

PAUL'S TRIP TO ROME

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Introduction:

Paul's desire to go to Rome (19:21) and the Lord's promise that he would go (23:11) finally came to reality through a series of providential circumstances (cf. 25:12; 27:24). Although Paul was certain of his destination, he was unaware of the danger he would encounter before he would reach Rome. Many of the exciting details of his adventurous voyage to Rome are included in these two chapters. It must be remembered that God providentially led in Paul's ministry and often used evil men to accomplish His purpose. Perhaps Paul's verse for the trip was, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you" (Isaiah 43:2).

I. Paul's Mission at Sea — 27:1-44

A. Revisited the Saints — 27:1-3

27:1 — Paul was among other prisoners (perhaps they were already condemned) entrusted to a Roman centurion, Julius. "We" refers to Luke, the author, Paul and Aristarchus. Luke and Aristarchus were Paul's companions in travel (cf. **19:29; 20:4**).

27:2 — They boarded a ship which claimed Adramyttium as its home port. It was a city in northwestern Asia Minor. This ship sailed along the coasts of Asia Minor for commerce.

27:3 — The ship stopped at Sidon where Paul (still under guard) was allowed to visit his friends. The church at Sidon was most likely founded after Stephen's death (11:19).

B. Regarded the Season — 27:4-13

27:4-5 — The ship left port but stayed relatively close to the mainland. The term "under Cyprus" meant under the protection of Cyprus. This island protected the ship from the contrary winds out of the west. Another stop was made at Myra in Lycia.

27:6-8 — Here Julius discovered a ship from Alexandria, Egypt, carrying grain to Italy (cf. 27:38). The prisoners were transferred to this ship. The winds were contrary and slow progress was made until they finally arrived at the harbor of Fair Havens on the island of Crete.

27:9-11 — Much time was spent at Fair Havens while they awaited better weather conditions. Sailing on the Mediterranean was dangerous in the winter season. The time of safe travel was past when the Jewish fast (Day of Atonement in October) had arrived. Paul regarded the danger of sailing at this time of the year and advised the centurion to remain at Fair Havens. He had already suffered three shipwrecks and spent a night and a day in the deep (2 Cor 11:25), so his advice came from experience, but the centurion conferred with the pilot and owner of the ship and believed what he said rather than what Paul said.

27:12, 13 — Fair Havens was not as commodious as the port in Phenice (Phoenix). Also the members of the crew were anxious to sail to a better port. So when favorable winds came they were convinced to set sail again.

C. Represented the Savior — 27:14-44

1. The storm — 27:14-20

27:14, 15 — Southerly winds had misled the crew (v. 13) and soon a storm was upon them. The Euroclydon was a violent northeast wind similar to a typhoon. The meeting of contrary air currents

caused cloudy and tempestuous conditions. The ship was incapable of resisting the elements and was subject to the sea.

27:16-20 — The storm threatened the ship so severely that special means were used to save it. First, they hauled the dinghy aboard for it was filling with water (vv. 16-17). Second, they undergirded the ship with ropes to hold the timbers together. This was accomplished by passing ropes underneath from side to side. Third, "they lowered the gear" or "strake sail." This is an obscure term which may mean they dropped a floating anchor or it may mean they dismantled and laid flat all gear, such as excess sails, rigging and cables which the wind could use to drive the ship toward Africa. No doubt, they also used a storm sail to keep the bow of the boat toward the north. All this was done because they were fearful that the strong winds from the north would soon drive them into the dreaded shallows and sandbanks off North Africa. The next day they decided to jettison the cargo when the ship was in danger of breaking up (cf. Jonah 1:5). Finally, in desperation the ship's tackle was cast overboard (perhaps an immense spar and all moveable objects). Note that the pronouns indicate Luke was a helper. Even after these drastic measures had been taken, despair reigned and no hope was evident.

