

PAUL'S MINISTRY AT MELITA AND ROME

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 27:1-44; 28:1-31.

LESSON 371 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Acts 27:1-44

1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; *one* Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

3 And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia.

6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;

8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city *of* Lasea.

9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished *them*,

10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, *and there* to winter; *which is* an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* purpose, loosing *thence*, they sailed close by Crete.

Bible References:

Notes:

Carrying the Gospel

One of Paul's greatest ambitions was being realised – he was going to Rome. This was not a pleasure trip. In Paul's accounts of his journeys, he never spoke of the beautiful sea, the countryside, the mountains or scenery. He saw something beyond what met the eye. He saw something that consumed his thoughts, his life, inspired his ambitions and motivated every step he took. He saw lost souls and lived that he might preach the Gospel to them.

Let us learn from Paul's life that we are not here just to be blessed. We enjoy the blessings of the Lord, but we are to be a blessing to others. If there ever was a time when the Lord needed men, women, boys and girls who are willing to serve the Lord and serve their brother, it is today. As in Bible days, the "Macedonian call" – "Come over . . . and help us," is ringing out (Acts 16:9). If we cannot go to faraway lands, we can pray for lost souls and pray for those who **can** go and carry the Gospel.

Dangers of the Voyage

There were 276 men aboard as the ship set sail. This was not a modern, fast-sailing vessel as those used today, but an old-time sailboat, heavily loaded with tackling, wheat and supplies. Because of extreme danger due to rough seas and bad weather, Paul had warned the owner of the ship that they should remain in the harbour of Crete (Acts 27:21). But the master of the ship had not heeded the warning and now it looked hopeless; no sun or stars had appeared for many days, as the huge waves rocked the vessel. When all hope that they should be saved was lost, Paul encouraged the men aboard as he told of the angel of God who had stood by him at night and said, "Fear not, Paul."

Paul's Courage

This is a remarkable account of what it means in the face of disaster and peril for one man of God to be in the group. Paul was an example of faith and courage under severe trial. He encouraged the people and told them that they would all be saved. It was the hand of the Lord, which directed them to the little island of Melita. (This island was one of the most bombed spots in World War II.)

As the men were about to jump overboard and try to swim to shore Paul advised them. "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." He also persuaded them to eat, after their two-weeks' fast. As the ship was tossed back and forth, Paul preached the Gospel to the men aboard that rugged, old sailboat.

The Gospel Ship

We are, as it were, aboard a ship today called "The Good Ship Zion." Sometimes we are in some very bad storms; the sea of the life may be plenty rough. But if we are aboard, then let us not "give up the ship." She is the only ship that is going to ride the storms; all the others are going down. But the Gospel Ship will ride safely through until it reaches the Heavenly Harbour.

We are reminded of that historic sentence of Captain James Lawrence, in the War of 1812, when he was dying in the naval

14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. 18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next *day* they lightened the ship;

19 And the third *day* we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on *us*, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

28 And sounded, and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms.

29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of

battle. His last words to his men were, "Don't give up the ship."

All Ashore

All the men escaped safe to land, although the ship was dashed to pieces by the waves. The natives on the island of Melita kindled a fire and were friendly to the poor, shivering, exhausted seamen. As Paul helped gather sticks for the fire, a viper, or snake, fastened on his hand, but he shook it off into the fire and was not hurt. The natives kept watching him to see if his hand would become swollen or if he might even fall down dead. But after a great while they saw that no harm was going to come to Paul. We are sure that the Lord protected him from harm.

Missionary Work on the Island

Paul always found opportunity to tell the Gospel story to whomsoever he met. Here Publius, the chief man of the island, showed kindness to Paul and the mariners. When the chief's father became ill Paul laid his hands on the sick man and prayed, and he was healed. Others also who were sick came to Paul and the Lord healed them. "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; . . . they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17, 18).

Paul's Education

Paul and the other Apostles were commissioned from Heaven to preach the Gospel. "They went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20). Their credentials were issued by the "Commander-in-Chief," God Himself. An education is a good thing to have, but better still is the "schooling" one receives from studying the Word and praying much. Paul had studied hard in school and learned much from his instructors, but from the day that he met Jesus on the Damascus Road, he had a new Teacher. From Him he learned greater lessons. From Him, we, too, may learn the way of righteousness and holiness. Let us study hard in this "school."

On to Rome

After three months on the island they were once more ready to sail. The people there gave them the needed supplies for the remainder of their voyage.

They finally reached the great city of Rome, the capital of the world in those days. Paul explained to the Jews in Rome how he happened to be there as a prisoner. He told them about Jesus from morning until evening. Some believed and some did not. For two years he preached to the people there, but because of their unbelief, he told the Jews that God was sending the news of salvation to the Gentiles who **would** hear it.

Our Privileges

We today who are Gentiles have heard the Gospel story: salvation from sin, through the Blood of Jesus; sanctification, a clean heart, also through His Blood; the baptism of the Holy Ghost upon a clean, sanctified life; divine healing and other blessings we receive from the Lord.

Let us not be as many of the Jews of Paul's days: they heard, but did not understand because the "ears" of their heart were closed; they saw, but did not perceive, because their spiritual eyes were not open. Let us open our heart and have a purpose firm that, although the road to Heaven is not always easy, we will stand in the hard places and, like Paul, make the end of the journey, by the grace of God.

QUESTIONS

1. Why was sailing dangerous at that time?
2. What was Paul's advice? Was it heeded?

the boat, and let her fall off.

33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat.

37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land:

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

Acts 28:1-31

1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

4 And when the barbarians saw the

3. What happened to encourage Paul? How did he cheer the others?

4. How long did they fast?

5. How many were aboard the ship?

6. How did they get to land? Was anyone lost?

7. What was the name of the island?

8. Were the people friendly to the seamen? Tell what they did.

9. What did Paul do while there?

10. Did the people of Rome receive the Gospel message?

venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded *us* with such things as were necessary.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days.

13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was

no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.