forever!"

¹³ God has never said to any angel what he said to his Son:

"Sit in the most important place next to me and rule with me

while I defeat all of your enemies for you to rule over them!"

¹⁴ The angels are only spirits whom God has sent out to serve and care for believers whom God will soon save completely, as he has promised to do for them.

Chapter 2

¹ So, since that is true, we must pay very great attention to what we have heard about God's Son, so that we do not gradually stop believing it. ² When the angels spoke God's law to the people of Israel, what they said was valid. God justly punished all who disobeyed him and violated his law. ³ Since this is true, we will certainly not escape God; he will certainly judge us if we ignore the good news about how he saves us. It was the Lord Jesus who first told us about this, and the disciples who heard him have assured us that he did so. ⁴ God also confirmed to us that this message was true by giving believers power to do mighty deeds that prove these things are true. And the Holy Spirit also gives many gifts to the believers, just as he desires to distribute them.

⁵ God has not put the angels in charge of the new world he will make, but instead, he is putting Christ in charge of it.

⁶ Someone solemnly spoke to God about this somewhere in the scriptures, saying,

"No human being is worthy enough for you to think about him!"

No human is worthy enough for you to care for him!

⁷ You created humans a little less important than the angels,

Yet you have greatly honored them, as people honor kings.

⁸ You have put everything under their control."

God has determined that mankind will rule over everything. That means that nothing will be left out from him ruling it. But now, at this present time, we do not see mankind ruling over everything. ⁹ However, we do know about Jesus, who

appeared in this life as a little less important than the angels. Because he suffered and died, God has made him the most important of all. He has made Jesus king over everything, because Jesus died for all mankind. It was because God was so kind to us that this happened.

¹⁰ It was proper that God should make Jesus complete in every way by suffering and dying for us. God is the one who created all things, and he is the one for whom all things exist. And Jesus is the one who enables God to save people. ¹¹ Jesus, the one who sets his people apart for God, and those same people whom God declares as good before him, are all from the same source, God himself. So Jesus is not embarrassed to proclaim them to be his own brothers and sisters. ¹² The psalmist wrote that Christ said to God,

"I will proclaim to my brothers how awesome you are."

I will sing praise to you in the middle of the assembly of believers!"

¹³ And a prophet wrote in another scripture passage what Christ said about God:

"I will trust him."

And in another scripture passage, Christ said about those who are like his children,

"I and the children whom God has given me are here."

¹⁴ So since those whom God calls his children are all human beings, Jesus also became a human being just like them. The devil has the power to cause people to be afraid to die, but Christ became human so that by his dying and defeating death he might make the devil powerless. ¹⁵ Jesus did this in order to free all of us who, all our lives, could not rid ourselves of the fear of death. ¹⁶ Because Jesus became a human being, it is not angels that he has come to help. No, it is us who trust God as

Abraham did whom he wants to help.¹⁷ So God had to make Jesus to be exactly like us, like his human “brothers.” He became a high priest who acts mercifully to all people and who acts faithfully for God, so he could die for the people’s sins and make a way for God to forgive them.¹⁸ Jesus is able to help those who are tempted to sin because he himself suffered and was tempted to sin, just as we are tempted to sin.

Chapter 3

¹ My fellow believers, God has set you apart and has chosen you to belong to himself. So consider Jesus. He is God’s apostle to us and is also the high priest whom we say we believe in together.² He faithfully served God, who appointed him, just like Moses faithfully served all of God’s people, whom we call God’s house.³⁻⁴ Now just as every house is made by someone, God made everything. So God has considered that Jesus is worthy for people to honor him more than they honor Moses, just as the one who builds a house deserves for people to honor him more than they should honor the house.⁵ Moses very faithfully served God as he helped all of God’s people, just as a servant faithfully serves his master. So Moses testified about what Jesus would say later.⁶ But Christ is the Son who rules over God’s people, and we are the people he rules if we continue to courageously believe in Christ and confidently expect God to do all that he has promised to do for us.

⁷ The Holy Spirit caused the psalmist to write these words in the scriptures to the Israelites:

“Now, when you hear God speak to you,⁸ do not refuse to obey him, and do not let your desires be more important than what

God says, for if you do, you would be just like your ancestors long ago, when they turned away from God and did not obey him.⁹ Your ancestors repeatedly tested me, to see whether I would be patient with them, even though for forty years they saw all the amazing things I did.

¹⁰ So I became angry with those people, and I said about them, ‘They are never faithful to me, and they do not understand how I wanted them to conduct their lives.’

¹¹ I was angry with them and solemnly declared, ‘They will not enter the land of Canaan where I would let them rest!’”

¹² So, fellow believers, be careful that none of you stops trusting in Christ because of evil in your heart, which would cause you to reject the only God who actually lives.¹³ Instead, each of you must encourage each other every day, while you still have the opportunity. If you are stubborn, others will deceive you and lead you to sin.¹⁴ We are now joined to Christ if we continue to seriously and confidently trust in him, from the time we first trusted in him to the time when we die.¹⁵ The psalmist wrote in the scripture that God said,

“Now, when you hear me speaking to you, do not stubbornly disobey me as your ancestors did when they rebelled against me.”

¹⁶ Remember who it was who rebelled against God, even though they heard him speak to them. It was all of God’s people who Moses led out of Egypt.¹⁷ And remember who it was with whom God was disgusted for forty years. It was God’s people who sinned, and their dead bodies lay there in the desert.¹⁸ And remember about whom God solemnly declared, ‘They will not enter the land where I would let them rest.’” It was those Israelites who disobeyed God.¹⁹ So, from

that example we know that it was because they did not keep trusting in God that they were unable to enter the land where God would allow them to rest.

Chapter 4

¹ God has promised that we would rest, but we must be careful, because we can miss God's place of rest. ² We have heard the good news about how Jesus gives us God's rest, just as the Israelites heard God promise that they would rest in Canaan. But just as that message did not help many Israelites because they did not trust God as Joshua and Caleb did, the good news about Christ will not help us if we do not trust God. ³ We who have believed in Christ are able to enter the place of rest because God said,

"Because I was angry with the people of Israel, I solemnly declared, 'They will not enter the land where I would let them rest.'"

God said this even though his plans had been finished from the time he created the world. ⁴ What was written in the scriptures about the seventh day after he had spent six days creating the world, shows that this is true:

"Then, on the seventh day, God rested from his work of creating everything."

⁵ But note again what God said about the Israelites in the passage that I quoted previously:

"They will not enter the land where I would let them rest."

⁶ Some people still enter God's rest. But the Israelites who first heard God promise that they would rest—they did not enter that place of resting, because they refused to believe God. ⁷ But God set another

time when we may enter that place of resting. That time is now! We know that is true because much later than when the Israelites rebelled against God in the desert, he caused King David to write what I have already quoted,

"Right now, when you understand what God is saying to you, do not stubbornly disobey him."

⁸ If Joshua had led the Israelites to enter the only place of resting God would give them, then much later God would not have spoken again about another day of rest. But he did give them another promise of rest. ⁹ So, just as God rested on the seventh day after he finished creating everything, there remains a time when God's people will rest eternally. ¹⁰ Whoever enters God's place of resting has ceased from his work, just as God finished doing his work of creating everything.

¹¹ So we eagerly enter into the rest of God by following Christ, so that the example of those who disobey will not influence us and ruin us too. ¹² God's words are alive and powerful, and they are able to cut like a sharp sword—cutting so deep that it can separate out the difference between our soul and our spirit. God's words are just like a sword that cuts deeply, down so deep they can cut into us like a sharp sword cuts through the joints of an animal. Those words cut even into the hardest places in us, like a sword that can cut down into the marrow within the bones. God's words are like a judge, deciding what thoughts are good or what thoughts are bad, and his words test the motives hidden deep within each of our hearts. ¹³ God knows everything about everyone. Nothing is hidden from him. Everything is completely open to him and he sees everything we do. We must all appear before God and we must tell him how we have lived our lives.

¹⁴ So we have a great high priest who ascended through the heavens when he returned to God's presence. He is Jesus, God's Son. So let us courageously say openly that we trust Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ Our high priest can indeed have mercy on us and encourage us, we who tend to sin easily, because Satan also tempted him to sin in every way that he tempts us to sin—but he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us come boldly to Christ, who rules from heaven and does for us what we do not deserve, so that he might kindly help us and have mercy on us when we need him to do so.

Chapter 5

¹ When God chooses a high priest, he selects a man from the people. This man must serve God for the people; he must give God gifts and sacrifice animals to him for the people's sins. ² A high priest can be gentle with those who know little about God and with those who sin against him. This is because the high priest himself is weak with sin. ³ As a result, he also must sacrifice animals, because he sins just like the people do. ⁴ But no one can honor himself by deciding to become the high priest. Instead, God chose each man to become a high priest, as he chose Aaron to be the first high priest. ⁵ Similarly, Christ also did not honor himself by becoming high priest. Instead, God the Father appointed him by saying to him what the psalmist wrote in the scriptures:

“You are my son! Today I have declared that I am your father!”

⁶ And he also said to Christ what the psalmist wrote in another scripture passage:

“You are a priest eternally in the way that Melchizedek was a priest.”

⁷ In the days when Christ was living here in the world, he prayed to God and cried out loudly to him in tears. He asked God, who could save him from dying. And God listened to him, because Christ honored him and obeyed him. ⁸ Although Christ is God's own son, he learned to obey God by suffering and dying. ⁹ By accomplishing everything that God wanted him to do, he has now become fully able to save eternally all who obey him. ¹⁰ God has designated him to be our high priest in the way that Melchizedek was a high priest.

¹¹ I want to tell you much about the many ways in which Christ resembles Melchizedek. This is hard for me to explain to you because you find it so difficult to understand. ¹² You became Christians long ago. So by now you should be teaching God's truths to others. But you still need someone to teach you again the elementary truths of the words of God from the scriptures, starting from the beginning. You need those basic truths like babies need milk. You are not ready to learn more difficult things, things that are like the solid food that mature people need. ¹³ Remember that those who are still learning these elementary truths do not understand what God says about becoming righteous. Neither do they yet know right from wrong. They are just like babies who need milk! ¹⁴ But the more difficult spiritual truth is for people who know God better, just like solid food is for people who are adults. They can tell the difference between what is good and what is evil, because they have trained themselves by learning what is right and what is wrong.

Chapter 6

¹⁻³ So, we must not keep discussing what we first learned about Christ, things that

all believers must learn at first. Some of these things are how to stop doing sinful deeds, those that lead to death, and how to start trusting in God. There are also important things we teach: various kinds of baptism, why we often pray while putting our hands on each other; and also about how God will raise us all from the dead and judge everyone in a way that will last forever. Indeed, we will discuss these things again later, if God gives us the chance to do it. But now we must discuss things that are harder to understand; these are things that will help us to trust in Christ in all times, no matter what happens. ⁴ I will explain why it is important to do this. Some people have at one time understood the message about Christ. They learned what it was like for God to forgive them and for Christ to love them, and they received gifts from the Holy Spirit. ⁵ They found for themselves that God's message is good, and they learned how God will work powerfully in the future. ⁶ But now, if these people reject Christ, no one will be able to persuade them to stop sinning and to trust in him again! That is because it is as though these people have nailed the Son of God to his cross again! They are causing people to despise Christ in front of others. ⁷ Think about this: God has blessed land on which rain has frequently fallen and on which plants grow for the farmers. ⁸ But what will happen to believers who do not obey God is like what happens to land on which only thorns and thistles grow. Such land is worthless. It has become land that the farmer will curse and whose plants he will burn away.

⁹ You can see that I am warning you, dear friends, not to reject Christ. At the same time, I am certain that you are doing better than that. You are doing the things that are in conformity with the fact that God is saving you. ¹⁰ Since God always

acts justly, he will not overlook all you have done for him; he will not overlook how you have loved and helped your fellow believers, and how you are still helping them. ¹¹ We greatly desire that each of you continue to show the same effort you are showing now, so that to the very end of your lives, you will be sure you will receive all that God promised to give you. ¹² I do not want you to be lazy. Instead, I want you to do what other believers have done, those who are receiving what God promised them, because they trusted in him and were patient.

¹³ When God promised to do great things for Abraham, there was no one greater than himself whom he could ask to force himself to do those things. So he asked himself. ¹⁴ Then he said to Abraham, "I will certainly bless you and I will certainly greatly increase the number of your descendants." ¹⁵ So after Abraham patiently waited for God to do what he promised, God did for him what he had promised. ¹⁶ Keep in mind that when people promise something, they ask a more important person to punish them if they do not do what they promise. This is how they often settle disputes. ¹⁷ So when God wanted to demonstrate very clearly to us who would receive what he had promised that he would not change what he had planned to do, he said that he would declare himself guilty if he did not do what he promised. ¹⁸ He did that to strongly encourage us, because he has done two things that cannot change: He promised to help us, and he told us that he would declare himself guilty if he did not help us. Now, God cannot lie. That is why we have trusted in him, just as he has encouraged us to do. ¹⁹ Yes, we confidently expect to receive what God has promised to do for us. It is as if we were a ship, whose anchor is holding us firmly in one place. The one we confidently expect to hold us is Jesus,

because he has gone into God's very presence. This is why he is just like the high priests who go behind the curtain into the innermost part of the temple, where God is present.²⁰ Jesus went into God's presence ahead of us to allow us to enter in that same place with God, too. Jesus has become a high priest forever, in the way that Melchizedek was a high priest.

Chapter 7

¹ Now I will say more about this man Melchizedek. He was the king of the city of Salem and was also a priest of God, who rules the universe. He met Abraham and his men who were returning home from defeating the armies of the four kings. Melchizedek blessed Abraham.² Then Abraham gave to him one tenth of all the things he took after winning the battle. Now Melchizedek's name means first, "king who rules righteously," and, since Salem means "peace," his name also means "the king who rules peacefully."³ The scriptures provide us with no record of Melchizedek's father, mother, or ancestors; nor do the scriptures tell us when he was born or when he died. It is as if he continues to be a priest forever. In this way, he is a little like the Son of God.

⁴ You can realize how great this man Melchizedek was from the fact that Abraham, our famous ancestor, gave him a tenth of the best things he took from the battle with the kings.⁵ According to the laws God gave Moses, the descendants of Abraham's great-grandson Levi, who were priests, should take tithes from God's people who were their relatives, even though those people also were fellow descendants of Abraham.⁶ But this man Melchizedek, who was not among the descendants of Levi, received a tenth

of everything from Abraham. He also blessed Abraham, the man to whom God promised many descendants.⁷ Now everyone knows that the more important people bless the less important people, just as Melchizedek blessed Abraham. So we know that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham.⁸ In the case of the priests who are descendants of Levi, they are all men who will die one day, but even they received tithes. However, in the case of Melchizedek, who received a tenth of everything from Abraham—it is as if God testified that Melchizedek keeps on living, since scripture does not speak about him dying.⁹ And it was as though Levi himself, and all the priests descended from him—those who received tithes from the people—paid tithes to Melchizedek because their ancestor Abraham paid tithes to him. When Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek it was as though Levi and all the priests descended from him acknowledged that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham.¹⁰ This is true because we can say that Levi and his descendants were still in Abraham's body when Melchizedek met Abraham.

¹¹ God gave the law to his people at the same time he gave regulations about the priests. So if the priests who were descended from Aaron and his ancestor Levi could have provided a way for God to forgive people for disobeying those laws, those priests would have been adequate. In that case, no other priest like Melchizedek would have been necessary.¹² But we know those priests were not adequate, because a new type of priest like Melchizedek has come. And since God has appointed a new type of priest, he also had to change the law.¹³ Jesus, the one about whom I am saying these things, is not a descendant of Levi. Instead, he came from the tribe of Judah, which never gave any person who served as priest.¹⁴ The

scriptures clearly state this. And in fact, Moses never said that any of Judah's descendants would become priests.¹⁵ Furthermore, we know that the priests descended from Levi were inadequate, since it is even more obvious that another priest has appeared who is like Melchizedek.¹⁶ This priest is Jesus; he became a priest, but not because he fulfilled what God's law required about being a descendant of Levi. Instead, he has the kind of power that came from a life that nothing can destroy.¹⁷ We know this since God confirmed it in the scripture passage in which he said to his Son,

"You are a priest eternally, just as Melchizedek was a priest."

¹⁸ God withdrew what he had first commanded about the priests because those priests are unable to make sinful people holy.¹⁹ No one was able to become good by obeying the laws that God gave Moses. On the other hand, God gave us a better reason to have confidence in him, because he makes it possible for us to come near to him.

²⁰ Furthermore, when God appointed Christ as a priest, he solemnly declared it. When God appointed former priests, he did not do this.²¹ But when he appointed Christ to be a priest, it was by these words that the psalmist wrote in scripture:

"The Lord has solemnly declared
—and he will not change his mind:
'You will be a priest forever!'"

²² Because of that, Jesus himself guarantees that the new covenant will be better than the old one.

²³ And formerly, priests could not keep serving as priests because they would always die. So there were many priests to take the place of the ones who died.²⁴ But because Jesus lives eternally, he will con-

tinue to be a high priest forever.²⁵ So Jesus can completely and eternally save those who come to God, since he lives forever to plead with God to forgive them and keep them safe.

²⁶ Jesus is the kind of high priest that we need. He was holy, he did no wrong, and he was innocent. God has now separated him from living among sinners, and has now taken him up to the highest heaven.

²⁷ The Jewish high priests need to sacrifice animals day by day as well as year by year. They do this, firstly, to cover their own sins, and then to cover the sins of other people. But because Jesus never sinned, he does not need to do that. The only thing he needed to do to save people was to sacrifice himself once, and that is exactly what he did!²⁸ We need a high priest like Jesus, because the priests, who were appointed as commanded in the law, sinned like all humans sin. But God solemnly declared after he had given his laws to Moses that he would appoint his Son to be high priest. Now his Son, who is God the Son, Jesus, is forever the only perfect high priest.

Chapter 8

¹ The most important part of everything that I have written is that we have a high priest who has sat down to rule in the place of greatest honor in heaven, beside God himself.² He serves in the sanctuary, that is, in the true place of worship in heaven. That is the true sacred tent, for the Lord set it up, not Moses.

³ God appoints every high priest to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people's sins. So since Christ became a high priest, he also had to offer something.⁴ Since there are already priests who offer gifts as God's law requires, if Christ were now living on the

earth, he would not be a high priest at all.⁵ The priests in Jerusalem perform rituals that are only a copy of what Christ does in heaven. This is because when Moses was about to set up the sacred tent, God told him, “Be sure that you make everything according to what I showed you on Mount Sinai!”⁶ But now Christ serves in a much better way than the Jewish priests do. In the same way, the new covenant that he established between God and people is better than the old one. When he established the new covenant, he promised us better things than the laws that God gave Moses.

⁷ God needed to make this new covenant, because the first covenant had not done everything well. ⁸ Because God declared that the Israelites were guilty of not obeying the first covenant, he wanted a new covenant. This is what a prophet wrote about that:

”The Lord says, ‘Listen! There will soon be a time

when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and the people of Judah.

⁹ That covenant will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors

when I led them out of Egypt like a father leads his young child.

They did not continue to obey my covenant,

so I let them alone,’ says the Lord.

¹⁰ ”This is the covenant that I will make with the Israelites,

after the first covenant has ended,’ says the Lord:

’I will enable them to understand my laws,

and I will enable them to obey them sincerely from their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.

¹¹ No one will need to teach a fellow citizen

or tell his fellow kinsmen, ‘You acknowledge that the Lord is God,’

because all my people will acknowledge me.

Everyone among my people, from the least important to the most important, will know me.

¹² I will mercifully forgive them for the wicked things they have done.

I will no longer consider that they are guilty for their sins.”

¹³ Since God said that he was making a new covenant, we know that he considered that the first covenant was no longer in use, and that it would soon disappear.

Chapter 9

¹ In the first covenant God regulated how people of Israel should worship, and he told them to make a place to worship him.

² The sanctuary that the Israelites set up was the sacred tent. In its outer room there were the lampstand and the table on which they put the bread on display before God. That room was called the holy place. ³ Behind the curtain on one side of the holy place there was another room. That was called the very holy place.

⁴ It had an altar covered with gold for burning incense. It also had the sacred chest. All its sides were covered with gold. In it was the golden pot which contained pieces of the food they called manna. In the chest there was also Aaron’s walking stick that had budded to prove that he was God’s true priest. In the chest were also the stone tablets on which God had

written the Ten Commandments.⁵ On top of the chest were figures of winged creatures that symbolized God's glory. Their wings overshadowed the sacred chest's lid where the high priest sprinkled the blood to atone for the sins of the people. I cannot now write about these things in detail.

⁶ After they have arranged all these things in this way, the Jewish priests habitually go into the outer room of the tent to do their tasks.⁷ But into the inner room only the high priest goes once a year. He always takes the blood of animals that they have slaughtered. He offers the blood to God for his own sins and for the sins that the other Israelites have committed. This includes the sins they committed but they did not know they were committing sins.⁸ By those things the Holy Spirit indicated that God did not reveal the way for ordinary people to enter into the inner room, the very holy place, while the outer room still existed. In a similar way, he did not reveal the way for ordinary people to enter the presence of God while the Jews offered sacrifices in the old way.⁹ This was a symbol for the time in which we are now living. The gifts and sacrifices offered in the sacred tent cannot make a person always know right from wrong or always do right from our hearts and in a way that he pleases God.¹⁰ Those rules about what to eat and drink, and about what to wash—all those rules are no longer any good because God has made a new covenant with us. This new covenant is a much better system.