2. Paul's encouragement — 27:21-26

27:21-26 — At a most discouraging moment, Paul appeared with a message of hope. He indicated that the ship would be lost but all lives would be saved. He indicated his message had come from God (27:23). Oftentimes the unbelievers receive special blessings because of a few righteous servants of God! (Contrast Sodom's destruction because there was an insufficient number of righteous people.) Paul was again reassured by the Lord of his safe arrival in Rome (v. 24).

3. Paul's example — 27:27-38

27:27-29 — The storm continued to drive the ship and the crew suspected they were nearing a shore. They sounded (measured the sea bottom) and realized that such was the case. Fear spread throughout the ship because they visualized being thrown upon the rocks. Anchors were put down from the stern to slow the ship. Normally they were put out from the bow but this would have caused the ship to swing around.

27:30-32 — Several sailors attempted to escape by pretending ("under color") to let down the anchors. Paul warned that unless they remained, they would lose their lives. The soldiers cut the ropes holding the dinghy intact.

27:33-38 — Paul realized the exhausted condition of his traveling companions. He also realized the only way they would have the energy to get to shore would be to eat. What a testimony when he took food and gave thanks to God. When he ate, the rest followed his example and were encouraged (vv. 33-36). After eating, the balance of the cargo was cast off in order to lighten the ship.

4. The rescue — 27:39-44

27:39-40 — When daylight arrived, the sailors were not aware of their location, but they did spot a beach or bay. They cut (not "taken up") and loosed the ropes which had held the rudders in place and hoisted the foresail (not "mainsail") in an attempt to direct the ship toward shore. As they approached the shore they realized they were in deeper water where two seas met.

27:41 — The ship ran aground and the violence of the waves soon destroyed the back part of the ship. The wood from this was used by the non-swimmers as an aid in getting to shore (v. 44). Note that although Paul knew by divine revelation that all would be saved, this did not void human responsibility. Likewise, even though God has elected certain people to salvation, this does not reduce nor negate our responsibility to witness nor the need of the sinner to call on the Lord through His divine plan.

27:42-44 — The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners because they feared that some would escape and then the soldiers would suffer severe consequences. However, because of Paul's testimony, the centurion chose to save them. Again, the righteous were a benefit to the wicked.

II. Paul's Miracles at Melita — 28:1-10

A. Repelled the Snake — 28:1-6

28:1 — They landed on the Island of Malta (Melita).

28:2 — The natives were called "barbarous" because of their non-Greek birth, not because they were uncivilized. They showed kindness to the shipwrecked people.

28:3-6 — Paul gathered sticks for a fire. When he placed some sticks on the fire, a venomous snake came out of the sticks and fastened itself on Paul's hand. Perhaps Paul had mistaken the snake for a stick. The people first thought this was the fulfillment of justice. They reasoned that although he had survived the storm, he was being punished for some sin he had committed. However, after he shook off the snake and remained unharmed, they changed their minds and decided he must be a god. Contrast their change of mind to those in Lystra that thought Paul was a god and later stoned him (Acts 14:11-19).

B. Restored the Sick — 28:7-10

28:7, 8 — Publius, a chief man of the island, warmly received Paul and his friends. His sick father was healed by Paul through prayer. It is interesting to notice that Luke, the physician, was not used to bring about this miraculous healing, but instead it was Paul, the apostle.

28:9, 10 — Many others were healed and in exchange, the natives provided the group with many necessities. Although Luke does not state it, Paul must have had a preaching ministry here where they stayed for three months while waiting for a ship to take them to Rome (v. 11).

III. Paul's Ministry at Rome — 28:11-31

A. Refreshed by the Saints — 28:11-16

28:11 — After three months, the distressed group boarded a ship with the marks of Castor and Pollux. These were legendary sons of Zeus and were the guardians of mariners. They were considered a sign of good fortune by pagan sailors.