¹¹ But when Christ came as our high priest, he brought the good things that we have now. Then he went into God's presence in heaven, which is like the sacred tent, but it is not part of the world that God created. It is better than the tent Moses set up here on earth because it is perfect.¹² When a high priest goes into the in-

ner room in the tent each year, he takes goats' blood and calves' blood to offer as a sacrifice. But Christ did not do that. It was as though he went into that very holy place only once because he gave his own blood on the cross, just one time. By doing that, he redeemed us forever, because his blood flowed from himself.¹³ The priests sprinkle on people goats' blood and bulls' blood and the water that has been filtered through the ashes of a red heifer that they have completely burned. By performing that ritual, they then say that God will now accept that the people should worship him.¹⁴ If all that is true, then it became even more true when Christ, who had never sinned, sacrificed himself to God—he did this by the power of God's eternal Spirit. Because he sacrificed himself, God now forgives us for having sinned, for having done things that would have made us die forever. Now it is as though we had never sinned; now we can worship the true God.

¹⁵ By dying for us, Christ made for God a new covenant with us. We were trying to please God by means of the first covenant, but we were still guilty of having sinned. When he died, he freed us from having to die for our own sins. As a result, all of us whom God has called to know him will receive what he has promised to give us forever.¹⁶ A covenant is like a will. In the case of a will, in order to put its provisions into effect, someone must prove that the one who made it has died.¹⁷ A will goes into effect only when the one who makes the will has died. It is not in effect when the one who made it is still alive.¹⁸ And so God put the first covenant into effect only by means of animals' blood that flowed when the priests sacrificed them.¹⁹ After Moses had declared to all the Israelites everything that God commanded in the laws that God gave him, he took calves' and goats' blood mixed with water.

He dipped into this blood scarlet wool that he tied around a sprig of hyssop. Then he sprinkled with some of the blood the scroll itself containing God's laws. Then he sprinkled more of that blood on all the people. ²⁰ He said to them, "This is the blood that brings into effect the covenant that God commanded that you obey." ²¹ Likewise, he sprinkled that blood on the sacred tent and on every object that they used in working there. ²² It was by sprinkling blood that they cleansed almost everything. That was what was stated in God's laws. If blood does not flow when they sacrifice an animal, God does not forgive the sins of those people.

²³ So by animal sacrifices it was necessary for the priests to cleanse the things that symbolized what Christ does in heaven. But God has to cleanse the things in heaven by means of much better sacrifices than those. ²⁴ Christ did not enter the very holy place that humans made, which only represented the true very holy place. Instead, he entered heaven itself, in order to now be in God's presence to plead with God for us. ²⁵ The high priest enters the very holy place once every year, taking blood that is not his own, to offer it as a sacrifice. But when Christ entered heaven, it was not in order to offer himself repeatedly like that. ²⁶ If that were so, he would have needed to suffer and shed his blood repeatedly since the time when God created the world. But instead, in this final age, Christ has appeared once so that by sacrificing himself, God will forgive all our sins and will not condemn us any more because we have sinned. ²⁷ All people must die once, and after that God will judge them for their sins. ²⁸ Likewise, when Christ died, God offered him once to be a sacrifice, to punish him in the place of the many people who had sinned. He will come to earth a second time, not in order to sacrifice himself again for those

who have sinned, but in order to save us who wait for him and expect him to come.

Chapter 10

¹ The law does not show very well the good things that God will give us later. The law is like a shadow of something else. If people come to worship God by offering the same kinds of sacrifices every year, they can never become perfect. ² If God had removed the guilt of those who brought these sacrifices, they would not feel that they were still guilty. So they would certainly have stopped offering those sacrifices! ³ But rather, the fact that they offer those sacrifices each year reminds them that they are still guilty for their sins. ⁴ So we know that even if we offer animals such as bulls or goats to God, even if he sees their blood flow, that will not stop us from being guilty.

⁵ That is why, as Christ was coming into the world, he said to his Father,

"It is not sacrifices and offerings that you have wanted,

but you have prepared for me a body to offer.

⁶ Animals that completely burn up when people offer them to you, these animals have not pleased you,

and neither do other sacrifices please you.

⁷ Because of this, I said, 'My God, listen!

I have come here in order to do what you want me to do,

just as they have written about me in the scriptures."

⁸ First Christ said, "It is not sacrifices and offerings and animals that the priests have completely burned up and other offerings to atone for those who have sinned

that you have really wanted. They have not pleased you." He said that even though those things were offered according to the laws that God gave Moses! ⁹ Then, concerning his offering himself as a sacrifice to atone for people's sin, he said, "Listen! I have come here to do what you want me to do!" Thus Christ got rid of the first way of atoning for sin, in order to establish the second way of atoning for sin. ¹⁰ Because Jesus Christ did what God wanted him to do, God set us apart for himself. This happened when Jesus Christ offered his own body once as a sacrifice, a sacrifice that he will never need to repeat.

¹¹ As every priest stands daily in front of the altar, he performs rituals and offers the same kind of sacrifices that could never remove the guilt for anyone's sins.

¹² But Christ offered a sacrifice that will be enough forever, and he offered it only one time! After that, he sat down to rule beside God in the place of highest honor.

¹³ From now on, he is waiting for God to completely defeat all his enemies. ¹⁴ By offering himself once as the sacrifice for sin, he perfected forever those in whom God has worked his cleansing and purity.

¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also confirms to us that that is true. First he says:

¹⁶ "When the time of the first covenant with my people has finished,

I will make a new covenant with them.

I will do this for them:

I will cause them to understand my laws
and I will cause them to obey them."

¹⁷ Then he said:

"I will forgive them for their sins,

and I will consider that they are no longer guilty for having sinned."

¹⁸ When God has forgiven someone's sins, that person does not need to make any more offerings to make up for his sin!

¹⁹ So, my fellow believers, because we trust in what Jesus accomplished when his own blood flowed for us, we can confidently go into God's very presence that was symbolized by the very holy place in the sacred tent. ²⁰ He has enabled us to go into God's presence by making a new way in which we can live forever. This new way is Jesus, who died for us. ²¹ Christ is a great priest who rules over us, we who are God's people. ²² So we must approach God sincerely by confidently trusting in Jesus. It is he who has made our hearts pure from having sinned. It is as if he sprinkled his own blood over our hearts, and as if he had washed our bodies in pure water. ²³ We must unwaveringly keep stating what we believe. Since God faithfully does all he promised to do, we must confidently expect him to do these things. ²⁴ And let us think how each of us can best encourage each other to love one another and to do good deeds. ²⁵ We must not cease assembling ourselves to worship the Lord, as some people have done. Instead, each one of us must encourage the others. Let us do that all the more since we know that the time that the Lord will return is near.

²⁶ If we deliberately and habitually sin after we have known the true message about Christ, no other sacrifice will help us. ²⁷ Instead, we must fearfully expect that God will judge us, and then he will righteously punish all his enemies in a furious fire.

²⁸ Everyone who rejected the laws that God gave Moses had to die without mercy when at least two or three people testified against him. ²⁹ That was severe punishment. But Christ is God's Son, and he is also God. If anyone rejects the covenant that he has made and despises the blood that flowed from him—if that person rejects the blood in exchange for which God forgave him—if that person rejects the Spirit of God, who acted so kindly toward him—then God will punish him

very, very severely. ³⁰ We can be sure of this, since we know that God said, "The right and power to give people what they deserve for having sinned belongs to me. I will punish them as they deserve." And Moses wrote, "The Lord will judge his people." ³¹ It will be a terrible thing if the all-powerful God who really lives seizes and punishes you!

³² Remember the earlier times when you first understood the truth about Christ. You endured much hardship, and when you suffered, you continued to trust God. ³³ At times people insulted you in public; at other times they made you suffer. At other times you suffered with other believers in their hardships. ³⁴ You not only were kind to those who were in prison because they believed in Christ, but you also accepted it joyfully when unbelievers took away your possessions. You accepted it because you yourselves knew very well that you had possessions in heaven forever, possessions that are much better than those that they took from you! ³⁵ So do not become discouraged when they cause you to suffer, because if you continue to trust in God, he will greatly reward you. ³⁶ You must patiently continue to trust in him in order that, because of your doing what God wants you to do, he will give you what he has promised. ³⁷ A prophet wrote in the scriptures that God said about the Messiah:

"In just a short time the one I promised would come will surely come;

he will not delay coming.

³⁸ But those who belong to me, who act righteously, will continue to live trusting in me.

If they are cowards and stop trusting in me,

I will not be pleased with them.

³⁹ But we are not people who are cowards

and cause God to destroy us. Instead, we are people who trust in him, so that he will save us forever.

Chapter 11

¹ Faith is when people trust God and they are sure they will receive the things they confidently expect him to give them. Faith is when people are certain they will see those things happen, though, for now, those things cannot be seen. ² Because our ancestors trusted in God, he approved of them. ³ Because we trust in God, we understand that God formed the universe by commanding that it exist. So the things we see were not made from things that already existed.

⁴ Because Adam's son Abel trusted God, he sacrificed something better to God than what his older brother Cain offered to God. So God spoke well about what Abel sacrificed, and God declared that Abel was righteous. And although Abel is dead, we still learn from him about trusting God.

⁵ Because Enoch believed God, God took him up to heaven. Enoch did not die, but no one could find him. Before God took him away, he testified that Enoch pleased him well. ⁶ Now it is possible for people to please God only if they trust him, because anyone who wants to come to God must first believe that God exists and that he rewards those who try to know him.

⁷ God warned Noah that he would send a flood, and Noah believed him. He honored God by building a ship to save his family. In this way he showed that the rest of the people deserved for God to punish them. So Noah became a person whom God made right with himself, because Noah trusted him.

⁸ God called Abraham to go to the land

that he would give his descendants. Because Abraham trusted him, he obeyed God and left his country, even though he did not know where he was going.⁹ Because Abraham trusted God, he lived as though he were a foreigner in a land that God had promised to give his descendants. Abraham lived in tents, and his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob did also. God promised to give to Isaac and Jacob the same things that he promised to give Abraham.¹⁰ Abraham was waiting to live in the permanent city that God himself would design and build.¹¹ And even though Sarah was unable to have children because of her old-age, Abraham received the ability to father a child, because he considered Yahweh to be faithful because he had made the promise to him that he would have a son.¹² So, although Abraham was too old to have children, from that one man people descended who are as many in number as the stars in the sky and are as countless as the grains of sand along the shore, just like God promised him.

¹³ While they still trusted in God, all these people died. Even though they had not yet received the things that God had promised to give them, it was as though they had seen those things in the distance, and they were glad. It was as though they had admitted that they did not belong to this earth, but that they were only here temporarily.¹⁴ As for people who say such things, they clearly show that they long for a place that will become their true native land.¹⁵ If they had been thinking that their true native land was the place from which they had come, they could have simply returned there.¹⁶ But, instead, they desired a better place in which to live. They desired a home in heaven. So God has prepared a city for them to live with him, and he is pleased for them to say that he is their God.

¹⁷ Because Abraham trusted God, he was ready to kill his son Isaac as a sacrifice when God tested him. Abraham, to whom God promised to give a son, was going to sacrifice the very son whom he had given him, the only son whom his own wife had borne!¹⁸ It was about this son that God had said, "It is only from Isaac that I will consider your family to descend."¹⁹ Abraham considered that to fulfill that promise, God could make Isaac live again even if he died after Abraham had sacrificed him! The result was that when Abraham did receive Isaac back after God told him not to harm Isaac, it was as though he received him back even after he died.

²⁰ Because Isaac trusted God, he prayed that God would bless his sons Jacob and Esau after he died.

²¹ Because Jacob trusted God, as he was dying, he prayed God would bless each of the sons of his own son Joseph. He worshiped God as he leaned upon his walking stick before he died.²² Because Joseph trusted God, when he was about to die in Egypt, he thought ahead to the time when the Israelites would leave Egypt, and he instructed his people to carry his bones with them when they left Egypt.

²³ Because Moses' father and mother trusted God, they hid their son for three months shortly after he was born, because they saw that the child was beautiful. They were not afraid of disobeying what the king of Egypt had commanded, that all the Jewish male babies must die.

²⁴ The daughter of the king, whom they called Pharaoh, raised Moses, but when Moses had grown up, because he trusted God, he refused to accept the royal privileges that would have been his if people considered him as "the son of Pharaoh's daughter."²⁵ He decided that it was better for others to mistreat him for a time along with God's people, than to temporarily en-

joy living sinfully in the king's palace.²⁶ He decided that if he suffered for Christ, it would be worth far more in God's sight than owning the treasures of Egypt that he would receive as one of Pharaoh's family. He looked forward to the time when God would give him an eternal reward.²⁷ Because he trusted God, Moses left Egypt. He was not afraid that the king would be angry because he left. He kept going because it was as though he kept seeing God, whom no one can see.²⁸ Because Moses believed God would save his own people, he obeyed God's commands about Passover, which became a yearly festival. He commanded the people to kill lambs and sprinkle their blood on their doorposts so that the angel who causes people to die would not kill the oldest male Israelites with the oldest sons in each Egyptian family.

²⁹ Because the Israelites trusted God when they walked through the Sea of Reeds, it was as though they were walking on dry land! But, when the army of Egypt also attempted to cross where the sea had been, they drowned, because the sea came back and flooded them!

³⁰ Because the Israelite people trusted God, the walls around the city of Jericho collapsed, after the Israelites marched around the walls for seven days.

³¹ Rahab was a prostitute, but because she trusted God, she did not perish with those inside Jericho who disobeyed God. Joshua had sent spies into the city to find ways to destroy it, but God saved Rahab because she welcomed those spies peacefully.

³² I do not know what more I should say about others who trusted in God. It would take too much time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the other prophets.³³ Because they trusted God, some of them did great deeds for him. Some conquered

lands ruled by powerful men. Some ruled Israel and justly treated men and nations. Some received from God the things that he promised to give them. Some forced lions to keep their mouths shut.³⁴ Some escaped from burning up in fire. Some escaped from others who tried to kill them with swords. Some became well again after being sick. Some became powerful when they fought wars. Some caused armies that came from foreign lands to run away from them.³⁵ Some women who trusted God received their relatives back again when God made them live again after they had died. But others who trusted God were tortured until they died. They were tortured because they refused to agree when their enemies said, "We will release you if you deny that you believe in God." They refused to do that, because they wanted to live with God forever, which is better than continuing to live on earth.³⁶ Other people who trusted God were mocked. Some had their backs cut open by being struck with whips. Some were chained and put in prison.³⁷ Some of those believers were stoned to death. Others were sawn completely in two. Others were killed with swords. Others of these people who trusted God wandered around the land wearing garments made only of skins from sheep and goats. They did not have any money. People constantly oppressed them and harmed them.³⁸ The people on earth who caused those who trusted in God to suffer like this were so bad that they did not deserve to live with people like those who trusted God. Some who trusted God wandered in deserts and mountains. Some lived in caves and in other large holes in the ground.

³⁹ Although God approved of all these people because they trusted him, he did not give them what he had promised them.

⁴⁰ God knew ahead of time that what he

would give us and them later would be better than giving them immediately what he promised. What God intends is that only when they and we are together will we have all that God intends us to have.

Chapter 12

¹ We know about many people like these who proved that they trusted in God. Let us put off everything that weighs us down and so we put away the sin that clings to us. Then let us run our race patiently and do everything God gives us to do until we make it to the finish line. ² And let us keep thinking about Jesus and give him all our attention. He is the one who leads us and he makes our faith complete. He is the one who endured the terrible suffering on the cross and he paid no attention to the people who tried to shame him. He did this because he knew how joyful God would make him later. He now sits at the place of highest honor beside the throne where God rules in heaven.

³ Jesus patiently endured it when sinful people hatefully acted against him. Strengthen your hearts and minds with Jesus' example so that you will not give up trusting God or become discouraged.

⁴ While you have struggled against being tempted to sin, you have not yet bled and died because of resisting evil, as Jesus did. ⁵ Do not forget these words that Solomon spoke to his son, which are the same with which God encourages you as his children:

"My son, pay attention when the Lord is disciplining you,

and do not be discouraged when the Lord punishes you,

⁶ because everyone the Lord loves he also disciplines,

and he severely corrects everyone he calls his own."

⁷ God may discipline you by requiring you to endure difficult things that happen to you. When God disciplines you, he is treating you as a father treats his children. All fathers discipline their children. ⁸ So if you have not experienced God disciplining you like he disciplines all his children, you are not true children of God. You are like illegitimate children who have no father to correct them. ⁹ Furthermore, our natural fathers disciplined us when we were young, and we respected them for doing that. So we should certainly more readily accept God our spiritual Father disciplining us so we will live eternally! ¹⁰ Our natural fathers disciplined us for a short time as they considered right, but God always disciplines us to help us share in his holy nature. ¹¹ During the time God is disciplining us, it does not seem to be anything about which we can rejoice. Instead, it pains us. But later it causes those who have learned from it to live righteously, which produces peace in us.

¹² So, instead of acting as though you were spiritually tired out, trust God's discipline to renew you. ¹³ Go straight forward following Christ so that believers who are weak in trusting Christ will gain strength from you and not become crippled. Instead, they will be spiritually restored as an injured and useless limb becomes well again. ¹⁴ Try to live peacefully with all people. Do your best to be holy, since no one will see the Lord if he is not holy.

¹⁵ Beware that none of you stops trusting in God, who has done kind things for us that we did not deserve. Be on guard so that none of you act in an evil way toward others, because that will grow like a root grows into a big plant, leading many believers to sin. ¹⁶ Do not let anyone be immoral or disobey God like Esau. He

exchanged the rights he had as a first-born son for only one meal.¹⁷ Esau later wanted to get back his birth rights and all that his father Isaac's blessing would give him. But Isaac refused to do what Esau requested. So Esau found no way to get back his birth rights and blessing, even though he sought it tearfully.

¹⁸ In coming to God, you have not experienced things like what the Israelite people experienced at Mount Sinai. They approached a mountain that God commanded them not to touch because he himself had come down to that mountain. They approached a blazing fire, and it was gloomy and dark, with a violent storm. ¹⁹ They heard a trumpet sound, and they heard God speak a message. It was so powerful that they pleaded for him not to speak to them like that again. ²⁰ For God had commanded them, "If a person or even an animal touches this mountain, you must kill him." The people were terrified. ²¹ Truly, because Moses was terrified after seeing what happened on the mountain, he said, "I am trembling because I am very afraid!" ²² Instead, you have come to the presence of God who truly lives in heaven, to the "New Jerusalem." That is like what your ancestors did when they came to worship God on Mount Zion in Israel, upon which the earthly Jerusalem was built. You have come to where there are countless angels who are rejoicing as they have gathered together. ²³ You have joined the assembly of all the believers who have privileges as firstborn sons, whose names God has written down in heaven. You have come to God, who will judge everyone. You have come to where the spirits of God's people are, people who lived righteously before they died, and whom God has now made perfect in heaven. ²⁴ You have come to Jesus, who arranged a new covenant between us and God by the blood that flowed when he

died on the cross. Jesus' blood made it possible for God to forgive us, and his blood is better for us than Abel's blood.

²⁵ Beware that you do not refuse to listen to God who is speaking to you. The Israelite people did not escape God punishing them when Moses warned them here on earth. So we shall surely not escape God punishing us if we reject what he says when he warns us from heaven! ²⁶ The earth shook when he spoke at Mount Sinai. But now he has promised, "I will shake the earth again, one more time, and I will shake the heavens, too."²⁷ The words "again, one more time" indicate that God will remove those things on earth that he will shake, everything that he has created. He will do this in order that the things in heaven that cannot shake may remain forever. ²⁸ So let us thank God that we are becoming members of a kingdom that nothing can shake. Let us worship God by gratefully thanking him and by being greatly in awe of his great power and love. ²⁹ Remember that the God we worship is like a fire that burns up everything that is impure!

Chapter 13

¹ Continue to love your fellow believers.

² Do not forget to be hospitable to needy travelers. By caring for strangers, some people have welcomed angels into their home without knowing it. ³ Remember to help those who are in prison because they are believers, as though you were in prison with them and were suffering physically as they are doing.

⁴ Men and women who are married to each other must respect each other, and they must be faithful to each other. God will surely condemn those who act immorally or adulterously. ⁵ Live without

constantly wanting money, and be happy no matter how much or little you own. Remember what Moses wrote that God said:

"I will never leave you;

I will never stop providing for you."

⁶ So we can say confidently as the psalmist said,

"Since the Lord is the one who helps me, I will not be afraid! People can do nothing to me that will keep God from helping me."

⁷ Your spiritual leaders have told you the message about Christ. Remember how they have conducted their lives and imitate how they have trusted in Christ. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same now as he always has been, and he will be the same forever.

⁹ So do not let other people persuade you to believe other things about God, strange things that you have not learned from us. For example, do not let anything make you obey various rules about what to eat and not to eat. These rules cannot help us.

¹⁰ Those who serve in the sacred tent have no right to eat at the sacred altar where we worship Christ. ¹¹ After the high priest brings into the very holy place the blood of animals that they have sacrificed to atone for sins, other people burn the bodies of those animals outside the camp. ¹² Similarly, Jesus suffered and died outside the gates of Jerusalem in order that he might make us, his people, special for God. He did this by offering his own blood as a sacrifice for our sins.

¹³ So we must go to Jesus to be saved; we must allow others to insult us just like people insulted him. ¹⁴ Here on earth, we believers do not have a city such as Jerusalem. Instead, we are waiting for the heavenly city that will last forever.