28:12-14— The ship stopped at Syracuse (Sicily) and then at Rhegium on the toe of Italy. After a south wind arose, the ship made the 180 miles to Puteoli in two days. This was the principle port of southern Italy. Paul found Christian brethren here and stayed seven days. 28:15-16 — Some Christians came from Rome to meet Paul as he neared their city. Some came 33 miles and met him at Three Taverns, others came an extra 10 miles to Appii Forum. Paul thanked God for them (cf. Rom 16:5, 14, 15). Finally, Paul arrived in Rome where he was delivered to the prison. He was allowed private quarters although he was continually guarded by a soldier.

B. Rejected by the Jews — 28:17-27

28:17-20 — Paul waited three days before contacting the Jewish leaders. Perhaps it required time to learn from the Christians the name of the leading Jewish leaders. He then called for these chief Jews and reviewed his case as a prisoner of Rome. He presented three defenses:

- 1) He was not guilty of any offense against the Jews or their religion (v. 17),
- 2) The Romans did not find fault in him, and would have released him, but the Jews spoke against it, so he had to appeal to Caesar (v. 18).
- 3) He had nothing to say against his nation, but he was bound for the hope of Israel (vs. 19-20).

"The hope of Israel" was Paul's reference to the resurrection of true believers in Israel so they could be in the Messianic Kingdom, which will be on earth (Zech 14:9; Rev 19:15-16). He defended this hope when he appeared before the council (Sanhedrin) in Jerusalem (Acts 23:6) and before Felix in Caesarea with his Jewish accusers present (Acts 24:15, 20-21). He also spoke of his hope in the resurrection before Agrippa and Festus (Acts 26:6-8). So what is the significance of this hope? The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of all faithful Jews so they could be in Messiah's Kingdom, when He would rule over all nations of the earth (Dan 12:13). Paul learned by experience that only those Jews that trusted in Jesus' death and resurrection would be worthy to be in His Kingdom. Before Paul's conversion, he believed in the resurrection, but denied that Jesus had risen from the dead and persecuted those that spoke of it. However, when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he was convinced that He was resurrected from the dead and was his Messiah. Then Paul was commissioned by Christ and he testified to small and great that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah). He was the first to rise from the dead to give light to all people (Acts 26:9-23). Paul spoke of the resurrection as the hope of Israel when he spoke to Israelites, but he proclaimed this message among the Gentiles as well (Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 15:1-58).

28:21-27 — These Jews said they had received no information of his case. They expressed an interest in hearing of the Christian faith. They made an appointment to meet with Paul and he showed them from the Old Testament how Jesus was their Messiah. Some believed, but others rejected the gospel. The apostle felt this rejection more and more as time elapsed (Phil 1:12-17; Col 4:11). Paul quoted from Isaiah to show why some Jews would not believe. He said they had hardened their hearts through unbelief (Isaiah 6:9, 10). Israel in Isaiah's day also refused to believe. Isaiah's biblical preaching caused those in rebellious unbelief to become more hardened against God's message. God is not responsible for making these people disbelieve and harden their hearts. It is the natural result of saying no to God's Spirit. So the Jews who would not believe were hardened against the gospel by a failure to respond positively to His Word.

C. Resorted to the Gentiles — 28:28.31

28:28 — After many Jews rejected the gospel, Paul turned and gave the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15, 16; 13:45-49; Eph 3:7-9).

28:29.31 — Paul spent two years ministering to Gentiles while in prison. In addition to being a tireless witness, he authored the "prison epistles": Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians.

Conclusion:

We do not know the outcome of Paul's case, but there is good evidence that he was released and perhaps visited Spain (Rom 15:24). Later he was imprisoned again in Rome from where he wrote the Pastoral Epistles.

Why did Paul encounter so many troubles on his way to Rome? Several reasons may help explain:

- 1) These events taught Paul once again to trust in the Lord moment by moment (cf. 2 Cor 1:9; 5:7).
- 2) These trials helped him to become a more patient man (James 1:2-4).
- 3) These events enabled him to comfort others in their affliction (2 Cor 1:4).
- 4) These trials gave Paul a better view of eternal values as opposed to temporal ones (2 Cor 4:16-18).
- 5) He was given more opportunities to preach the gospel (Phil 1:12-14).