¹⁵ Because Jesus has died for us, we must continually praise God no matter what

happens. That will be something we can sacrifice to him instead of animals. We must be ready to openly say to others that we trust in Christ.

¹⁶ Always be doing good deeds for others and sharing the things you have, because doing things like that will be as though you are offering sacrifices that will please God.

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and do what they tell you, since they are the ones who are guarding your welfare. Some day they will have to stand before God so that he can say if he approves of what they have done. Obey them in order that they can do the work of guarding you joyfully and not have to do it sadly, because if you cause them to do it sadly, that will certainly not help you at all.

¹⁸ Pray for me and those with me. I am certain that I have not done anything that displeases God. I have tried to act well toward you in every way. ¹⁹ I urge you earnestly to pray that God will quickly remove the things that stop my coming to you.

²⁰ Jesus provides for us, protects us, and guides us as a great shepherd does for his sheep. And God, who gives us inner peace, raised our Lord Jesus from the dead. By doing that God confirmed his eternal covenant with us by the blood that flowed from Christ when he died on the cross. ²¹ So I pray that God may equip you with everything good that you may do what he desires. May he accomplish in us what pleases him, as he watches us follow Jesus, who offered up himself for us. May all people praise Jesus Christ forever. Amen!

²² My fellow believers, since this is a short letter that I have written to you, I ask you that you patiently consider what I have just written to encourage you.

²³ I want you to know that our fellow believer Timothy has gone free from prison. If he comes here soon, he will accompany me when I go to see you.

²⁴ Tell all your spiritual leaders and all your other fellow believers who belong to God in your city that I greet them. The believers in this area who have come from Italy greet you also.

²⁵ May God continue to love you and protect you by his kindness.

JAMES

Chapter 1

¹ I, James, serve God and am bound to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. I am writing this letter to the twelve Jewish tribes who trust in Christ and who are scattered throughout the world. I greet you all.

² My fellow believers, consider it something to greatly rejoice over when you experience various kinds of hardships. ³ Understand that as you trust God in hardships, they help you to endure even more hardships. ⁴ Endure hardships to their very end, so that you may follow Christ in every way. Then you will not fail to do well.

⁵ If anyone of you needs to know what to do, let him ask God, who gives generously and is not angry at anyone who asks. ⁶ But when you ask God, trust him to answer you. Do not doubt that he will answer and always help you, because people who keep doubting God cannot follow him, like a wave of the sea that is blown back and forth by the wind and thus cannot continue in the same direction. ⁷ Indeed, people who doubt should not think that the Lord God will do anything that they request him to do. ⁸ For they are people who cannot decide whether they will follow Jesus or not follow Jesus. These people do not do what they say they will do.

⁹ Believers who are poor should be glad because God has honored them. ¹⁰ And believers who are rich should be glad that God has humbled them, which helps them trust in Jesus Christ, because they and their riches will pass away, just as wild flowers wither. ¹¹ When the sun rises, the scorching hot wind dries the plants and

causes the flowers to fall and no longer be beautiful. Like the flower that dies, rich people will die while they are earning money.

¹² God honors those who endure hard trials, because God will reward them by making them live forever, as he has promised to do for all who love him.

¹³ When we are tempted to sin, we must not think it is God who is tempting us, because no one can persuade God to do evil, and he never tries to persuade anyone to do evil. ¹⁴ But everyone wants to do evil, and so they do it, just as if they are falling into a trap. ¹⁵ After that, their evil thoughts lead them to commit sin, and this sin takes over their minds until it destroys them. Then, when evil desires come together, sin is born, which means the person commits sin and can only be forgiven by Jesus. And when sin produces its final result, death comes, both the death of the body and the death of the spirit, meaning the sinner is separated from God forever. Only Jesus can save us from this final death.

¹⁶ My fellow believers whom I love, stop deceiving yourselves. ¹⁷ Every truly good and perfect gift comes from God the Father, who is in heaven. He is the true God who gives us light. God does not change like created things change, like shadows that appear and disappear. God never changes and He is always good! ¹⁸ God chose to give us spiritual life when we trusted in his true message. So now believers in Jesus have become the first people to have true spiritual life, which only Jesus can give.

¹⁹ My fellow believers whom I love, you know that every one of you should be eager to pay attention to God's true message. You should not quickly speak your own thoughts, nor quickly get angry, ²⁰ because when we get angry we cannot do the

righteous things that God wants us to do.

²¹ So stop doing all kinds of evil, and humbly accept the message that God planted in your inner beings, because he is able to save you if you accept his message. ²² Do what God commands in his message. Do not only listen to it, because people who only listen to it and do not obey it think wrongly that God will save them. ²³ Some people hear God's message but do not do what it says. They are like someone who looks at his face in a mirror. ²⁴ Although he looks at himself, he goes away from the mirror and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But other people look closely at God's message, which is perfect and which sets people free to voluntarily do what God wants them to do. And if they continue to examine God's message and do not just hear it and then forget it, but do what God tells them to do, God will bless them because of what they do.

²⁶ Some people think that they worship God rightly, but they habitually speak evil talk. Those people are wrong in thinking that they worship God rightly. The fact is that they worship God in vain. ²⁷ One of the things that God has told us to do is to take care of orphans and widows who suffer hardship. Those who do that, and who do not think or act immorally like those who do not obey God, truly worship God, who is our Father, and God approves of them.

Chapter 2

¹ My brothers and sisters, do not think of honoring some people more than others as you at the same time trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is greater than anything. ² For example, suppose that a person who wears gold rings and fine

clothes enters your meeting place. Then suppose that a poor person who wears shabby clothes also comes in. ³ And suppose that you show special attention to the one dressed in fine clothes by saying, "Please sit here in this nice seat!" and you say to the poor one, "You stand over there or sit on the floor!" ⁴ You have then judged one another for wrong reasons. ⁵ Listen to me, my brothers and sisters whom I love. God has chosen poor people who seem to have nothing of value, to trust in him very much. So he will give them great things when he rules everyone everywhere. This is what he has promised to do for everyone who loves him. ⁶ But you dishonor the poor people. Think about it! It is the rich people, not the poor people, who are causing you to suffer! It is the rich people who forcibly take you to court to accuse you in front of judges! ⁷ And they are the ones who speak evil against the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is worthy of praise, to whom you belong! ⁸ If you follow the royal law, as they are written in the scriptures, you will see the command, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." If you love others, you are doing what is right. ⁹ But if you honor some people more than others, you are doing wrong. And because you do not do what God commanded us to do, he condemns you because you disobey his laws.

¹⁰ Those who disobey only one of God's laws, even if they obey all his other laws, God considers to be as guilty as anyone who has disobeyed all of his laws. ¹¹ For example, God said, "Do not commit adultery," but he also said, "Do not murder anyone." So if you do not commit adultery but you murder someone, you have become a person who disobeys God's laws.

¹² Always speak and act toward others as people should whom God will judge using the law that frees us from being punished

for our sins. ¹³ Because when God judges us, he will not act mercifully toward those who do not act mercifully toward others. But if we are merciful to others, then we will not fear God when he judges us.

¹⁴ My brothers and sisters, some people say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," but they do not do good things. What they say will do them no good. If they only believe with words, God will certainly not save them. ¹⁵ To illustrate, suppose that a brother or sister is continually lacking clothes or food for each day. ¹⁶ And suppose one of you says to them, "Do not worry, go away, get warm, and find the food you need!" But if you do not give them the things that they need for their bodies, then that will be no help to them! ¹⁷ Similarly, if you do not do good deeds to help others, what you say about believing in Christ is as useless as a dead person! You do not really believe in Christ.

¹⁸ But someone may say to me, "God saves some people only because they trust in him, and he saves others because they do good deeds for people." I would answer that person, "You cannot prove to me that people truly trust in God if they do not do good deeds for others! But by doing good deeds for others I will prove to you that I truly trust in God! ¹⁹ Think about it! You believe that there is only one real God who truly lives, and you are right to believe that. But the demons also believe that, and they tremble because they also know that God truly lives, and that He will punish them. ²⁰ Also, you foolish person, I will give you proof that if someone says, "I trust in God," but does not do good deeds, what that person says does not help him in any way. ²¹ We all honor Abraham, our ancestor. He tried to obey what God told him to do; he tried to give his son Isaac to God on the altar. God considered Abraham to be a righteous person for trying to

obey him. ²² In this way, Abraham trusted in God and obeyed him. When he obeyed him, he finished doing what he was trusting God for. ²³ And so it happened as it is written in the scriptures, "Because Abraham truly trusted in God, God viewed him as someone who did the right thing." God also said about Abraham, "He is my friend." ²⁴ From the example of Abraham you can realize that it is because people do good deeds that God considers them to be righteous, and not only because they trust in him. ²⁵ Similarly, it was certainly because of what Rahab did that God considered her to be good. Rahab had been a prostitute, but she cared for the messengers who came to spy out the land, and she helped them to escape by sending them home on a different road from the one that they came on.

²⁶ Just as when a person no longer breathing is dead and his body is useless, in the same way, someone who says he trusts in God but does nothing good trusts in God uselessly.

Chapter 3

¹ My brothers and sisters, not many of you should desire to become teachers of God's word, because you know that God will judge us teachers more severely than he will judge other people. ² In many ways we do what is wrong. But those who control what they say will be all that God intends them to be. They will be able to control all their actions. ³ To illustrate, if we put a small metal bit into the mouth of a horse in order to cause the horse to obey us, we can turn the horse's large body and cause it to go where we want it to. ⁴ Think also about ships. Although a ship may be very large and although it can be moved by strong winds, by turning a very small

rudder people can direct the ship wherever they want it to go.⁵ In the same way, although our tongues are very small, if we do not control them, we can harm people by talking big. Think also about how just a small flame of fire can cause a large forest to burn.

⁶ Just like a fire burns a forest, when we say things that are evil, we can destroy many people. What we say reveals that there is much evil within us. What we say contaminates all that we think and do. Just like a flame of fire easily causes the whole surrounding area to burn, what we say can cause sons and daughters and their descendants to want to do evil for the rest of their lives. It is the devil himself who influences us to speak what is evil.⁷ Although people are able to tame all kinds of wild animals, birds, reptiles and creatures that live in the water, and people have tamed them,⁸ no one is able to control what he says. The words we speak are an uncontrolled evil. Our words can do great harm, just like poison that kills.⁹ We use our tongue to praise God, who is our Lord and Father, but we also use our same tongue to ask God to do evil to people. That is very wrong, because God made people like himself.¹⁰ We praise God, but with our same mouth we also ask for evil things to happen to others. My brothers and sisters, this should not be!¹¹ Surely bitter water and good water do not come out of the same spring!¹² My brothers and sisters, a fig tree cannot produce olives. Nor can a grapevine produce figs. Neither can a salty spring produce good water. Similarly, we should speak only what is good, and we should not speak what is evil.

¹³ If any of you thinks that you are wise and know much, you should always act in a good way to show people that your good deeds are the result of your being truly

wise. Being wise helps us to act gently toward others.¹⁴ But if you are very envious of other people and lie against them and do them wrong, you should not pretend that you are wise. By boasting like that you are saying that what is true is actually false.¹⁵ Those who think like this are not wise as God wants them to be. Instead, they are only thinking and acting as people who do not honor him. They think and act according to their own evil desires. They do what the demons want them to do.¹⁶ Remember that people who think like this do not control themselves. They envy other people and act as if what they were doing were right, but it is wrong. They do every sort of evil.¹⁷ God in heaven makes us wise. First of all, he teaches us to be morally pure. He teaches us how to make peace with others. He teaches us to be kind to others and to help them. He teaches to be kind to those who do not deserve it. He teaches us to do good things that have lasting results. He teaches us to never stop doing what is right and to be honest.¹⁸ Those who act peacefully toward others cause them to also act peacefully, with the result that they all live together and act in the right way.

Chapter 4

¹ Now I will tell you why you are fighting among yourselves and quarreling with each other. It is because each of you wants to do the evil things that you enjoy doing, things that do not please your fellow believers.² There are things that you very much desire to have, but you do not get those things, so you want to kill those who hinder you from getting them. You desire what other people have, but you are unable to get what you desire, so you quarrel and fight with one another. You do not have what you desire because you do not

ask God for it. ³ Even when you do ask him, he does not give you what you ask for because you are asking for the wrong reason. You are asking for things in order that you may use them just to enjoy yourselves in bad ways.

⁴ Like a woman who is unfaithful to her husband, you are being unfaithful to God and not obeying him anymore. Those who behave as evil people do belong to this world and are enemies against God. Perhaps you do not realize that. ⁵ Surely you do not think that it is for no reason that God told us in the scriptures that the Spirit he placed in us yearns for us to live our lives in ways that please him. ⁶ But God is powerful and very kind to us, and he wants very much to help us stop sinning. That is why the scripture says, "God opposes those who are proud, but he helps those who are humble."

⁷ So submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and as a result he will run away from you. ⁸ Come near spiritually to God. If you do, he will come near to you. You who are sinners, turn away from doing what is wrong and do only what is good. You who cannot decide whether you will commit yourselves to God, stop thinking wrong thoughts, and think only his thoughts. ⁹ Be sorrowful and weep because of the wrong that you have done. Do not laugh, enjoying only what you selfishly desire. Instead, be sad because you have done what is wrong. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord; if you do, he will honor you.

¹¹ My brothers and sisters, stop speaking evil against one another, because those who speak evil against a fellow believer and thus condemn one who is like a brother or sister to them are really speaking against the law that God gave us to obey. If you speak against his law, you are acting like a judge who condemns it. ¹² But

in fact, there is only one who has the authority to forgive our evil and to condemn people, and that is God. He alone is able to save people or to destroy people. You certainly have no right to take God's place and judge others.

¹³ Some of you are arrogantly saying, "Today or tomorrow we will go to a certain city. We will spend a year there and we will buy and sell things and earn a lot of money." Now, you listen to me! ¹⁴ You should not talk like that, because you do not know what will happen tomorrow, and you do not know how long you will live! Your life is short, like a mist that appears for a short time and then disappears. ¹⁵ Instead of what you are saying, you should say, "If the Lord is willing, we will live and do this, or we will do that." ¹⁶ But what you are doing is boasting about all the things that you plan to do. Your boasting like that is evil.

¹⁷ So if anyone knows the right thing that he should do, but he does not do it, he is sinning.

Chapter 5

¹ Now I have something to say to you rich people who say you believe in Christ. Listen to me! You should weep and wail loudly because you will experience terrible troubles! ² Your wealth is worthless, as though it were rotted. Your fine clothes are worthless, as though moths had ruined them. ³ Your gold and silver are worthless, as though they were corroded. When God judges you, this worthless wealth of yours will be evidence that you are guilty of being greedy, and as rust and fire destroy things, God will severely punish you. You have in vain stored up wealth in a time when God is about to judge you. ⁴ Think about what you

have done. You did not pay the wages you promised to the workmen who harvested your fields for you. The pay you kept for yourself shows me your guilt and how unfair you were to them. The workers cry out to God because of the way you treat them. And the Lord God of the angel armies listens to their loud cries.⁵ You have bought anything you wanted so you could live like kings. Just like cattle fatten themselves, not realizing that they will be slaughtered, you have lived just to enjoy things, not realizing that God will severely punish you.⁶ You have arranged for others to condemn innocent people. You have arranged for others to kill people, even though those people had not done anything wrong. They were not able to defend themselves against you. My brothers and sisters, that is what I say to the rich people who oppress you.

⁷ So, my brothers and sisters, although rich people cause you to suffer, be patient until the Lord Jesus Christ comes back. Remember that when farmers plant a field, they wait for their valuable crops to grow. They must wait patiently for the rain that comes at the planting season and for more rain that comes just before the harvest season. They wait for the crops to grow and mature before they can harvest them.⁸ Similarly, you also should wait patiently and trust the Lord Jesus firmly, because he is coming back soon and will judge all people fairly.⁹ My brothers and sisters, do not complain against each other, in order that the Lord Jesus may not condemn and punish you. It is he who will judge us, and he is ready to appear.¹⁰ My brothers and sisters, as an example of how to be patient, consider the prophets whom the Lord God sent long ago to speak his messages. Although people caused them to suffer much, they endured it patiently.¹¹ We know that God honors and helps those who endure suffering for him. You have

also heard about Job. You know that although he suffered much, the Lord God planned to bring good to Job because he endured that suffering. And from that we know that the Lord is very compassionate and kind.

¹² Also, my brothers and sisters, I want to say something important about how you talk. You must not take an oath by calling on heaven or by calling on the earth to stand as a witness for the promise you make. All you need to say is "Yes" or "No." God will judge you when you say more than that.

¹³ Whoever among you is experiencing trouble should pray that God would help him. Whoever is cheerful should sing songs of praise to God.¹⁴ Whoever among you is sick should call the leaders of the congregation to come to pray for him. They should put olive oil on him and, with the Lord's authority, pray.¹⁵ The prayer that is offered to God with faith will heal the person who is sick, and the Lord will restore his health. If that person has sinned, God will forgive him.¹⁶ So, because the Lord is able to heal the sick and to forgive sins, tell each other the sinful things that you have done, and pray for each other in order that you may be healed. If righteous people pray and ask fervently for God to do something, God will act powerfully and will certainly do it.

¹⁷ Although the prophet Elijah was an ordinary person like us, he earnestly prayed that it would not rain. And it did not rain for three and a half years.¹⁸ Then he prayed again, asking God to send rain, and God sent rain, and plants grew and produced crops again.

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if anyone of you stops obeying the true message from God, some other person among you should persuade that person to once again do what God has told us to do. If he stops

doing what is wrong,²⁰ all of you should remember that because of that other person, God will save the sinner from spiritual death and will forgive his many sins.

1 PETER

Chapter 1

¹ I, Peter, whom Jesus Christ made an apostle, am writing this letter to you who believe in him, you whom God has chosen to belong to himself. I am writing to you who live in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, far away from your true home in heaven. ² God our Father chose you as he himself decided previously, and his Spirit has set you apart in order that you may obey Jesus Christ, and in order that his blood may make you acceptable to God. May God act very kindly to you, and may he make you live more and more peacefully.

³ Praise God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is because he is kind to us and he has shown us great mercy, by causing us to experience the new birth that gives us a living hope, and we receive the new life because God raised Jesus Christ to life from the dead ones. ⁴ He has enabled us to expect to receive things that he has kept for us in heaven, things that will last forever. ⁵ God, by his mighty power, is guarding you as you trust in Jesus. He is guarding you so that he may, at the end of the time in which we now live, completely rescue you from Satan's power. ⁶ You rejoice because of what will happen then, but now you are grieving for a short time while you suffer many different hardships. God is allowing you to be tested, as precious metals are tested to see if they are pure. These trials that you are experiencing are necessary. ⁷ These hardships happen in order to prove that you really do trust in Jesus. This means more to God than all the gold in the world, which fire can destroy. Because you trust in Jesus, God will honor you very highly when

Jesus Christ comes again. ⁸ You love Jesus, although you have not seen him. Although you do not see him now, you rejoice very much; ⁹ because you trust in him, God is saving you from the guilt of your sins.

¹⁰ Long ago prophets spoke messages that God had shown them about how he would one day save you. They investigated very carefully these things. ¹¹ They wanted to know whom the Spirit of Christ that was in them was referring to. They also wanted to know what time he was talking about. This was because the Spirit was telling them beforehand that the Christ would suffer and die, and that glorious things would happen to him afterwards.

¹² God told them that it was not for their own sake that he was revealing these things to them, but that it was for your sake. They proclaimed them to you because the Holy Spirit whom God sent from heaven enabled them to do that. And even angels would like to know more about these truths about how God saves us.

¹³ Therefore, prepare your minds to obey God. What I mean is that you should discipline your minds. Be confident that you will receive the good things that God will kindly do for you when Jesus Christ returns from heaven. ¹⁴ And because you should obey your heavenly Father, just as children ought to obey their fathers here on earth, do not do the evil deeds that you previously wished to do, when you did not know the truth about God. ¹⁵ Instead, just like God, the one who chose you to belong to him, is holy, you also must be holy in everything that you do. ¹⁶ Be holy, because it is written in the scriptures that God said, "You must be holy because I am holy."

¹⁷ God is the one who judges what each one does, and he does this very fairly. Since you call him 'Father,' behave in a right way while you are living here on

earth. You are like people whom others have driven from their homes, because you are living away from heaven, your true home. ¹⁸ Live reverently because you know that it was not with things like gold and silver—things that will not last forever—that God bought you, so you could stop behaving foolishly, as you learned to do from your ancestors. ¹⁹ Instead, it was with the precious blood of Christ that flowed from his body when he died that God bought you. Christ was a like the lambs that the Jewish priests sacrificed: Perfect, without any blemishes or spots. ²⁰ God chose him to do this before he created the world. But it was not until now, when the world will soon end, that God revealed him to you. ²¹ Because of what Christ has done, you are trusting in God, who caused him to become alive again after he died, and who greatly honored him. As a result, God is the one in whom you are trusting and expecting that he will do great things for you.

²² Because you have obeyed the truth about God and have allowed him to make you pure and to love our fellow believers, continue to love each other earnestly and sincerely. ²³ I ask you to do this, because you now are living a new life. It was not by means of something that will perish that you received this new life. Instead, it was by means of something that will last forever: The promises of God, which you have believed. ²⁴ We know that this is true because, as the prophet Isaiah wrote,

"All people will perish like grass perishes. And all the greatness that people have will not last forever,

like the flowers in the grass do not last long.

The grass withers and the flowers die,

²⁵ but God's message endures forever."

This message that endures is the message

about Christ that we proclaimed to you.

Chapter 2

¹ Therefore, do not act maliciously in any way or deceive others. Do not be hypocrites, and do not envy others. Do not ever speak evil about anyone untruthfully.

² Just as newborn babies long for their mothers' pure milk, you should desire to learn true things from God, so that by learning it you may become like adults in trusting him. You must do this until the time when God sets you completely free from all the evil in this world. ³ Also, you must do this because you have experienced that the Lord acts very kindly toward you.

⁴ Come to the Lord Jesus. He is like the most important stone in the foundation of a building, but he is living, not lifeless like a stone. Many people rejected him, but God chose him and considers him to be very valuable. ⁵ And like men build houses with stones, God is joining you together like a building in which his Spirit lives. He is doing this in order that you—

like the priests who offer sacrifices at the altar, might do things that please God because Jesus Christ has died for you. ⁶ What the scriptures say show us that this is true: "I am placing in Jerusalem someone who is like a very valuable stone, the most important stone in the building, and those who believe in him will never become ashamed."

⁷ Therefore, God will honor you who believe in Jesus. But those who refuse to believe in him are like the builders that the scriptures talk about: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the most important stone in the building."

⁸ It is also written in the scriptures:

"He will be like a stone that causes people to stumble,

and like a rock that people trip over.

Just as people are injured when they stumble over a rock,

people who disobey God's message injure themselves;

that is what God determined would happen to them."

⁹ But you are people whom God has chosen to belong to him. You are a group that worship God like priests, and you rule with God like kings. You are a people group that belongs to God, so that you might proclaim the wonderful things he has done. He has called you from your former ways, when you were ignorant of his truth, and he has made you understand the marvelous true things about him. ¹⁰ What the scriptures say is true about you:

"Formerly, you were no people group at all,

But now you are God's people group.

At one time God had not acted mercifully toward you,

But now he has acted mercifully toward you."

¹¹ You people whom I love, I urge you to think about this: You are like foreigners whose real home is in heaven. So you should not do the sinful things you used to want to do, because if you do them, you will not be able to live well with God. ¹² Keep behaving in a good way among those who do not know God. If you do that, although they may say that you do what is evil, they will see that you are doing good things, and at the time when God comes to judge everyone, they will honor him.

¹³ Because you wish to honor the Lord Jesus, obey everyone who has proper authority. This includes the king, because he

has the greatest power. ¹⁴ It also includes governors, because God sends them to punish those who do what is wrong and to praise those who do what is right. ¹⁵ What God wants is for you to do good. If you do that, you will cause foolish people who do not know God to be unable to say that you have done wrong. ¹⁶ Behave as though you were free from having to obey any master, but do not think that you can do evil because of that. Instead, behave as servants of God should. ¹⁷ Act respectfully toward everyone. Love all your fellow believers. Honor God, and honor the king.

¹⁸ You slaves who are believers, submit yourselves to your masters and completely respect them. Submit yourselves not only to those who act in a good and kind way toward you, but also submit yourselves to those who act in a harsh way toward you. ¹⁹ You should do that because God is pleased with those who know what he wants and obey him, and who, for this reason, accept to suffer pain because their masters treat them unjustly. ²⁰ God will certainly not be pleased with you if you do something that is wrong and then they beat you for that. But if you do what is good and still suffer harm, you are suffering for doing what is good. If you endure that, God will praise you. ²¹ One of the reasons why God chose you is that you might suffer. When Christ suffered for you he became an example for you, in order that you would imitate what he did. ²² Remember how Christ conducted himself,

He never sinned,

And he never said anything to deceive people.

²³ When people insulted him, he did not insult them in return.

When people caused him to suffer, he did not threaten to get revenge.

Instead, he decided to let God, who always judges justly, prove that he was innocent.

²⁴ He himself endured the punishment for our sins in his body when he died on the cross, in order that we would stop sinning and start living rightly.

It is because they wounded him that God has healed you. ²⁵ Truly you were like sheep that had become lost, but now you have returned to Jesus, who cares for you as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

Chapter 3

¹ You women believers should submit yourselves to your husbands. Do this in order that if any of them do not believe the message about Christ, they may become believers without your having to say anything to them. ² They will believe in Christ when they see that you honor them and that you are completely faithful to them. ³ Do not try to do this by decorating the outside of your bodies, such as having fancy hair arrangements or wearing gold jewelry and fine clothes. ⁴ Instead, make your inner beings beautiful in a way that will not fade. I mean, have a humble and quiet attitude, which is something that God considers to be very valuable. ⁵ The women who honored God, who lived long ago, made themselves beautiful in this way. They trusted in God and obeyed their husbands. ⁶ Sarah, for example, obeyed her husband Abraham and called him master. God will consider you to be her daughters if you do what is right and are not afraid of what your husbands or anyone else may do to you because you are believers.

⁷ You men who are believers, just as your wives should respect you, you should conduct your lives in an appropriate way

with them. Treat them respectfully, realizing that they are usually weaker than you are. But also realize that God is making them to live forever, just like you. Do this so that nothing will hinder you from praying.

⁸ To end this part of my letter, I say to all of you, agree with each other in what you think. Be sympathetic toward each other. Love each other as members of the same family should. Act compassionately toward each other. Be humble. ⁹ When people do evil things to you or insult you, do not do the same to them. Instead, ask God to help them, because that is what you have been chosen by God to do, in order that he may help you. ¹⁰ Consider what the psalmist wrote about the proper way of conducting our lives:

"As for those who want to enjoy life and for good things to happen to them,

they must not say what is evil or speak words that deceive others.

¹¹ They must continually refuse to do evil, and do what is good instead.

They must try to help people act peacefully toward each other;

they must earnestly urge people to act in a peaceful way,

¹² because the Lord accepts what righteous people do.

He listens to righteous people when they pray, and he answers them.

But he rejects those who do evil."

¹³ Who is going to harm you if you are making every effort to do what is good?

¹⁴ But even if you suffer because you did what was right, God will bless you. "Do not be afraid of the things that other fear; and do not be troubled when people treat you badly." ¹⁵ Instead, acknowledge in your inner beings that Christ is your master, whom you love. Always be ready to

answer anyone who demands that you tell them about what you are confidently expecting God to do for you. But answer them humbly and respectfully,¹⁶ and make sure that you do nothing wrong, in order that those who speak evil about you may be ashamed when they see the good way in which you are conducting yourselves because you are joined to Christ.¹⁷ It may be that God wants you to suffer. If so, it is better to do good deeds, even if you suffer for doing them, than to do evil deeds.¹⁸ I say that because Christ died once for the sake of people who have sinned. He was a righteous person who died for unrighteous people. He died in order that he might bring us to God. During the time that he had an ordinary body, he was killed, but God's Spirit caused him to become alive again.¹⁹ The Spirit also enabled him to go proclaim God's victory to the evil spirits whom God had imprisoned.²⁰ Long ago, during the time that Noah was building a big boat, those evil spirits disobeyed God when he waited patiently to see if people would turn from their evil behavior. Only a few people were saved in that boat. Specifically, God brought only eight persons safely through the waters of the flood, while all the others drowned in it.²¹ That water represents the water in which we are baptized, by which God saves us because he raised Jesus Christ from the dead. This water, of course, removes no dirt from our bodies. Instead, it shows that we are requesting God to assure us that he has removed our guilt for having sinned.²² Christ has gone into heaven and is ruling in the place of highest honor next to God, after God caused all the evil and powerful spirit beings to be made obedient to him.

Chapter 4

¹ Therefore, because Christ suffered in his body, you also be willing to suffer. Those who suffer in their bodies have stopped their sinning.² As a result, during their remaining time here on earth, they do not do the things that sinful people desire to do, but instead they do the things that God wants them to do.³ I say that to you because you have already spent too much of your time here on earth doing what the people who do not know God like to do. In the past you committed all kinds of sexually immoral acts, you got drunk and then participated in orgies and carousing, and you worshiped idols, which is disgusting to God.⁴ Now your friends are surprised that you do not join with them anymore when they do these things. As a result, they say bad things about you.⁵ But one day they will have to admit to God everything they have done. He is the one who will judge them.⁶ That is the reason why Christ preached the good news to the dead. He did that so that, although God had judged them when they were alive, they might by the power of the Holy Spirit live forever as God lives.⁷ All things on this earth will soon come to an end. Therefore, keep thinking sensibly, and control what you think so that you can pray well.⁸ Most importantly of all, love each other sincerely, because if we love others we will not try to find out what they have done wrong.⁹ Provide food and a place to sleep for those Christian travelers who come among you, and do it without complaining.¹⁰ Believers should all use the gifts that God has given them to serve others. They should manage well the various gifts that God has kindly given them.¹¹ Those who speak to the assembly of believers should do that as if they were speaking the very words of God. Those who do kind deeds for others should do it with the

strength that God gives them, in order that you might honor God as Jesus Christ enables us to do so. May we all praise God because he has all authority to rule everything forever. May it be so! ¹² You whom I love, do not be surprised about the painful things that you are suffering because you belong to Christ. Those things are testing you as people test metal by putting it into a fire. Do not think that something strange is happening to you. ¹³ Instead, rejoice that you are suffering the same kinds of things that Christ endured. Rejoice when you suffer, in order that you may also be very glad when Christ returns and shows everyone how glorious he is. ¹⁴ If others insult you because you believe in Christ, God is pleased with you, because it shows that the Spirit of God, the Spirit who reveals how great God is, lives within you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, do not let it be because you murdered anyone, or stole anything, or did some other kind of evil thing, or because you interfered in someone else's affairs. ¹⁶ But if you suffer because you are a Christian, do not be ashamed about it. Instead, praise God that you are suffering because you belong to Christ. ¹⁷ I say this, because it is now time for God to begin judging people, and first he will judge those who belong to him. Since he will judge us believers first, think about the terrible things that will happen to those who do not obey the good news that comes from him! ¹⁸ That will be as it is written in the scriptures:

"Many righteous people will have to suffer many difficult trials before going to heaven.

So ungodly and sinful people will surely have to suffer much severe punishment from God!"

¹⁹ Therefore, those who suffer because God wishes it, should trust God to keep them—God is the one who created them

and he is the one who always does what he promises to do. And so they should continue to do what is right.

Chapter 5

¹ Now I will say this to those among you who are elders, you who lead the assemblies of believers: I am also an elder. I also am one of those who saw Christ suffer, and I will also share some of the glory that Christ has in heaven. ² I appeal to you elders to take care of the people who are in your assemblies. Do this as if you were shepherds who take care of their flocks of sheep. Do this, not because you must do it, but instead do it willingly, as God desires. Do not be greedy to get money for doing it, but instead do it enthusiastically. ³ Do not act like domineering bosses over the people whom God has assigned to you, but instead be examples to them by the way in which you conduct your lives. ⁴ If you do that, when Jesus, who is like our chief shepherd, appears, he will give each of you a splendid reward. That reward will be like the wreaths that are given to athletes who win races, but your reward will never wither like those wreaths do.

⁵ Now I will say this to you young men. You must obey the older men in the assembly. All of you believers should act humbly toward each other, because it is true that God opposes those who are proud, but he acts kindly toward those who are humble.

⁶ Therefore, realizing that God has great power to punish proud people, humble yourselves in order that he may honor you at the time that he has determined. ⁷ Because he takes care of you, let him take care of all the things that you are worried about.

⁸ Always be alert and pay attention, because the devil, who is your enemy, is going around, looking for people to destroy. He is like a lion that roars as it prowls around, seeking someone to kill and devour. ⁹ You must resist him by continuing to firmly trust in Christ and his message, remembering that your fellow believers all over the world are suffering similar hardships. ¹⁰ God is the one who kindly helps us in every situation, and he is the one who chose us to share his eternal glory in heaven because we are joined to Christ. And after you have suffered for a while because of things that people do to harm you, he will remove your spiritual defects, he will strengthen you to trust him more, and he will support you in every way. ¹¹ I pray that he will rule powerfully forever. May it be so!

¹² Silas has written this letter for me as I have dictated it to him. I consider that he is a faithful fellow believer. I have written this short letter to you to encourage you, and I want to assure you that what I have written is a true message about the things that God kindly does for us, things that we do not deserve. Continue to firmly believe this message.

¹³ In this city that we sometimes call ‘Babylon,’ the believers, whom God has chosen to belong to him just like he chose you, send you their greetings. Mark, who is like a son to me, also sends you his greetings. ¹⁴ Greet each other with a kiss on the cheek to show that you love each other. I pray that God will give peace to all of you who are joined to Christ.

2 PETER

Chapter 1

¹ I, Simon Peter, am writing this letter to you. I serve Jesus Christ, and I am an apostle that he appointed. I am sending this letter to you whom God has caused to believe in Christ just like he caused us apostles to believe in Christ. You and we have the same honor of believing in Jesus Christ. He is God, he is completely just, he is the one whom we worship, and he is our Savior. ² I pray that God will continue to act very kindly toward you and give you a deep peace, because you truly know God and Jesus, who is our Lord.

³ God has given us everything that we need in order that we might live forever and honor him. He does this by his power as God, and he does this because we know him. He has also given it to us as a result of our knowing him. He is the one who chose us to be his people because he is powerful and good. ⁴ Because he is this way, he has promised us that he will do very great and priceless things for us. He has also said to you that as you believe in what he has promised, you will be able to act in a right way, just like God acts in a right way, and that you will no longer be on the way to perish because of desiring to do evil things, as the unbelievers are.

⁵ Because God has done all that, do your best not only believe in Christ, but to live good lives. And make sure that you are not only living good lives, but that you also learn more and more about God. ⁶ In addition, do your best, not only to know more and more about God, but also to control yourself in what you do and say. And make sure that you not only control what you do and say, but also that you are faithful to him. And make sure that

you are not only faithful to him, but that you also honor him. ⁷ And make sure that you do not only honor him, but that you also have a concern for your fellow believers, as brothers and sisters ought to have for each other. And make sure that you not only have a concern for your fellow believers, but that you also love others. ⁸ If you do all these things, and if you do them more and more, that shows that knowing our Lord Jesus Christ produces very great results in your lives. ⁹ But if these things are not true about people, it means they are not aware that these things are important, just like a blind person is not aware of what is around him. They think only about earthly matters, just like a shortsighted person sees clearly only things that are near. It seems that they have forgotten that God has forgiven them for their former sinful lives. ¹⁰ Instead of acting like those people, try to behave so as to make everyone know that God has chosen you to be his people. If you do that, you will certainly never become separated from God, ¹¹ and God will very wholeheartedly welcome you into the place where our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will rule his people forever.

¹² I intend to keep on reminding you very frequently about these matters, even though you already know them and are firmly convinced that they are true. ¹³ I consider it right that I should help you to continually think about these matters by reminding you about them as long as I am alive, ¹⁴ because I know that I shall die soon, just like our Lord Jesus Christ clearly has revealed to me. ¹⁵ Moreover, I will make every effort by writing these things down to enable you to remember them at all times after I have died.

¹⁶ We apostles told you that our Lord Jesus Christ is powerful and that he is coming back some day. We were not basing what

we told you on stories that we had cleverly invented. Instead, we told you what we ourselves saw with our own eyes, that the Lord Jesus is supremely great.¹⁷ God, our Father, greatly honored him when God's great light surrounded him, and he said, "This is my Son, whom I love very much; I am very pleased with him."¹⁸ We ourselves heard God say that from heaven when we were with Christ on that holy mountain.¹⁹ We are even more sure that what the prophets wrote about Christ long ago is completely reliable. Pay attention to what they wrote, because it is like a lamp that is shining in a dark place that helps people see where they are going. That light will shine until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.²⁰ It is important that you understand that no prophet could interpret by his own imagination.²¹ No prophecies come from the decision of a human being. Those who spoke messages from God did so when the Holy Spirit helped them do it. Therefore the Spirit must also help us understand what they mean.

Chapter 2

¹ Long ago, various people among the Israelites pretended to give true messages from God, and people will do the same with you. At first you will not know who they are, and they make some stop trusting in Christ; they will start thinking that the Lord is not important—although he is the one who redeemed them. But soon, God will make these false prophets perish.² And many believers will imitate how these false prophets live. In this way they will insult what is true about God.³ They will tell you lies in such a way that they will make a profit off of you. God will not wait very long before he punishes them; they will soon perish.

⁴ God destroyed the angels who sinned. He threw them into the worst place in hell and imprisoned them there in darkness in order to keep them there until he judges and punishes them.⁵ He also destroyed the people who lived in the world long ago. He saved only eight of them, including Noah, who was a righteous preacher. He did this when he destroyed by a flood all the ungodly people who were living then.⁶ He also condemned Sodom and Gomorrah cities and then burned them completely to ashes. This is a warning to those who afterwards would live so as to dishonor God.⁷ But he rescued Abraham's nephew, Lot, who was a righteous man. Lot was greatly distressed because the people in Sodom were doing very immoral deeds.⁸ That righteous man was in agony because every day he saw and heard those wicked people do things against God's law.⁹ And since the Lord God rescued Lot, you can be sure that he knows how to rescue people who honor him, and how to keep those who do not honor him ready for the time when he will punish them.¹⁰ He will punish especially severely those who do what they themselves want to do, things that make them displeasing to God. They boldly do whatever they wish to do; they even insult God's powerful angels.¹¹ But God's angels, even though they are much more powerful than those people, do not insult anyone in front of God, not even them!¹² Those people who teach false things—who are like animals that cannot think like us—they say bad things about God, whom they do not even know. So he will destroy them like we hunt down and destroy wild animals that even nature has no use for.¹³ The wrong things they do harm them themselves: They party and get drunk by day and night. They are like stains and spots on clothing that once was clean.¹⁴ They want to sleep with every

woman whom they see. They can never sin enough. They persuade people who are not very faithful to God to join with them. As athletes train for sports, these people train themselves to be greedy. But God has cursed them! ¹⁵ They refuse to live like God wants them to. They have imitated what the prophet Balaam, the son of Beor, did long ago. He thought he would act in a wicked way and gain a reward for it. ¹⁶ But God rebuked him for sinning. And even though donkeys do not speak, God used Balaam's own donkey to speak to him with a human voice and stop his insane action.

¹⁷ These people who teach falsely are like springs that give no water; they are like clouds that quickly pass overhead before they can give rain. Therefore, God has reserved the darkness of hell for those teachers. ¹⁸ They boast about themselves, but what they say is worth nothing. They persuade people who have recently become believers and who have just now ceased to do wicked things. They persuade them to sin again by doing whatever sinful people like to do. ¹⁹ They tell them that they are free to do whatever they like. But they themselves are slaves who must obey whatever their evil minds tell them to do. Certainly a person is a slave to whatever controls him. ²⁰ But suppose that you began to know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and that you stopped doing the things that kept God from accepting you. Then suppose that you began doing those same wicked things again, then you would be even worse off now than you were at first. ²¹ It would have been better for them if they had never learned how to live in the right way. But God will punish them even more, since they have rejected what he instructed them to do, what we apostles passed on to them. ²² The way in which they are behaving again is just like the proverbs that people say: "They

are like dogs that return to eat their own vomit," and, "They are like pigs that have washed themselves and then roll again in the mud."

Chapter 3

¹ This letter that I am now writing to you whom I love, is the second letter that I have written to you. I have written both these letters to you in order that by reminding you about the things you already know, I may stimulate you to think sincerely about those things. ² I want you to remember the words that were spoken by the holy prophets long ago, and also to remember what our Lord and Savior commanded, things that we, your apostles, told you about.

³ It is important for you to understand that in the time immediately before Christ comes back, people will ridicule you for saying that Christ will come back. Those people will do whatever evil deeds they wish to do. ⁴ They will say, "Although Christ promised that he would come back, he has not. Since the ancestors died, everything has remained the same. Things are as they always have been since God created the world!" ⁵ They will say this because they deliberately overlook the fact that God, by commanding long ago that it should be so, caused the heavens to exist, and he caused the earth to come up out of water and to be separate from the water. ⁶ And God, by commanding that it should be so, later destroyed the world that existed at that time, by causing the earth to be flooded with water. ⁷ Furthermore, God, by commanding that it should be so, has set apart the heavens and the earth that exist now, and they are being kept until the time when he will judge ungodly people. And at that time he will de-

stroy the heavens and the earth by burning them. ⁸ Dear friends, I want you to understand well that the Lord God is willing to wait a long time to judge the people in the world! How much time passes before the Lord God judges the people in the world does not matter to him! He considers that one day passes no more quickly than a thousand years, and he also considers that a thousand years pass as quickly as one day passes to us! ⁹ Therefore, you should not think that because Christ has not yet come back to judge people, the Lord God is delaying what he promised. Some people think that this is so, and they say that Christ never will come back. But you should understand that the reason why Christ has not yet come back to judge people is that God is being patient toward you, because he does not want anyone to be lost eternally. Instead, he wants everyone to turn away from their sinful behavior. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly. He will come like a thief comes—without warning. At that time there will be a great roaring sound. The heavens will cease to exist. The elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it that anyone has ever done will be revealed to God for him to judge.

¹¹ Because God will certainly destroy all these things like I just said, you certainly know how you should behave. You should behave in a way that honors God, ¹² while you eagerly wait for Christ to return on the day that God has appointed, and you should try to make that day come soon. Because of what God will do on that day, the heavens will perish. The elements will melt and burn up. ¹³ Although all those events will happen, we rejoice because we are waiting for the new heavens and new earth that God has promised. The only people who will be in the new heavens and on this new earth will be people who

are righteous.

¹⁴ Therefore, dear friends, because you are waiting for these things to happen, do all that you can to conduct your lives in a way that honors God, in order that Christ may see that you do not sin and that you are living peacefully with each other.

¹⁵ And think about this: Our Lord Jesus Christ is patient because he wants to save people. Our dear brother Paul also wrote wise words to you about these same matters, because God enabled him to understand these events. ¹⁶ In the letters that Paul wrote there are certain things that are difficult for people to understand. People who know nothing about God and who speak at random interpret these things wrongly, as they also interpret the other parts of the scriptures wrongly. The result is that they will lead God to punish them. ¹⁷ Therefore, dear friends, since you already know about these false teachers, guard against them. Do not let these wicked people deceive you by telling you things that are wrong. Do not let them persuade you to doubt what you now firmly believe. ¹⁸ Instead, live in such a manner that you experience more and more our Savior Jesus Christ acting kindly toward you, and that you get to know him better and better.

I pray that everyone will honor Jesus Christ both now and forever! May this truly be so!

1 JOHN

Chapter 1

¹ I, John, am writing to you about the one who existed before there was anything else. He is the one whom we apostles listened to as he taught us. We saw him. We ourselves looked at him and touched him. He is the one who taught us the message about eternal life. ² (Because he came here to the earth and we have seen him, we proclaim to you clearly that the one whom we have seen is the one who has always lived. He was previously with his Father in heaven, but he came to live among us.) ³ We are proclaiming to you the message about Jesus, the one whom we saw and heard, in order that you may join together with us. The ones with whom we have joined are God our Father and his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ I am writing to you about these things so that you will be convinced that they are true, and that as a result we may be completely joyful.

⁵ The message that we heard from God and that we are proclaiming to you is this: He never sins. He is like a brilliant light that has no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have joined together with God, but if we conduct our lives in an impure manner, that is like living in evil darkness. We are lying. We are not conducting our lives according to God's true message. ⁷ But living in a pure manner, as God is living in a pure manner in every way, is like living in God's light. If we do that, we can join together with each other, and God forgives us and accepts us because Jesus died for us. ⁸ Those who say that they have never sinned are deceiving themselves and are refusing to believe what God says about them. ⁹ But God always does what he says he will do, and what he does is al-

ways right. So if we admit to him that we have sinned, he will forgive us for our sins and will free us from the guilt of everything we have done wrong. Because of that, we should admit to him that we have sinned. ¹⁰ Because God says that everyone has sinned, those who say that they have never sinned talk as though God lies! They reject what God says about us!

Chapter 2

¹ You who are as dear to me as my own children, I am writing this to you to keep you from sinning. But if any of you believers does sin, remember that Jesus Christ, the righteous one, pleads with the Father for him to forgive us. ² Jesus Christ voluntarily sacrificed his own life for us, so that as a result God forgives our sins. Yes, God is able to forgive our sins, but not only ours. He is also able to forgive the sins of people everywhere!

³ I will tell you how we can be sure that we know God. If we obey what he commands us to do, that shows us that we are joined together with him. ⁴ Those who say, "We know God," and do not obey what God commands us to do, are liars. They are not conducting their lives according to God's true message. ⁵ But those who obey what God commands them to do are the people who love God in every way. This is how we can be sure that we are joined with God. ⁶ If we say that we are in union with God, we should conduct our lives as Christ did.

⁷ Dear friends, I am not writing that you must do something new. Instead, I am writing something that you have known to do since you first believed in Christ. This is part of the message that you have always heard. ⁸ But I will say something again to you on this same topic: I can say

that I am telling you to do something new. It is new because what Christ did was new, and what you are doing is new. This is because you are ceasing to do evil and you are doing more and more good. It is like when night passes away and day dawns, the true day of Christ. ⁹ Those who claim that they are like people who live in the light, but who hate any of their fellow believers, are still like people who live in darkness. ¹⁰ But those who love their fellow believers behave like people who are living in the light; they have no reason to sin. ¹¹ Those who hate any of their fellow believers are still like people who are living in darkness, unaware of what is true about God.

¹² I am writing this to you whom I love as though you were my own children. God has forgiven your sins because of what Christ has done for you. ¹³ I am writing to you believers who are older than the others. You have known Christ, who has always lived. I am also writing to you young men; you have defeated Satan, the evil one. And I am writing to you little children, because you know God the Father.

¹⁴ I will say it again: I am writing this to you older men because you have come to know Christ, the one who has always existed. And I am writing to you young men, because you are strong and you continue to obey what God commands, and because you have defeated Satan, the evil one.

¹⁵ Do not behave like the people in the world who do not honor God. Do not desire the things they want to have. If anyone lives like they live, they are proving they do not love God our Father. ¹⁶ I am writing this, because all the wrong things that people do, all the things that people see and try to obtain for themselves, and all the things that they boast about—all these things have nothing to do with our Father in heaven. They belong to the

world. ¹⁷ The people in the world who do not honor God, along with everything that they desire, will disappear. But those who do what God wants them to do will live forever!

¹⁸ You who are very dear to me, it is now just before Jesus returns to earth. You have already heard that the person who will pretend to be Christ is coming; actually, many such persons have already arrived—but they are all against Christ. Because of this, we know that Christ will return very soon. ¹⁹ These people refused to remain in our congregations, but they never really belonged with us in the first place. When they left us, we clearly saw that they had never joined with us. ²⁰

But as for you, Christ, the one who is holy, has given you his Spirit; it is his Spirit who teaches you all the truth. ²¹ I am writing this letter to you, not because you do not know the truth about God, but because you do know what it is. You also know that God teaches us nothing that is false; instead, he teaches us only what is true.

²² The worst liars are the ones who deny that Jesus is the Christ. All who do this are against Christ, because they refuse to believe in the Father and the Son. ²³ Those who refuse to acknowledge that Jesus is God's Son are in no way joined with the Father, but those who acknowledge that Christ is the Son of God are also joined with Father. ²⁴ So, as for you, you must continue to believe the truth about Jesus Christ that you first heard, and to live according to it. If you do that, you will stay joined to the Son and the Father. ²⁵ And what God told us is that he will cause us to live forever!

²⁶ I have written this to you to warn you about those who want to deceive you concerning the truth about Christ. ²⁷ As for you, God's Spirit, whom you received from Christ, remains in you. So you do

not need anyone else to be your teacher. God's Spirit is teaching you everything that you need to know. He always teaches the truth and never says anything that is false. So continue to live in the way that he has taught you, and remain joined with him.

²⁸ Now, my dear ones, I urge you to continue to remain joined with Christ. We need to do that in order that we may be confident that he will accept us when he comes back again. If we do that, we will not be ashamed when we stand before him when he comes. ²⁹ Since you know that Christ always does what is right, you know that all those who continue doing what is right are the ones who have become God's children.

Chapter 3

¹ Think about how much our Father loves us: He allows us to say that we are his children. And this is indeed true. But people who are unbelievers have not understood who God is. So they do not understand who we are, that we are God's children. ² Dear friends, even though at present we are God's children, he has not yet shown us what we will be like in the future. However, we know that when Christ comes back again, we will become like him, because we will see him face to face. ³ So all those who confidently expect to see Christ face to face, will keep themselves from sinning, just like Christ, who never sins. ⁴ But everyone who continues to sin is refusing to obey God's laws, because that is what sin is, refusing to obey God's laws. ⁵ You know that Christ came in order to completely remove the guilt of our sins. You know also that he never sinned. ⁶ Those who continue doing what Christ wants them to do, do not continue sinning

repeatedly. But those who repeatedly sin have not understood who Christ is, nor have they truly joined with him. ⁷ So I urge you who are very dear to me, do not let anyone deceive you by telling you that it is all right to sin. If you continue doing what is right, you are righteous, just like Christ is righteous. ⁸ But anyone who continues to sin repeatedly is like the devil, because the devil has always been sinning since the world began. And the reason why God's Son became a human being was to destroy what the devil has done. ⁹ People do not continue sinning repeatedly if they have become children of God. They cannot continually sin because God has made them his children, and he has put into them what he himself is like. ¹⁰ Those who are God's children are clearly different from those who are the devil's children. The way that we can know who are Satan's children is this: Those who do not do what is right are not God's children. And those who do not love their fellow believers are not God's children.

¹¹ The message that you heard when you first believed in Christ is that we should love each other. ¹² We should not hate others as did Adam's son, Cain, who belonged to Satan, the evil one. Because Cain hated his younger brother, he murdered him. I will tell you about why he murdered his brother. It was because Cain habitually behaved in an evil way, and he hated his younger brother because his younger brother behaved in the right way. ¹³ You should not be amazed when unbelievers hate you. ¹⁴ Because we love our fellow believers, we know that God has made us to live forever with him. But God regards anyone who does not love their fellow believer as a person who is not living in life but is living under the power of death. ¹⁵ God treats anyone who hates their fellow believers as though they had done something just as bad as committing murder.

Anyone who does not love his brother is living for death, not life. ¹⁶ The way that we now know how to truly love our fellow believers is by remembering that Christ died for us of his own free will. So in the same way, we should do anything for our fellow believers, even die for them.

¹⁷ Many of us have the things that are necessary for us to live in this world. If we become aware that any of our fellow believers do not have what they need and if we refuse to provide for them, it is clear that we do not love God as we claim to do. ¹⁸ I am saying to you whom I love dearly, let us not merely say we love each other; let us love each other by helping each other.

¹⁹ If we truly love our fellow believers, we can be sure that we are living according to the true message about Christ. As a result, we will not feel guilty in the presence of God. ²⁰ We can pray confidently, because although we might feel guilty because we have done wrong, God deserves for us to trust him. He knows everything about us.

²¹ Dear friends, if our minds do not accuse us of having sinned, then we can pray confidently to God. ²² When we confidently pray to him and request something from him, we receive it because we do what he commands us to do, and because we do what pleases him. ²³ I will tell you what he commands us to do: We must believe that Jesus Christ is his Son. We must also love each other, just as God commanded us to do. ²⁴ Those who do what God commands are those who are joined with God, and God is joined with them. And it is because we have his Spirit, whom he gave to us, that we can be sure that God is joined with us.

Chapter 4

¹ Dear friends, many people who have a false message are teaching it to peo-

ple. But you must think carefully about what you hear them teach, so that you may know whether they are teaching the truth that comes from God or not. ² I will tell you how to know whether someone is teaching truth that comes from the Spirit of God. Those who affirm that Jesus Christ came from God to become a human like us are teaching a message that is from God. ³ But those who do not affirm that truth about Jesus are not teaching a message from God. They are teachers who oppose Christ. You have heard that people like that are coming among us. Even now they are already here.

⁴ As for you who are very dear to me, you belong to God, and you have refused to believe what those people teach, because God, who enables you to do what he wants, is greater. ⁵ As for those who are teaching what is false, they belong with all the people in the world who refuse to honor God. That is why what they say comes from those same people, and those same people listen to them. ⁶ As for us, we belong to God. Whoever knows God listens to what we teach, but whoever does not belong to God does not listen to what we teach. This is how we can distinguish between people who teach truth about God, and those who deceive others.

⁷ Dear friends, we must love each other, because God enables us to love each other, and because those who love their fellow believers have become God's children and know him. ⁸ God shows his love to people. So those who do not love their fellow believers do not know God. ⁹ I will tell you how God has shown us that he loves us: He sent his only Son to live on the earth to enable us to live eternally because of him. ¹⁰ And God has shown us what it means to truly love another person: It does not mean that we loved God, but that God loved us. So he sent his Son to

sacrifice himself, in order that he—God—may forgive us when we sin.¹¹ Dear friends, since God loves us like that, we certainly ought to love each other!

¹² No one has ever seen God. Nevertheless, if we love each other, it is clear that God lives within us and that we love others just like he intends us to do.¹³ I will tell you how we can be sure that we are joined with God and that God is joined with us: He has put his Spirit within us.¹⁴ We apostles have seen God's Son, and we solemnly tell others that the Father sent him to save the people in the world from suffering eternally for their sins.¹⁵ So God remains joined with those who say the truth about Jesus. They say, "He is the Son of God." And so they remain joined with God.¹⁶ We have experienced how God loves us and we believe that he loves us. As a result, we love others. Because God's nature is to love people, those who continue to love others are joined with God, and God is joined with them.¹⁷ We should love others completely. And if we do that, when the time comes for God to judge us, we will be confident that he will not condemn us. We will be confident of that because we are living in this world joined to God, as Christ himself is joined to God.¹⁸ We will not be afraid of God if we truly love him, because those who love God completely cannot possibly be afraid of him. We would be afraid only if we thought that he would punish us. So those who are afraid of God certainly are not loving God completely.¹⁹ We love God and our fellow believers because God loved us first.²⁰ So those who say "I love God" but hate a fellow believer are lying. Those who do not love one of their fellow believers, whom they have seen, certainly cannot be loving God, whom they have not seen.²¹ Keep in mind that this is what God has commanded us: If we love him, we must also love our fellow believers.

Chapter 5

¹ All those who believe that Jesus is the Christ are children of God, born from God. And whoever loves anyone who is a father certainly loves his child also.² We can be sure that we truly love God's children when we love God and do what he commands us to do.³ I am saying this because what loving God really means is that we do what he commands. Also, it is not difficult to do what he commands.⁴ All of us whom God has caused to become his children have been able to refuse to do what unbelievers want us to do. We are stronger than everything that is against God. We are able to refuse to do wrong because we trust in Christ.⁵ Who is the person who is stronger than everything that is against God? It is anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶ Think about Jesus Christ. He is the one who came to earth from God. God showed that he had truly sent Jesus when John baptized Jesus in water, but also when Jesus' blood flowed from his body when he died. And God's Spirit declares truthfully that Jesus Christ came from God.⁷ These three are like three witnesses who give testimony:⁸ God's Spirit, the water and the blood. These three all tell us the same thing.⁹ We usually believe what other people tell us. But we can certainly trust much more in what God says. And he has certainly testified about his Son.¹⁰ Those who trust in the Son of God know within their inner beings what is true about him. But those who do not believe what God says call him a liar, because they have refused to believe what God has testified about his Son.¹¹ This is what God says to us: "I have given you eternal life." We will live forever if we are joined with his Son.¹² Those who are joined with God's Son will live forever with God. Those who

are not joined with him will not live forever.

¹³ I have written this letter to you who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, in order that you may know that you will live forever. ¹⁴ Because we are joined with him, we are very confident that he hears us when we ask him to do anything he approves of. ¹⁵ Also, if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—then we can be sure that we will receive whatever we asked from him.

¹⁶ Suppose you see one of our fellow believers sinning in a way that would not separate them from God, and when you see sinning, you should ask God and pray that God will give that person life—that is, to that person who is not committing a sin that would separate him from God. But there are some people who sin in a way that causes them to be separated from God forever. I am not saying you should ask God to help people who sin in that way. ¹⁷ Everything that is wrong is a sin against God, but not every bad thing we do can separate us from God forever. ¹⁸ We know that if a person is a child of God, he does not keep sinning again and again. Instead, the Son of God protects him so that Satan, the evil one, does not harm him. ¹⁹ We know that we belong to God, and we know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. ²⁰ We also know that the Son of God has come among us and has enabled us to understand the truth; we are joined to him who is true, God's Son Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is truly God, and he is the one who enables us to have eternal life.

²¹ I say to you who are very dear to me, guard yourselves from worshiping gods that have no real power.

2 JOHN

Chapter 1

¹ You all know me as the chief Elder. I am writing this letter to you believers, the congregation that I love so much. God has chosen you, and I love you because what we know about Christ is true! Not only do I myself love you, but all those who know and accept the true message that Jesus taught also love you! ² This is because all of us believe God's true message. It is in our inner beings and we will continue to believe it forever! ³ God the Father and Jesus Christ, who is his Son, will continue to act kindly and mercifully toward us because they love us. They will enable us to have peace, because they truly love us.

⁴ I am very happy because I have learned that some of you are living according to the truth that God has taught us. this is just what our Father commanded us to do.

⁵ And now, dear congregation, I beg you to obey what he has commanded us to do. This is why I am writing to you. What he commanded—that we should love each other—is nothing new; instead, it was when we first believed in Christ that we learned that we should love each other.

⁶ This is what it means to love God and each other—we should obey what God commands us to do. What he commands us to do is love him and each other.

⁷ Many people who deceive others have left your congregation and have now gone out among other people in your area. They are the ones who refuse to believe that Jesus Christ became human. They are the ones who deceive others and oppose Christ himself. ⁸ So be careful that you do not let those teachers deceive you! If you let them deceive you, you will lose

the reward which we, together with you, have been working for, and you will not receive the complete reward of being eternally united to God! ⁹ Those who change what Christ taught and do not continue to believe what he taught are not joined with God. But those who continue to believe what Christ taught are joined with both God, our Father, and with his Son. ¹⁰ So when anyone comes to you who teaches something different from what Christ taught, do not welcome him into your homes! Do not encourage him by greeting him or wishing him well in any way! ¹¹ I say that because if you treat people like that as you would treat a fellow believer, you are helping them do their evil deeds.

¹² Even though I have much more that I want to tell you, I have decided not to say it in a letter. Instead, I expect to be with you soon and talk directly with you. Then we can be completely joyful together. ¹³ Your fellow believers in the congregation here, whom God has also chosen, all greet you.

3 JOHN

Chapter 1

¹ You know me as the chief Elder. I am writing this letter to you, my dear friend Gaius, whom I truly love. ² Dear friend, I ask God that things may go well for you in every way, and that you may be physically healthy just as you are healthy in respect to God. ³ I am very happy because some fellow believers have come here and told me that you live in accordance with the true message about Christ. They said that you are behaving in a manner that is consistent with God's truth. ⁴ I am very happy when I hear that people whom I helped to believe in Christ are living in a way that matches God's truth! ⁵ Dear friend, you are serving Jesus loyally whenever you do things to help fellow believers, even strangers whom you do not know, who are traveling around doing God's work. ⁶ Some of them have reported before the congregation here how you have showed that you love them. You should continue to help such people do their work in a way that honors God.

⁷ When those fellow believers went out to tell people about Jesus, they received no money from people who do not believe in Christ. ⁸ So we who believe in Christ ought to give food and money to such people as these, to work with them to help others know God's true message.

⁹ I wrote a letter to your group of believers to tell them to help those other believers. However, Diotrephes does not accept my letter, because he wants to dominate you. ¹⁰ So when I arrive there I will publicly tell everyone what he does: He tells others evil nonsense about us in order to harm us by what he says. He is not content with only doing that, but he

himself also refuses to welcome the fellow believers who are traveling around doing God's work. And those who want to welcome them—he stops them by making them leave the congregation.

¹¹ Dear friend, do not imitate a bad example like that. Instead, keep imitating good examples. Remember that people who do good deeds truly belong to God. Anyone who keeps doing what is bad has never seen God.

¹² All the believers who know Demetrius say that he is a good person. If the truth were a person, he would say the same thing! We also say he is a good person, and you know that what we say about him is true.

¹³ When I began to write this letter, I had much more than I intended to tell you. But now I do not want to say it in a letter.

¹⁴ Instead, I expect to come and see you soon. Then we will talk directly with one another. ¹⁵ May God give his peace to you. The friends here send you greetings. Please give our greetings to all our friends there, personally and by name.

JUDE

Chapter 1

¹ I am Jude. I am a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother to James. I am writing to you whom God has called to him, to you whom God the Father loves, to you whom he is keeping for Jesus Christ. ² May God have much mercy on you. May he give you much peace, and may he love you very much.

³ You whom I love, I tried very hard to write a letter to you about how God has saved us all together. I needed to write to encourage you to do your best to speak for the true things that we believe. These are things that God has taught to all those who trust in Christ. These things will never change. ⁴ There are men who are creeping into your assemblies; they are like the wicked men the prophets wrote about long ago—they teach false things and they twist the grace of God into giving permission to commit sexual sin. In this way they oppose what is true about Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord.

⁵ Although you previously knew all these things, there are certain things about which I desire to remind you. Do not forget that although the Lord rescued his people from Egypt, he later destroyed most of those same people, those people who did not believe in him. ⁶ Also, there were many angels to whom God assigned positions of authority in heaven. But they did not continue to rule with authority in those positions. Instead, they abandoned those places. So God has put those angels in chains forever in darkness in hell. They will stay there until the important day in which God will judge and punish them. ⁷ Similarly, the people who lived in Sodom and Gomorrah cities and the

nearby cities committed sexual immorality. They sought all kinds of sexual relations that differ from what God permits. So God destroyed their cities. What happened to those people and those angels in heaven shows that God will punish people, such as the ones who teach false doctrine, in the eternal fire of hell. ⁸ Similarly, these people in your midst also defile their own bodies by living immorally. They say that God has sent them visions that tell them to do this. But they do not obey God's commands, and they insult his wonderful angels.

⁹ Even when Michael the archangel argued with Satan about who would take possession of Moses' body, he kept from insulting and condemning him; he merely said, "May the Lord punish you!" ¹⁰ But these people about whom I am writing say evil words about everything good that they do not understand. They are just like wild animals that cannot think, because all the things that they are naturally able to understand destroy them.

¹¹ God will punish very severely those who do these things. They behave like Cain did. They commit the same sin as the sin Balaam committed for money, and they will die like Korah, who rebelled against Moses. ¹² These people are like rocks under the water that ships crash against. When they share in your love feasts, they have no shame, because they eat only to please themselves. They are like clouds that give no rain, clouds that the wind pushes along. They do no good deeds, for they are like trees in late autumn that bear no fruit. They are like people who have died two times; they are like trees that have been uprooted. ¹³ They do not control themselves. They are like the sea's strong waves in a storm, and they pollute others with their shame, just as the waves bring up foam and dirt onto the

beaches. They are like stars that do not stay where they should in the sky. God will put them in very great darkness forever.

¹⁴ Enoch, the seventh person in the line of people who descended from Adam, said this about those teachers of false doctrine: "Listen carefully to this: The Lord will certainly come with a countless number of his saints. ¹⁵ They will judge everyone and will punish all wicked people, and all who dishonor God. The angels will do this, because of all the harsh things that these people have spoken against God." ¹⁶ These teachers of false doctrine grumble about the things that God does. They complain about what happens to them. They do the evil things because they wish to do them. They talk boastfully. They praise people in order to get things from them.

¹⁷ But you people whom I love, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ said long ago. ¹⁸ They told you, "Just before the last day, some people will laugh at the true things that God has told us. They will commit the sins with their bodies that they wish to commit because they dishonor God." ¹⁹ These are the people who make believers angry with each other. They do all the wicked things that they want to do. The Spirit of God does not live within them.

²⁰ But you people whom I love, strengthen each other using the truth about God that you believe. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in the way to pray. ²¹ Keep conducting your lives in a way that is right for those whom God loves. Keep constantly expecting that our Lord Jesus Christ will act mercifully toward you. Keep expecting that until the time when we begin living eternally with him.

²² Be kind to those who are not certain about what teachings they should believe, and help them. ²³ Keep others from going

into the fire of everlasting punishment. Be kind to people who sin, but be afraid to join them in those sins. Instead, hate even their clothing, because it is made dirty by their sins.

²⁴ God is able to keep you trusting in him. He will also take you into his presence, where there is brilliant light. You will rejoice very much and be free from sin. ²⁵ He is the only true God. He has saved us as a result of what Jesus Christ our Lord did for us. God was glorious, great, and mighty, and he ruled with great authority before time began. He is still like that, and he will remain like that forever! Amen!

REVELATION

Chapter 1

¹ This book has the things that Jesus Christ showed to me, John. God showed these things to Jesus in order that he might pass them on to his servants. These things will happen soon. Jesus communicated these things by sending his angel to me, his servant John. ² As a witness I, John, reported everything I saw and heard about the word of God, and the true accounts that were given about Jesus Christ. ³ God will do good to anyone who reads these words and to any who hear them when they are being read aloud. He will do good to those who listen carefully to them and obey them, for the time when these things happen is approaching quickly.

⁴ I, John, am writing this letter to the seven groups of believers in the province of Asia. May God be kind to you and give you peace, for he is the one who has always existed, who exists now, and who will always exist in the future. May the seven spirits who are sitting in front of his throne do these things for you, too. ⁵ May Jesus Christ—who has faithfully told us the truth about God and—also be kind to you and give you peace. For he is the first one whom God raised from the dead, and he is the one who rules the kings of the earth. He is the one who loves us and who has freed us from the guilt of our sins by his blood when he died on the cross. ⁶ He is the one who has begun to rule over his kingdom; he has set us apart to be priests who worship God his Father as he commanded. It is Jesus Christ whom we must honor and praise forever. This is the truth.

⁷ Look! Christ is coming in the clouds. Everyone will see him, including those who

killed him by nailing him to a cross. Every tribe on the earth will be in sorrow and grief when they see him coming. That is the truth! ⁸ The Lord God declares, “I am the one who began all things, the Alpha, and I am the one who will cause all things to end, the Omega. I am the one who exists, who has always existed, and who will always exist. I am the One who rules over everything and everyone.”

⁹ I, John, your fellow believer, am suffering as you are because Jesus rules over us. We share together the call to suffer for our faith. We are part of his reign and rule over all things, and we are patiently enduring every trial and test that comes. I was imprisoned and sent to the Island of Patmos because I kept telling people about God’s message and the truth about Jesus.

¹⁰ On one of the days we worship the Lord with other believers, God’s Spirit took control of me. Then I heard behind me someone speaking. His voice was like a trumpet that was being played. ¹¹ He said to me, “Write on a scroll what you see, and send it to seven groups of believers. Send it to the believers in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.” ¹² When I heard these words, I turned to see who was speaking. Then I saw seven golden lampstands.

¹³ In the middle of the lampstands there was someone who looked like a human being. He wore a robe that reached to his feet and a golden sash around his chest.

¹⁴ The hair on his head was as white as wool or fresh fallen snow. His eyes were like a brilliant flame. ¹⁵ His feet looked like gleaming bronze. When he spoke, his voice had the volume and depth of a great river of rushing water. ¹⁶ He was holding seven stars in his right hand. A sword with two sharp edges was coming out of his mouth. His face shone as bright as the sun at midday. ¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell down at his feet as though I were

dead. But he put his right hand on me and said to me, "Do not be afraid! I am the First One who began all things and the Last One who causes all things to end.¹⁸ I am alive, even though I died once, and indeed, I am alive forever! I have power over death and I control the place of the dead.¹⁹ So write down what you have seen. And write down what is happening now. And write down what will happen in the future.²⁰ The meaning of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars represent the angels who watch over the seven groups of believers in Asia, and the seven lampstands represent the seven groups that are there."

Chapter 2

¹ "Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Ephesus: The one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, and the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands says this:² 'I know all you have done. I know that you work hard for me. I know you are patient when you go through hard times. I also know that you cannot tolerate people who are evil, and that you question people about their faith, and you know those who claim to be apostles, but they are not.³ I know also that you endure patiently when you suffer for believing in me and that you continue to serve me steadfastly, even when people caused you to suffer because you followed me. You have continued to serve and hold to my words even when it was difficult. You did not give up or stop, even though it has been difficult for you.⁴ Nevertheless, you have done something wrong: You no longer love each other and me as you did when you first came to trust. You do not have the same love for me now that you had at first.⁵ So, I tell you to re-

member how you used to love me. Love me again like you did at the first. If you do not, I will come to you and remove your lamp so you will no longer be my people together.⁶ But you do one thing very well: Those Nicolaitans, the people who say you can worship idols and act immorally—you hate what they do, just as I hate it.⁷ Everyone who wants to understand my message must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together. The message is this: I will allow those who are victorious to eat fruit from the tree that gives eternal life, the tree that is in God's garden."⁸

⁸ "Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Smyrna: 'I am saying these things to you. I am the first, the one who began all things and I am the last, who causes all things to end. I am the one who died and became alive again.⁹ I know about how you have suffered. I know about how you are poor and lack many things that you need (but you are really rich in the things that are eternal and that can never be taken from you). You know what it is like to have people curse you and say terrible things about you because you follow Christ. Those Jews (who are not real Jews) who curse you and say terrible things about you, they are members of the gathering of Satan, and not the gathering of God's people.¹⁰ Do not be afraid of any of the things that you are about to suffer. The truth is that the devil is about to put some of you in prison, to put you in a difficult place where you are being tested to see what kind of faith you have. For a short period of time you will suffer. Continue to trust in me, even if they kill you because you trust in me. and I will put a wreath on your head that will be a sign that you have eternal life and that you have overcome.¹¹ Listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit

speaks to the groups of believers assembled together. All who conquer will never die a second time.””

¹² “Write this message to the angel of the group of believers in the city of Pergamum: ‘I am saying these things to you. I am the one who has the sword with two sharp edges. ¹³ I know that you live where Satan’s power is strong and his influence is everywhere. I know that you firmly believe, and you hold on to what I love and what is important to me—even when they killed my faithful servant Antipas, who had kept telling people who I am and what I did for them. ¹⁴ But, even so, I see some matters that are hurting your testimony and weakening your obedience. You permit some of your members to teach things like Balaam taught long ago. He taught Balak to eat food that had been offered to idols and that sexual immorality was permitted among God’s people. ¹⁵ In that way, you are also permitting some of your members to practice what the Nicolaitans teach, that sexual immorality is permitted, which, of course, it is not permitted. ¹⁶ Stop doing this and change your direction, or I will come to you suddenly and I will make war against them with the sword in my mouth, the word of God. ¹⁷ Listen carefully to the message that God’s Spirit speaks to the groups of believers. To him who conquers, I will give the hidden manna, that will feed and strengthen you and I will also give him a white stone, on which I will engrave a new name for him, and the name I give him only he will know.””

¹⁸ “Write this message to the angel of the group of believers assembled together in the city of Thyatira: ‘I, the Son of God, whose eyes shine like a flame of fire and whose feet shine like gleaming bronze, am saying these things to you. ¹⁹ I know all the good things that you do. I know that

you love me and each other, and that you trust in me. I know that you serve others and that you steadfastly endure a lot of difficulties. I know that you are doing these things more now than you did in the past. ²⁰ Nevertheless, you have done something wrong: You tolerate that woman among your people who is like that wicked Queen Jezebel who lived long ago. She says that she is a prophetess. However, by what she teaches, she is deceiving my servants. She is urging them to commit sexual immorality and to eat food that they have offered to idols. ²¹ Although I gave her time to turn away from her sexual immorality and pagan practices, she did not want to stop. ²² As a result, I will cause her to become very ill. I will also cause those who act immorally as she does to suffer greatly, if they do not stop doing what she does. ²³ Some have become like her children by accepting what she teaches, and I will certainly kill them. Then all the groups of believers will learn that I am the one who finds out what everyone thinks and desires. I will reward each of you according to what you have done. ²⁴ But I have something good to say about the rest of you believers in the city of Thyatira. It is good that you do not accept these wrong things. It is good that you reject what those teachers call their “secret practices” that Satan taught them. I will not burden you with any other commands. ²⁵ Just keep believing firmly in me and obey me until I come. ²⁶ As for those who conquer Satan and who keep on doing what I command until they die, I will give them my authority over all people. ²⁷ They will control them as if they were striking them with an iron rod. They will destroy evildoers just as people shatter clay pots. ²⁸ I do all of this with the authority my Father gave me, and I will give the morning star to those who rule with me so that we may have great joy in our victory. ²⁹ Everyone

who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together.”

Chapter 3

¹ "Write this message to the angel of the group of believers assembled in the city of Sardis. 'I am saying these things to you. I am the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know everything that you have done. You appear to be alive, but you are dead. ² Be alert! Do more work for me, or what you have already done will become worthless. You must do this because my God knows that you have not done enough. ³ So then, keep remembering God's message and the truth that you accepted when you heard it. Always obey it and turn away from your sinful behavior. If you do not do this, I will come to you when you are not expecting me, as a thief comes. You will never know at what time I will come to judge you. ⁴ Nevertheless, you have a few believers there in the city of Sardis who have not been doing what is wrong. It is as though they have not dirtied their garments. As a result, because they are worthy to live with me, they will live with me and will be pure in every way, like people who are dressed in pure white clothing. ⁵ Those who conquer Satan I will dress in these same white garments. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life that contains the names of the people who have eternal life. Instead, I will acknowledge in the presence of my Father and his angels that they belong to me . ⁶ Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together.”

⁷ "Write this message to the angel of the

group of believers assembled in the city of Philadelphia: 'I am saying these things to you. I am the One who is holy, the True One. Just as King David had authority to allow people to enter the ancient city of Jerusalem, so I have the authority to allow people to enter my kingdom. I am the one who opens doors so that no one can close them and the one who closes doors so that no one can open them. ⁸ I know everything you have done. Be aware that I have opened a door for you that no one can close. I know that although you have little power, you have obeyed what I say, and you have not denied that you believe in me. ⁹ Be careful! I am aware that some of your people meet together with those who follow Satan. They claim to be Jews, but I know that they are not true Jews. They are lying. I will cause them to come to you and to bow down humbly at your feet and to acknowledge that I love you.

¹⁰ Because you have obeyed me when I commanded you to endure suffering patiently, I will keep you safe from those who will try to make you disobey me. They will soon do this to everyone in the entire world. ¹¹ I am coming soon. So continue to do what I have told you, in order that no one may cause you to lose your reward that God has reserved for you. ¹² I will make those who conquer Satan secure. They will be firm like the pillars in the temple of my God, and they will remain there forever. I will mark them with the name of my God, showing that they belong to him. I will also mark them with the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, the city that will descend out of heaven from my God. I will also mark them with my new name, showing that they belong to me. ¹³ Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together.”

¹⁴ "Write this message to the angel of the group of believers assembled in the city of Laodicea: 'I am saying these things to you. I am the one who guarantees all of God's promises. I am the one who testifies about God reliably and accurately. I am the ruler over all of God's creation. ¹⁵ I know everything that you have done: You do not deny that you trust in me, but you do not love me much. You are like water that is neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ Because you were not hot and also you were not cold, I am about to reject you, as if I were spitting lukewarm water out of my mouth. ¹⁷ You are saying, 'I am rich and have acquired a lot of wealth. I lack nothing!' But you do not realize that you are lacking in many ways. You are like people who are very wretched and pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ I advise you to obtain from me all that you need, as though you were buying from me pure gold so that you may be truly rich. Let me make you righteous, as though you were buying from me white garments so that you might wear clothes instead of being naked and ashamed. Let me help you to understand the truth, as though you were buying from me eye salve to put on sick eyes. ¹⁹ Since I rebuke and correct all those whom I love, turn away with all your heart from your sinful behavior. ²⁰ I am here! I am calling each one, and I am standing and waiting at your door and knocking on the door. If you hear my voice and you open the door, I will come in and we will eat together as friends. ²¹ I will permit everyone who conquers Satan to sit and rule with me on my throne, just as I conquered Satan and now sit and rule with my Father on his throne. ²² Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to the message that God's Spirit is saying to the groups of believers assembled together.'"

Chapter 4

¹ After these things I, John, saw in the vision that there was a door open in heaven. The one whose voice was like a loud trumpet, the one who had spoken to me previously, said to me, "Come up here! I will show you events that must happen later." ² Immediately I experienced that God's Spirit was specially controlling me. There was a throne there in heaven, and on the throne someone was sitting and ruling. ³ His appearance shone like a brilliant crystalline jasper jewel and like a brilliant red carnelian jewel. Around the throne was a rainbow that shone like a brilliant green emerald jewel. ⁴ Around the throne there were twenty-four other thrones. On these thrones twenty-four elders were sitting. They were wearing pure white garments and had golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne there came lightning and rumblings and thundering. In front of the throne were burning seven torches, which represent the seven spirits of God. ⁶ In front of the throne there was also what looked like a sea made of glass. It was clear, like crystal. On each of the four sides of the throne there was a living creature. Each one was covered with eyes in front and behind. ⁷⁻⁸ The first living creature was like a lion. The second living creature was like an ox. The third living creature had a face like a man's face. The fourth living creature was like an eagle that was flying. Each of the four living creatures had six wings. These wings were covered with eyes both top and bottom. Day and night they constantly say:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, who rules over all.

He is the one who has always existed,
who exists now, and who will always exist."

9-10 The living creatures praise, honor, and thank the one who sits on the throne, the one who lives forever. Whenever they do that, the twenty-four elders lie down on the ground before the one who sits on the throne. They worship him, the one who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns in front of the throne and say:

11 "Our Lord and God,

you are worthy that all beings should praise you;

you are worthy that all beings honor you; and

you are worthy that all beings acknowledge

that you are the powerful one.

Because you alone created all things.

Moreover, because you intended that they should exist,

you created them; as a result, they exist."

King David, has overcome Satan! As a result, he is worthy to break the seven seals on the scroll and to open it!"⁶ Then I saw a Lamb standing there in the midst of the four living creatures and the elders around the throne. Although he was alive, he had marks that showed that someone had killed him. He had seven horns, and he had seven eyes that are the seven spirits of God that God sends out over all the earth.⁷ The Lamb came and took the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne.⁸ When he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders prostrated themselves before him. They each had a harp, and they had golden bowls full of incense that represents the prayers of God's people.⁹ The living creatures and the elders sang a new song. They sang:

"You are worthy to receive the scroll and to open its seals

because you were killed, and because you redeemed

people for God from every tribe, language, people,

and people group with your blood when you died.

10 You have caused them to become a people over whom our God rules

and to become priests who serve him; they will rule on the earth."

11 As I continued to look, I heard the voices of many angels around the throne and around the living creatures and the elders. There were millions of them, a crowd so large that no one could count them.¹² They were singing in a loud voice:

"The Lamb whom they killed—

it is right that we should praise his power, wealth, wisdom, and strength.

It is right that all created things should honor him and praise him!"

Chapter 5

1 I saw that there was a scroll in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne. The scroll was written on its outside as well as on its inside, and it was sealed with seven seals.² I saw a strong angel who was announcing in a loud voice, "The person who is worthy to break the seals of the scroll and then to open it should come and do it!"³ But no created being in heaven, on the earth, or under it was able to open the scroll and see what was written on it.⁴ I wept loudly because there was no one worthy to do that.⁵ But one of the elders said to me, "Do not cry any longer! Look, the one who is called the Lion from the tribe of Judah, who is the descendant and heir of

¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea say,

"We must forever praise, honor, and glorify the one who sits on the throne
and the lamb.

May they reign with complete power forever!"

¹⁴ The four living creatures said, "May it be so!" Then the elders prostrated themselves on the ground and worshiped God and the lamb.

to buy it. Also make it happen that three liters of barley will sell for the same price. But do not reduce the supply of olive oil or wine." ⁷ Then the Lamb opened the fourth seal, and I heard the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸ This time I saw a pale horse appear. Someone was riding it; his name was "The one who causes people to die." Someone else was following him; this person's name was "The place where dead people go." God gave these two persons power to kill one-fourth of all people on earth. They could kill them with weapons, or with famine, or with sickness, or with wild animals.

⁹ Then the Lamb opened the fifth seal, and I saw under the altar in heaven the spirits of God's servants whom others had killed because these servants had believed God's message, the message to which God himself bore witness. ¹⁰ They loudly asked God, "Sovereign Lord, you are holy and true. How long will it be before you condemn and punish the people on earth who murdered us?" ¹¹ Then God gave to each of them a white robe, and he told them to be patient a little longer. They should be patient until the number of those who also served the Lord with them—who were their brothers and sisters in Christ—would be killed just like they themselves had been killed because of their faith.

¹² Then I saw the Lamb open the sixth seal, and the earth shook violently. The sun became as black as cloth made of black wool. The whole moon became red like blood. ¹³ Stars fell to the earth in great numbers, just as immature figs fall when a fig tree shakes in a strong wind. ¹⁴ The sky split open and rolled up on either side just as an old scroll rolls up when it is split in two. Every mountain and island was shaken out of its place. ¹⁵ As a result, all the people on earth, including kings, high-ranking people, generals, rich peo-

Chapter 6

¹ I saw the Lamb open the first of the seven seals of the scroll. Then one of the four living creatures said in a voice as loud as thunder, "Come!" ² and a white horse appeared. There was someone riding it, and he had a bow and arrows. God gave him a wreath of leaves to wear on his head to show that he was to conquer evil. He went out to continue to do battle and to win. ³ Then the one looking like a Lamb opened the second seal, and I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" ⁴ When he said that, a red horse appeared. There was also someone riding it, and God had given him the power to cause people to no longer live peacefully, but instead to kill each other. For this purpose he carried a large sword. ⁵ Then the Lamb opened the third seal, and I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" This time, I saw a black horse appear. There was someone riding it, and he had a pair of balance scales in his hand. ⁶ Then I heard a voice that sounded like it was coming from among the four living creatures. It said to the person on the horse, "Make it happen that one liter of wheat will cost so much that a man must work a whole day to earn enough money

ple, powerful people, along with everybody else, both slave and free, hid in caves and between the mountain rocks.¹⁶ They shouted to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us so that the one who sits on the throne will not be able to see us, and so that the Lamb will not be able to punish us!"¹⁷ This is the terrible day on which they will punish us. No one will be able to survive!"

Chapter 7

¹ After this I saw four angels standing on the earth. One was standing at the north, one at the east, one at the south, and one at the west. They were keeping back the winds from blowing and destroying things on the earth, on the ocean, or even on any tree.² Then I saw another angel come up from the east. He was carrying God's seal. With this seal God, who is all-powerful, marks his own people to protect them. This angel called out with a loud voice to the four angels whom God had told to harm the earth and the ocean.³ He said to them, "Do not harm the earth or the ocean or the trees until we have marked the servants of our God on their foreheads."⁴ Then the angel and his fellow angels marked all God's servants. I heard the number of people whom they marked. The number was 144,000. They were people from every tribe of Israel.⁵ The angels marked twelve thousand people from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand from the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand from the tribe of Gad,⁶ twelve thousand from the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand from the tribe of Naphtali, and twelve thousand from the tribe of Manasseh.⁷ In addition, there were twelve thousand from the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand from the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand from the tribe

of Issachar,⁸ twelve thousand from the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand from the tribe of Joseph, and twelve thousand from the tribe of Benjamin.

⁹ After these things happened, I saw a huge crowd. There were so many people that no one could count them. They were from every nation, every tribe, every people group, and every language. They were standing before the throne and before the lamb. They were wearing white robes and held palm branches to wave with their hands in order to celebrate.¹⁰ They shouted loudly, "Our God, the one who sits on the throne, and the Lamb have rescued us from Satan's power!"¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne, around the elders, and around the four living creatures. They all lay before the throne with their faces to the ground and worshiped God.¹² They said, "Yes, it is so! We praise, thank, and honor you, our God, forever! We acknowledge that you are completely wise, the powerful one, who is able to do all things forever! It is so!"

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, "These people who are wearing white robes, do you know who they are and from where they come?"¹⁴ I answered him, "Sir, I do not know. Surely you know who they are!" He said to me, "These are the people who have come through the great tribulation. The Lamb died for them, and God has forgiven them for their sins. It is as if they have washed their robes in his blood and made them clean.¹⁵ Because of this, they are in front of God's throne, and they worship him day and night in his temple. God, the one who sits on the throne, will protect them.¹⁶ As a result, they will never again be hungry. They will never again be thirsty. The sun will never again beat on them, nor will any heat scorch them.¹⁷ This is because the Lamb who is at the throne will take care of them, just

as a shepherd takes care of his sheep. He will guide them to the source of eternal life, just as a shepherd leads his sheep to springs of water. God will cause them to no longer be sad. It will be as if he were wiping away all tears from their eyes."

Chapter 8

¹ Then the Lamb opened the seventh seal, and there was no sound at all in heaven for a short time. ² I saw the seven angels who stand in front of God. He gave each of them a trumpet. ³ Another angel came and stood at the altar. He had a golden bowl for burning incense. God gave him a large quantity of incense in order that he might offer it, with the prayers of all God's people, on the gold altar that is in front of God's throne. Then he burned this incense on the altar. ⁴ From the bowl in the angel's hand, the smoke of the incense, along with the prayers of God's people, went up to God. ⁵ Then the angel took the golden bowl and filled it with coals of fire from the altar. He threw it all onto the earth. Thunder crashed and rumbled, lightning flashed, and the earth shook.

⁶ Then the seven angels, each of which had one of the seven trumpets, got ready to blow them. ⁷ The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood poured down onto the earth. As a result, one-third of everything on the surface of the land was burned up: one-third of the trees burned up, and one-third of all the green grass was burned up. ⁸ Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and something that was like a huge mountain burning with fire fell into the ocean. As a result, one-third of the ocean became red like blood, ⁹ one-third of the living creatures in the ocean died, and one-third of the ships in the ocean were destroyed. ¹⁰ Then the

third angel blew his trumpet, and a huge star, which was burning like a torch, fell from the sky into one-third of the rivers and into one-third of the springs of water. ¹¹ The name of the star is Bitterness. As a result, the water in one-third of the rivers and springs became bitter. Many people died from drinking the water because it had become bitter. ¹² Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and God struck the sun, the moon, and the stars so that they lost their light for one-third of the time. The sun did not shine during one-third of the day, and the moon and stars did not shine during one-third of the night.

¹³ As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying high in the sky shouting in a loud voice, "Terrible things will happen to the people who live on the earth when the three remaining angels blow their trumpets! They are about to blow them!"

Chapter 9

¹ Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. God gave it the key to the shaft that went down but had no ending. ² When he opened that shaft, smoke rose from it like smoke from a great burning furnace. The smoke prevented anyone from seeing the light of the sun and the sky. ³ Locusts also came out of the smoke onto the earth. God gave them power to sting people as scorpions sting people. ⁴ God told the locusts that they should not harm the grass of the earth or any plants or any tree. God said that they should harm only those people who did not have the mark on their foreheads to show that they belonged to God. ⁵ God did not allow the locusts to kill those people. Instead, the locusts kept torturing people for five months. The pain those people felt was

like the pain that a scorpion causes when it stings someone.⁶ During the time when the locusts torture rebellious people, the pain will be so bad that people will want to find a way to die, but they will not find any way. They will long to die, but they will not be able to die.⁷ The locusts looked like horses that are ready for battle. They had on their heads what looked like golden crowns. Their faces were like the faces of people.⁸ They had long hair like women's long hair. Their teeth were as strong as lions' teeth.⁹ They wore breastplates made of metal. When they were flying, their wings made a noise like the roar of many horses pulling chariots as they are rushing into battle.¹⁰ They had tails like tails of scorpions. With these tails they could sting people. Their power to harm people during those five months was in their tails.¹¹ The king who ruled over them was the angel of the shaft that went down but had no ending. His name in the Hebrew language is Abaddon. In the Greek language it is Apollyon. Both of these names mean "Destroyer."

¹² That ended the first terrible event. But be aware that two more terrible events are still to come.

¹³ Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four corners of the golden altar that is in God's presence.¹⁴ The voice was saying to the sixth angel, the one who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels whom I have bound at the great river Euphrates."¹⁵ Then those four angels went free, those who had waited for that exact hour of that day, month, and year. They went free in order that they might enable their soldiers to kill one-third of the people.¹⁶ The number of those soldiers riding on horses was two hundred million. I heard someone say how many there were.¹⁷ In the vision I saw what the horses and the

soldiers who rode them looked like. The soldiers wore breastplates that were red like fire, dusky blue like smoke, and yellow like sulfur. The heads of the horses were like the heads of lions. From their mouths came fire, smoke, and fumes of burning sulfur.¹⁸ Those three things—the fire, the smoke, and the burning sulfur from the horses' mouths—killed one-third of the people.¹⁹ The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails. Their tails had heads like snakes by which they harmed people.²⁰ But the rest of the people, those who were not killed by the plagues of fire and smoke and burning sulfur, did not turn from the sinful things they were doing. They did not stop worshiping demons or the idols that they themselves had made of gold, of silver, of bronze, of stone, and of wood. The people did not stop worshiping them, even though they were idols that could not see, hear, or walk.²¹ They did not stop murdering people, or practicing sorcery, or acting in sexually immoral ways, or stealing things.

Chapter 10

¹ In the vision I saw another mighty angel come down out of heaven. A cloud surrounded him. There was a rainbow over his head. His face shone like the sun. His legs looked like columns of fire.² He had in his hand a small scroll that was open. He set his right foot on the ocean and his left foot on the land.³ He shouted something with a loud voice, a voice like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, it thundered seven times; in the thunder were words that I could understand.⁴ I was about to write the words that I heard, but a voice from heaven said to me, "Keep secret what the thunder said! Do not write it down!"⁵ Then the angel whom I had seen

standing on the ocean and the land raised his right hand toward heaven,⁶ and he asked the one who lives forever—the one who created heaven and everything that is in it, who created the earth and everything that is on it, and who created the ocean and everything that is in it—to say that what he was going to say was true. The angel said that God would no longer delay in doing what he had planned to do.⁷ He said that when the time came for the seventh angel to blow his trumpet, God's secret plan would be finished, just as he had said long ago to his servants, the prophets.

⁸ The one whom I had heard speak from heaven spoke to me again. He said, "Go and take the open scroll from the hand of the angel who is standing on the ocean and on the land."⁹ So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. In your mouth it will taste sweet like honey, but it will make your stomach bitter."¹⁰ I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. In my mouth it tasted sweet like honey, but then it made my stomach bitter.¹¹ Then someone said to me, "You must speak God's messages again about many nations, people groups, speakers of many languages, and many kings."

Chapter 11

¹ Then an angel gave to me a reed similar to a measuring stick. God said to me, "Go to the temple, measure it and the altar in it, and count the people who are worshiping there.² But do not measure the courtyard outside of the temple building because I have given it to the non-Jewish people groups. As a result, they will trample the city of Jerusalem for forty-two months.³ I will send two witnesses to announce

what I reveal to them for 1,260 days. They will show they are sad about the people's sin by wearing rough clothes made from goat's hair."⁴ Those witnesses are the ones that are represented by the two olive trees and the two lampstands that are in the presence of the Lord, who rules the earth.⁵ If anyone tries to harm those witnesses, fire comes from the witnesses' mouths and destroys them. If people want to harm them, the two witnesses certainly kill them in the same way.⁶ Those witnesses will have authority over the sky in order to keep rain from falling during the time that they are announcing what God reveals to them. They also will have authority to cause water everywhere to become blood; they will also have authority to send down to the earth all kinds of plagues. They will do this as often as they wish.⁷ When they have finished announcing to people the message from God, the beast that comes up from the shaft that went down but had no ending will attack them, overcome them, and kill them.⁸ The dead bodies of the two witnesses will lie in the street of the great city where their Lord was crucified, the city that is symbolically called Sodom or Egypt because its people are very evil like the people who lived in Sodom and Egypt.⁹ Individuals of many people groups, tribes, language groups, and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days. But they will not allow anyone to bury their bodies.¹⁰ When the people who live on the earth see that the witnesses are dead, they will rejoice and celebrate. They will send gifts to each other because these two prophets had sent plagues that tormented them.¹¹ But after three and a half days, God will cause them to breathe again and live. They will stand up, and the people who see them will be terrified.¹² The two witnesses will hear a loud voice from heaven saying to them: "Come up

here!" Then they will go up into heaven in a cloud. Their enemies will watch them go up. ¹³ At that same time there will be a great earthquake, as a result of which a tenth of the buildings in the city will collapse, and seven thousand people will die. The rest of the people will be afraid and will acknowledge that the God who rules in heaven is awesome.

¹⁴ That will be the second terrible event. Be aware that the third terrible event will happen soon after.

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet. Voices in heaven shouted loudly, "Our Lord God and the Christ whom he has appointed can now govern all the people in the world, and they will continue to rule those people forever!" ¹⁶ The twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones in God's presence, bowed down their faces to the ground and worshiped him. ¹⁷ They said:

"Lord God, you are the one who rules over everything!

You are the one who exists now!

You are the one who has always existed!

We thank you that you have defeated with your power

everyone who has rebelled against you, and you now rule over all the people in the world.

¹⁸ The unbelieving people of the nations were angrily raging at you.

As a result you have become very angry with them.

You have decided that this is the right time for you to judge all those who have died.

The time has come for you to reward all your servants who were the prophets and the others who believe in you,

and all those who honor you,

and this includes those who are small and those who are great.

It is time for you to destroy the people who destroy the earth."

¹⁹ Then God opened his temple in heaven, and I saw in it the sacred chest. Lightning was flashing; it was thundering and rumbling; the earth shook, and large hailstones fell from the sky.

Chapter 12

¹ Then something very important appeared in the sky. It was a woman, whose clothing was the sun. The moon was under her feet. On her head was a wreath of victory that was made of twelve stars. ² She was about to deliver a child, and she cried out because she was suffering pain. ³ Something else very unusual appeared in the sky. It was a huge red dragon. It had seven heads and ten horns. On each of its heads was a royal crown. ⁴ The dragon's tail dragged a third of the stars from the sky and threw them to the earth. The dragon set himself in front of the woman who was about to give birth in order that he might eat her child as soon as it was born. ⁵ Then she gave birth to a son who is destined to rule all groups of people with complete authority as if he were using an iron rod. God snatched away her child and took him to his throne. ⁶ But the woman fled into the wilderness. She has a place there that God has prepared for her in order that he may take care of her for 1,260 days.

⁷ Then there was a battle in heaven. Michael and the angels that he commanded fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back against Michael and his angels. ⁸ But the dragon did not win the battle; nor did God allow the dragon and his angels to stay

in heaven any longer. ⁹ Instead, God threw the huge dragon out of heaven. The dragon is the ancient serpent, the one whose names are the Devil and Satan. He is the one who deceives people all over the earth. He was thrown to the earth along with all his angels. ¹⁰ Then I heard someone in heaven shout loudly,

"Now our God has saved his people by his power, and he rules all people!"

Now Christ has begun to rule!

This is because God has thrown the accuser of our fellow believers out of heaven.

He was the one who stood before God day and night and told him that they had done what is wrong.

¹¹ Our fellow believers overcame him because the Lamb had shed his blood and died for them

and because they spoke the truth about him to other people.

They did not seek to remain alive, but were willing to let people kill them for speaking the truth about him.

¹² So everyone in heaven should rejoice.

But terrible things will happen to you people who live on the earth and on the ocean because the devil has come down to you.

He is very angry because he knows that he has only a short time before God judges and punishes him."

¹³ When the dragon realized that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to a son. ¹⁴ But God gave to the woman two wings like the wings of a very large eagle in order that she might fly into the wilderness. There is a place there that God had prepared for her. There God took care of her for three and one-half years.

The serpent, that is, the dragon, was not able to reach her there. ¹⁵ Then the serpent poured water like a river from his mouth toward the woman in order to sweep her away with the water. ¹⁶ But the ground helped the woman by opening up and swallowing the river that the dragon poured out from his mouth. ¹⁷ Then the dragon was very angry with the woman, so he went away to fight against the rest of her descendants. They are the people who obey God's commandments and who speak the truth about Jesus. ¹⁸ Then the dragon stood on the ocean shore.

Chapter 13

¹ Then I saw a beast come up out of the ocean. It had ten horns and seven heads. On each of its horns there was a royal crown. On each of its heads there was a name that insulted God. ² This beast was like a leopard. But its feet were like the feet of a bear, and its mouth was like the mouth of a lion. The dragon made the beast very powerful. He gave him the authority to rule over people as king. ³ One of the heads of the beast looked as if someone had wounded it so that it died. But its wound had healed. As a result, all the people of the earth marveled at the beast and followed it. ⁴ They also worshiped the dragon because he had given the beast authority to rule over them. They also worshiped the beast and said, "No one is as powerful as the beast! Who could ever fight against it?" ⁵ God allowed the beast to speak proudly and to insult him. God also allowed it to rule the people for forty-two months. ⁶ When it spoke, it insulted God, his name, the place where he lives, and all who live in heaven. ⁷ God also allowed the beast to fight against his people and conquer them. It had authority to rule over every tribe, over every nation,

over the speakers of every language, and over every people group.⁸ All the people living on earth will worship it. They are the people whose names are not in the Book of Life that belongs to the Lamb who had been killed. These are the names of the people that he wrote in the book before God created the world, the names of those who belong to God.⁹ Everyone who wants to understand must listen carefully to this message from God.¹⁰ If God has decided that some people will be captured by their enemies, they will be captured. If God has decided that some people will die in war, they will die in war. So God's people must endure suffering and be faithful to him.

¹¹ Then I saw another beast come up from the earth. It had two small horns on its head as a sheep has. But it spoke harshly as a dragon does.¹² It rules people with power in order to do what the first beast wants. It forces the people who live on the earth to worship the first beast, that is, the beast that almost died but whose wound was healed.¹³ The second beast also did awesome miracles, even causing fire from the sky to fall to earth while people watched.¹⁴ He did these miracles on behalf of the first beast. By doing that, he deceived the people on the earth so that they thought they should worship the first beast. But this happened only because God allowed it to happen. The second beast told the people living on earth to make an idol to represent the first beast, the one that was alive, even though someone had killed him with a sword.¹⁵ God allowed the second beast to breathe life into that idol in order that the idol might speak. And the beast commanded that whoever refused to worship the idol should be killed.¹⁶ The second beast also required that people should write the first beast's name on the right hand or on the forehead of everyone, whether these

were important people or unimportant people, rich or poor, free or slave. Everyone!¹⁷ The second beast required this so that people could not buy anything or sell anything if they did not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number representing its name.¹⁸ You must think wisely to understand the meaning of the mark. Anyone who thinks wisely should understand that the number represents mankind. It is 666.

Chapter 14

¹ But then I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. With him were 144,000 people. His name and his Father's name had been written on their foreheads.² I heard a sound from heaven, which was as loud as the sound of a huge waterfall or mighty thunder. It also sounded like many people playing on harps.³ The 144,000 people were singing a new song while they stood in front of the throne, in front of the four living creatures, and in front of the elders. Only the 144,000 people, the ones whom the Lamb had redeemed from among the people on the earth, could learn that song. No one else could learn that song.⁴ Those 144,000 are the ones who did not corrupt themselves with women; for they never had sexual relations. They are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These are the ones whom the Lamb had redeemed for God from among the people of earth; they are the ones whom the Lamb had first offered to God and to himself.⁵ These people never lied when they spoke, and they never acted immorally.

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying between the sky and heaven. He was bringing God's eternal good news to earth in order that he might proclaim it to people who

live on the earth. He will proclaim it to every nation, to every tribe, to speakers of every language, and to every people group.⁷ He said in a loud voice, "Honor God and praise him because it is now time for him to judge everyone! Worship him because he is the one who created the heaven, the earth, the ocean, and the springs of water."⁸ Another angel, a second one, came after him saying, "The very evil city of Babylon is now completely destroyed! Babylon made people of all the nations engage with her in the passion of sexual immorality. Babylon is like someone who gives another person too much wine to drink!"⁹ Another angel, a third one, came afterward, saying in a loud voice, "If people worship the beast and its image or allow its mark to be put on their foreheads or on their hands,¹⁰ God will be angry with them and his anger will be like strong wine that he will make them drink. He will torment them in burning sulfur in the presence of his holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.¹¹ The smoke from the fire that torments them will rise forever. God will torment them continually, day and night. This is what will happen to the people who worship the beast and its image or who allow its name to be written on them."¹² So God's people, those who obey what God commands and who trust in Jesus, must faithfully continue obeying and trusting him.¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: How fortunate from now on are those who die in union with the Lord." God's Spirit says, "Yes, after they die, they will no longer have to endure suffering. Instead, they will rest, and everyone will know the good things that they have done."

¹⁴ Then I saw another surprising thing. It was a white cloud, and on the cloud someone was sitting who looked like the Son of Man. He was wearing a golden crown on his head. In his hand he held a

sharp sickle.¹⁵ Still another angel came out of the temple in heaven. In a loud voice, he said to the one who was sitting on the cloud, "The time has come to reap the grain on the earth, so with your sickle reap the grain because the grain is ripe."¹⁶ Then the one who was sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and he harvested the earth.¹⁷ Another angel came out of the sanctuary in heaven. He also held a sharp sickle.¹⁸ From the altar came still another angel. He is the one who takes care of the fire of the altar. He said in a loud voice to the angel who held the sickle, "With your sickle cut off the clusters of grapes in the vineyards on the earth! Then gather the clusters of grapes together because its grapes are ripe!"¹⁹ So the angel swung his sickle on the earth. Then he threw the grapes into the huge place where God will angrily punish.²⁰ God trampled the grapes in the winepress outside the city, and blood came out! The blood flowed in a stream so deep that it reached up to the bridles of the horses and extended for three hundred kilometers.

Chapter 15

¹ Something else very unusual appeared in the sky. I saw seven angels, whose duty it was to punish rebellious people in seven different ways. This is the last time that God will punish people this way, for it will fully show how angry he is.

² I saw what looked like an ocean that looked as though it was made of glass and mixed with fire. I also saw the people who had overcome the beast by not worshiping it or its image, and by not allowing its servant to mark them with the number that represents the beast's name. They were standing by the ocean (that was as clear as glass), and they were holding the

harps that God gave them. ³ They were singing a song like God's servant Moses sang long ago. They sang this to praise the Lamb in this way:

"Lord God, who rules over everything, whatever you do is powerful and marvelous!

You always act righteously and truthfully.

You are king forever over all the groups of people!

⁴ O Lord, everyone will fear you and honor you because you alone are holy.

All kinds of people will come and bow down before you

because you have shown that you have judged everyone in the right way."

⁵ After this I saw that the temple in heaven was open, where the sacred tent was. ⁶ The seven angels whose duty it was to punish rebellious people in seven different ways came out of the very holy place. The angels were dressed in clean, white linen garments; they wore gold bands around their chests. ⁷ One of the four living creatures gave each of the seven angels a golden bowl filled with wine. The wine symbolized that God, who lives forever, was very angry with the people who had rebelled against him and was going to punish them. ⁸ The temple was filled with smoke that symbolized the presence of the glorious and all-powerful God. No one was able to enter the temple until the seven angels finished punishing the people of the earth in seven different ways.

from here and pour out on the earth the wine in the seven bowls. This will make the people suffer because God is angry with them." ² So the first angel went and poured out on the earth what was contained in his bowl. As a result, horrible and painful sores broke out on the people who had allowed the beast's servants to write the beast's name on them, those who had worshiped the beast's image. ³ Then the second angel poured out upon the ocean what was contained in his bowl. When he poured out his bowl, the water changed its appearance, and it turned into blood, but not living blood. It was like the blood of a dead man, and every creature that lived in the ocean died. ⁴ Then the third angel poured out upon the rivers and water springs what was contained in his bowl. When he poured out his bowl, the water in the rivers and springs turned into blood. ⁵ I heard the angel who has power over the waters say to God, "O God, you exist and have always existed. You are the holy one. You are a fair judge of people. ⁶ The people who rebelled against you murdered your holy people and the prophets. So you are just in punishing them by giving them blood to drink. This is what they deserve." ⁷ Then I heard someone at the altar answer, "Yes, Lord God, you who rule over everything, you punish people rightly and justly." ⁸ Then the fourth angel poured out on the sun what was contained in his bowl. He was given permission to make the sun so hot that it would scorch people with fire. ⁹ So the people were severely burned, and they said evil things about God because he had the power to make them suffer in these ways. But they still refused to turn away from their evil behavior and refused to praise him.

Chapter 16

¹ In the vision I heard someone in the temple speak in a loud voice to the angels who had the seven bowls. He said, "Go

¹⁰ When the fifth angel poured out on the throne of the beast what was contained in his bowl, it became dark where the beast

ruled. So the beast and the people whom the beast ruled were biting their tongues because they were suffering intense pain. ¹¹ They insulted God who rules in heaven because their sores were so painful. But they refused to stop doing the evil things that they were doing. ¹² Then the sixth angel poured out on the Euphrates River what was contained in his bowl. The water in the river dried up so that the rulers from the eastern countries could cross it with their armies. ¹³ Then I saw evil spirits that looked like frogs. One came out of the mouth of the dragon, one from the mouth of the beast, and one from the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ Those spirits were demons who were able to perform miracles. They went out to the rulers of the whole world in order to gather their armies. This is so that they will fight on the important day when Almighty God punishes his enemies. ¹⁵ (I heard the Lord Jesus say, "You must listen carefully to me: I am coming unexpectedly, like a thief. So I will be happy with those who stay alert and keep on living in the right way so that they will not be ashamed. They will be just like a person who keeps his clothes on so that he will not be ashamed in front of other people.") ¹⁶ The evil spirits will gather the rulers at a place named in the Hebrew language Armageddon.

¹⁷ Then the seventh angel poured out into the air what was contained in his bowl. As a result, someone said with a loud voice from the throne in the very holy place, "The time for God to punish rebellious people is finished." ¹⁸ When the angel emptied his bowl, lightning flashed, there were rumblings and thunder, and the earth shook. It shook more violently than it had ever shaken since people first lived on earth. ¹⁹ As a result, the very large city split into three parts. God also destroyed the cities in the other nations. God did not forget that the people of Babylon

had sinned very much. So he made them drink a cup of the wine that made them suffer because he was angry with them. ²⁰ Also as a result of the earthquake, every island disappeared, and the mountains became flat land. ²¹ Huge hailstones, each weighing thirty-three kilograms, fell from the sky onto the people. Then people blasphemed God because he had punished them in this terrible way, and because the hailstones were very large.

Chapter 17

¹ One of the seven angels, who had one of the seven bowls, came to me and said, "Come with me and I will show you how God will punish the prostitute, the woman who represents the city in which there are many canals of water. ² The kings of the earth have acted immorally and idolatrously with her. The people on the earth acted immorally in the same way. It was as if they had gotten drunk on wine that she gave them."

³ Then God's Spirit took control of me, and the angel carried me away to a desolate area. There I saw a woman who was sitting on a red beast. The beast had written names all over itself. They were names that insulted God. The beast had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was wearing purple and red clothes. She had jewelry of gold, precious stones, and pearls; she held in her hand a golden cup. The cup was full of something to drink that stands for the detestable and filthy things that she does when she commits sexual immorality. ⁵ There was a name written on her forehead, a name with a secret meaning. It is "This woman is Babylon, the very evil city! She is the mother of all the prostitutes on the earth. She teaches them to do all the filthy, immoral things in the world." ⁶ I saw that

the woman had become drunk because she had drunk the blood of God's people, those who had suffered for proclaiming the truth about Jesus. When I saw her, I was completely amazed.

⁷ The angel said to me, "Do not be amazed. I will explain to you the hidden meaning of the woman and of the beast on which she rides, the beast with the seven heads and the ten horns. ⁸ The beast that you saw lived previously. Eventually God will destroy him, but now he is not alive. He is about to come up from the shaft that went down but had no ending. When that beast appears again, the people on the earth will be amazed. They are people whose names have not been written in the Book of Life before God created the world.

⁹ People need to think wisely to understand this: The seven heads of the beast on which the woman sits symbolize the seven hills of the city that the woman represents. They also symbolize seven rulers.

¹⁰ Five of those rulers have died. One is still alive. The seventh ruler has not yet come. When he comes, he must remain for only a short time. ¹¹ The beast that lived before and then was not alive will be the eighth ruler. He is actually one of those seven rulers, but God will certainly destroy him. ¹² The ten horns that you saw represent ten rulers who have not yet begun to rule. They will receive authority in order to rule people together with the beast, but they will rule for only a short time, as if it were for only one hour. ¹³

Those rulers will all agree to do the same thing. As a result they will give to the beast their right and authority to rule people. ¹⁴ The rulers and the beast will fight against the lamb. He will defeat them because he is the Lord who rules over all other lords and the King who rules over all other kings. The people who are with him are the ones whom God has chosen and called to himself, and who keep serv-

ing him faithfully." ¹⁵ Then the angel said to me, "The waters that you saw in the city represent many different kinds of people, and many different groups of people, and different languages that the people speak, where the prostitute sits. ¹⁶ The ten horns that you saw represent rulers. They and the beast will hate the prostitute. So they will take away everything that is in the city as if they were leaving it naked. They will destroy it as if devouring flesh, and they will burn it completely. ¹⁷ They will do that because God has caused them to decide to do what he wants them to do. As a result, they will let the beast have their power to rule until what God has said is fulfilled. ¹⁸ The prostitute that you saw represents the very evil city whose leaders rule over the kings of the earth."

Chapter 18

¹ After this I saw another angel, one who had great authority, coming down from heaven. The earth became bright because he was shining so intensely. ² He shouted with a very loud voice, "God is about to completely destroy the very evil city of Babylon. As a result, all kinds of evil spirits will live there, and all kinds of foul and detestable birds will live there. Babylon is like a prostitute ³ with whom all the people groups engaged with her in the passion of sexual immorality, which is like getting drunk on too much wine. Yes, and the kings of the earth have done the same things with her. The world's merchants became rich because she wanted to commit so much sexual immorality."

⁴ I heard Jesus speak from heaven. He said, "My people, flee from that Babylon in order that you do not sin as those people do. If you sin as they do, I will punish you in those seven different ways, just as

I will punish them.⁵ It is as though their sins have been piled up to heaven and God remembers them, so now he will punish them."

⁶ To the angels whom God assigned to punish Babylon, Jesus said, "Pay back the people of that city to the same extent that they harmed other people. Cause them to suffer twice as much as they caused other people to suffer.⁷ To the same extent that Babylon, like a woman, has honored herself and done the things she wanted to do, to that extent torment her and cause her to grieve. Do that because in her mind she thought, 'I rule as a queen! I am not a widow, and I will never mourn as widows do!'⁸ So in one day, terrible calamities will come upon her. The people in that city will die, others will mourn for them, people will be hungry because there will be no food, and the city will burn up. The Lord God is able to punish her because he is mighty."

⁹ The kings on earth who have acted immorally with her and have done just what they wanted to do with her will weep and mourn for her when they see the smoke of the fire that will burn there.¹⁰ They will stand far away from Babylon because they will be afraid that they will suffer just as she does. They will say, "How terrible it is for Babylon, that strong city! God is punishing her suddenly and swiftly!"¹¹ The merchants of the earth will weep and will mourn for her because no one in her will ever again buy the things that they have to sell.¹²⁻¹³ They sell ornaments made of gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls. They sell expensive cloth made of fine linen and silk, expensive cloth that is dyed purple and crimson. They sell all kinds of rare wood, all kinds of items made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble. They sell cinnamon, spice, perfume, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour,

and grain. They sell cattle, sheep, horses, and chariots. They even sell human beings as slaves.¹⁴ The good things you people longed to have are gone! All your luxurious and splendid possessions have vanished! They will be gone forever!¹⁵ The merchants who sold these things and who had become rich will stand far away because they will be afraid that they will suffer just as the city has. They will weep and mourn,¹⁶ and they will say, "Terrible things have happened to that great city! That city was like a woman, dressed in clothes made of fine linen cloth and expensive cloth dyed purple and crimson, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls.¹⁷ But suddenly and swiftly God has destroyed all these expensive things."

Every ship's captain, all people who travel by ship, all sailors, and all others who earn their living by traveling on the ocean will stand far away from the city."¹⁸ When they see the smoke of the fire that is burning there, they will shout, "No other city has ever been like that great city!"¹⁹ They will throw dust on their heads to show that they are sad, and they will shout, weep, and mourn. They will say, "Terrible things have happened to Babylon. That city made many people rich, the people who had ships that sail on the ocean in order to sell their expensive things. God has suddenly and swiftly destroyed that city!"

²⁰ Then someone spoke from heaven saying, "You who live in heaven, rejoice over what has happened to Babylon! You who are God's people, including you apostles and prophets, rejoice. You must rejoice; God has justly punished the people there because they acted so terribly toward you!"

²¹ Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large stone for grinding grain, and he threw it into the ocean.

Then he said, "You people in the great city of Babylon, God will throw down your city so that it will disappear just as that stone disappeared in the ocean! Your city will be gone forever!"²² In your city, there will never again be anyone playing harps, singing, playing flutes, or blowing trumpets. There will no longer be any skilled workers making things. There will never again be people grinding grain at the mills.²³ No lamp will ever again shine there. There will never again be the happy voices of any bridegroom and his bride. God will destroy your city because your merchants were the most important men in the world. You used witchcraft to deceive people of all groups of people.²⁴ You are also responsible for killing the prophets and others of God's people. Indeed, you are guilty of every murder committed on the earth!"

Chapter 19

¹ After these things I heard what sounded like a huge crowd in heaven. They were shouting things like,

"Hallelujah! He has saved us!

He is glorious and mighty!

² Praise him because he judges truly and justly!

He has punished the very evil city that was like a prostitute because their people persuaded the other people of earth to act immorally as they did.

Praise him because he has punished them for murdering his servants!"

³ The crowd shouted a second time, saying,

"Hallelujah! The smoke of the fire that is burning that city will rise forever!"

⁴ The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures prostrated themselves and worshiped God, who sits on the throne. They said:

"It is true! Hallelujah!"

⁵ Someone spoke from the throne and said,

"All you who are his servants, praise our God!

All you who honor him, whether you are important or not, everyone praise him!"

⁶ Then I heard something like the noise of a huge crowd of people, like the sound of a huge waterfall, and like the sound of loud claps of thunder. They were shouting:

"Hallelujah! Our Lord God, who rules over everything, reigns!"

⁷ We should rejoice, we should be extremely glad, and we should honor him

because it is now time for the Lamb to be united with the woman he is marrying. She has made herself ready.

⁸ God has permitted her to dress herself in fine linen, bright and clean."

Fine, bright, and clean linen represents the righteous actions of God's people.

⁹ Then the angel said to me, "Write this: how fortunate are the people whom God invites to the feast when the Lamb marries his wife!" He also said to me: "These words that God declares are true!"¹⁰ I immediately prostrated myself at his feet in order to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not worship me! I am just your fellow servant and the fellow servant of your fellow believers, those who speak the truth about Jesus. God is the one you should worship because it is the Spirit of God who gives people the power to speak the truth about Jesus!"

¹¹ Then I saw the heavens open up, and I was surprised to see a white horse. Je-

sus, the one who was riding on the horse, is called "Trustworthy and Genuine." He judges all people according to what is right; he fights in justice against his enemies.¹² His eyes shone like a flame of fire. There were many royal crowns on his head. A name had been written on him. Only he knows the meaning of that name.¹³ The cloak he was wearing was drenched with blood. His name is also "The Message of God."¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him. They were riding on white horses. They were wearing clothes made of clean white linen.¹⁵ A sharp sword extends from his mouth; with it he will strike the rebellious people groups. He himself will rule them powerfully as though he had an iron rod. He will crush his enemies as a person crushes grapes in a winepress. He will do this for God, who rules over everything and who is furiously angry with them because of their sins.¹⁶ On his cloak over his thigh a name had been written: "King who rules over all other kings and Lord who rules over all other lords."

¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the light of the sun. He called loudly to all the flesh-eating birds flying high in the sky, "Come and gather for the large feast that God is providing for you!"¹⁸ Come and eat the flesh of all God's enemies who are dead—the flesh of kings, of army commanders, of people who fought powerfully, of horses and of the soldiers who rode them, and the flesh of all other kinds of people, whether they were free or slave, important or not. All kinds!"¹⁹ Then I saw the beast and the kings of earth with their armies; they had gathered together to fight against the rider on the horse and his army.²⁰ The rider on the white horse captured the beast and the false prophet. The false prophet is the one who had performed miracles in the beast's presence. By doing that he had deceived the peo-

ple who had accepted the beast's mark on their foreheads and who had worshiped its image. Then God threw the beast and the false prophet alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.²¹ The rider on the horse killed the rest of their armies with his sword, the one that extended from his mouth. All the birds gorged themselves on the flesh of the people and horses that he had killed.

Chapter 20

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven. He had the key to the deep, dark pit, and he was carrying a large chain in his hand.² He seized the dragon. That dragon is the ancient serpent, the devil, that is, Satan. The angel bound him with the chain. That chain could not be loosed for one thousand years.³ The angel threw him into the deep, dark pit. He shut the door of the pit, locked it, and sealed it to prevent anyone from opening it. He did that in order that Satan might no longer deceive all the many groups of people, until those one thousand years are ended. After that time, Satan must go free for a short time in order that he can do what God has planned.

⁴ I saw thrones on which people were sitting. God gave them authority to judge. I also saw the souls of other people whose heads had been cut off because they had spoken the truth about Jesus and had declared God's message. They were people who had refused to worship the beast or its image, and who had not allowed the beast's servants to put the beast's mark on them, either on their foreheads or on their hands. They became alive again, and they ruled with Christ during those one thousand years.⁵ They were the ones who lived again the first time that God caused

dead people to live again. The rest of the believers who had died did not live again until after those one thousand years.⁶ God will be pleased with those who live again this first time. God will consider them holy. They will not die a second time. Instead, they will be priests who serve God and Christ, and they will rule with Christ during those one thousand years.

⁷ When the one thousand years are ended, God will release Satan from his prison.⁸ Satan will go out to deceive the rebellious people groups all over the earth. These are the nations that the prophet Ezekiel called Gog and Magog. Satan will gather them to fight against God's people. There will be so many of them fighting against God's people that no one will be able to count them, just as no one can count the grains of sand on the ocean shore.⁹ They will march over the whole earth and will surround the camp of God's people in Jerusalem, the city that God loves. Then God will send fire down from heaven, and it will burn them up.¹⁰ God will throw the devil, who had deceived those people, into the lake of burning sulfur. This is also where God had thrown the beast and the false prophet. As a result, they will continually suffer severely forever.

¹¹ Then I saw a huge white throne on which God was sitting. He was so fearsome that the earth and the sky disappeared from his presence completely; they were no more.¹² I saw that the people who had died but now lived again were standing in front of the throne. They were both important and unimportant people! The books in which God records what people do were opened. Another book was also opened, which is the Book of Life in which God has written the names of people who have eternal life. God judged the people who had died and now lived again according to what they

had done, just as he had recorded it in the books.¹³ The people whose bodies were buried in the sea became alive again in order to stand before God's throne. Everyone who had been buried on the land became alive again also in order to stand before the throne. God judged each one of them according to what each one had done.¹⁴ All the unbelievers—those who had been in the place where they waited after they died—were thrown into the burning lake. The burning lake is the place in which people die the second time.¹⁵ God also threw the people whose names were not in the book, the book where God has written the names of the people who have eternal life, into the lake of fire.

Chapter 21

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and the oceans no longer existed.² I saw God's holy city, which is the new city of Jerusalem. It was coming down out of heaven from God. God had prepared it and decorated it, just as women decorate a bride in order to marry a man.³ Then I heard a loud voice calling out from the throne of God saying, "Listen to this! Now God will live with people. He will live right in the midst of them! They will be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God.⁴ He will cause them to no longer be sad. He will stop them from weeping ever again. None of them will ever again die or mourn or cry or suffer pain because God has taken away those things and they are gone forever."

⁵ Then God, who sits on the throne, said, "Listen to this! I am now making everything new!" He said to me: "Write these things that I have told you because you

can trust that I will certainly cause them to happen.”⁶ He also said to me, “I have completed all these things! I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. To everyone who wants it, I will freely give water from the spring that causes people to live forever.

⁷ I will give this to all who are victorious over Satan. I will be their God, and they will be my children.⁸ But those who are cowardly, those who do not believe in me, those who do detestable things, those who murder people, those who sin sexually, those who do witchcraft, those who worship idols, and every liar will all suffer in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. That is what it means to die a second time.”

⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of wine—the wine that caused the seven last ways of suffering—came and said to me, “Come with me and I will show you the people who have permanently united with the Lamb as a woman marries a man!”

¹⁰ Then God’s Spirit took control of me, and the angel took me to the top of a very high mountain. He showed me God’s holy city, the new Jerusalem, which was coming down out of heaven from God.¹¹

It was shining with the brilliant light that came from God himself. The city was shining as a very precious jasper stone shines, and it was clear like crystal.¹² Around the city was a very high wall. The wall had twelve gates. An angel was at each gate. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written over the gates. Each gate had the name of one tribe.¹³ Three gates were on the east side, three gates were on the north side, three gates were on the south side, and three gates were on the west side.¹⁴ The city wall had twelve foundation stones. On each foundation stone was the name of one of the

twelve apostles whom the Lamb had appointed.

¹⁵ The angel who was speaking to me carried a golden measuring rod, a rod that he used to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.¹⁶ The city was square in shape; it was as long as it was wide. After the angel measured the city with his rod, he reported that it was 2,200 kilometers long, and that its width and height were each the same as its length.¹⁷ He measured its wall and reported that it was sixty-six meters thick. The angel used the measure that people normally use.

¹⁸ The city wall was made of something like the green stone that we call jasper. The city itself was made of pure gold that looked like clear glass.¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were beautifully made with precious stones. The first foundation stone was jasper, the second foundation stone was sapphire, the third foundation stone was chalcedony, the fourth foundation stone was emerald,²⁰ the fifth foundation stone was sardonyx, the sixth foundation stone was sardius, the seventh foundation stone was chrysolite, the eighth foundation stone was beryl, the ninth foundation stone was topaz, the tenth foundation stone was chrysoprase, the eleventh foundation stone was jacinth, and the twelfth foundation stone was amethyst.²¹ The twelve gates of the city were something like huge pearls. Each gate was like a single pearl. The city streets appeared to be pure gold that looked like clear glass.

²² There was no temple in the city. The Lord God himself, who rules over all, and the Lamb are there, so there was no need for a temple.²³ The city will not need the sun or the moon to light the city because the light coming from God will light the city, and the Lamb will also be its light.²⁴ The people groups will live with the light

of the city shining on them. The kings of the earth will bring their wealth into the city to honor God and the lamb. ²⁵ The gates of the city will not be shut at the end of the day as they usually are shut because there will be no night there. ²⁶ The people of the world will also bring their wealth into the city. ²⁷ Nothing that is morally impure, no one who does deeds that God considers detestable, and no one who tells lies will ever enter that city. Only those people whose names are written in the book that belongs to the lamb, the book that has the names of people who have eternal life, will be there.

Chapter 22

¹ Then the angel showed me the river that causes people who drink from it to live forever. The water was sparkling and clear like crystal. The river was flowing out from the throne where God and the Lamb were sitting. ² It flowed down through the middle of the main street of the city. On each side of the river were trees with fruit that causes people who eat it to live forever. The trees bear twelve kinds of fruit; they produce one crop each month. The people groups use the leaves of the trees as medicine in order that their wounds may heal. ³ There will never be anyone or anything there that God will curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city. God's servants will worship him there. ⁴ They will see him face to face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. ⁵ There will never again be night. God's servants will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun because the Lord God will shine his light upon them. They will rule forever.

⁶ The angel said to me: "These things that God has shown you are true, and he will

certainly make them happen. The Lord God who inspires the prophets sent his angel to show the people who serve him the events that must happen soon." ⁷ Jesus says to all his people, "Listen to this! I am coming soon; God will abundantly bless everyone who obeys the message that has been written in this book."

⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw in a vision these things that I have written down. When I had heard and seen them, I immediately lay down in front of the angel who had shown me these things in order to worship him. ⁹ But he said to me, "Do not worship me! I am just a servant of God like you! I am also a servant like your fellow believers who are the prophets, and like those who obey the message in this book. Instead, worship God!" ¹⁰ He also said to me, "Do not keep secret the message about what God has foretold in this book because it is almost time for him to fulfill this message. ¹¹ Since that time is near, if those who act in an evil manner want to continue to act that way, let them continue to do so. God will soon pay them back for that. If those who are vile want to continue to be vile, let them continue to do so. God will soon pay them back for that. Those who are acting righteously should continue to act righteously. Those who are perfect should continue to be perfect."

¹² Jesus says to all people: "Listen! I am coming soon! And I will pay back and punish or reward everyone according to what each one has done. ¹³ I am the one who began all things and the one who will cause all things to end. I am before all things and I am at the end of all things. ¹⁴ God is very pleased with the people who wash their robes and make them clean because they will be able to eat the fruit of the tree that enables people to live forever and because they will be able to enter the gates into the

holy city. ¹⁵ Outside are people who are unholy. They include people who practice witchcraft, people who sin sexually, people who murder others, idol worshipers, and all people who enjoy telling lies and are continual liars. They can never enter that city.”

¹⁶ “I, Jesus, sent my angel in order that he might say to you people who are the groups of believers that all these things are true. I am the descendant of King David whom the prophets promised would come. I am the one who is like the bright morning star.”

¹⁷ God’s Spirit and his people, who are like the bride of Christ, say to each one who desires to believe, “Come!” Whoever hears this should also say to each one who desires to believe, “Come!” The people who want to come should come! Everyone who desires the water that enables

people to live forever should take it as a free gift!

¹⁸ I, John, solemnly warn everyone who hears the message about what I have foretold in this book: If anyone adds anything to this message, God will punish him in the ways that this book tells about. ¹⁹ If anyone takes away any of the message about what I have foretold in this book, God will take away that person’s right to eat fruit from the tree that enables people to live forever. He will also take away that person’s right to enter God’s city. Both these things are described in this book.

²⁰ Jesus, who says that all these things are true, says, “Certainly I am coming soon!” I, John, reply, “May it be so! Lord Jesus, come!”

²¹ I pray that our Lord Jesus will continue to act kindly to all of you who are God’s people. Amen!