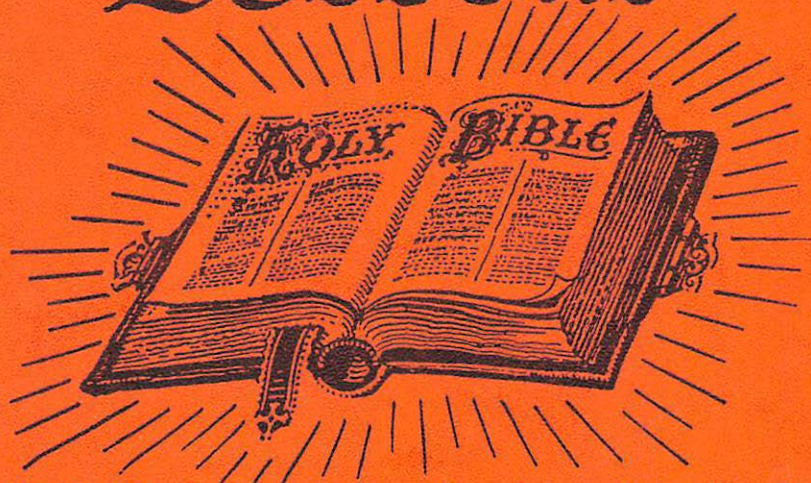


Bible Lessons



"Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,
we are CHANGED" II Cor. 3:18

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

Vol. 10, No. 4
Oct., Nov., Dec.,
1978

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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 10

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Notice of Price Increase

In order to meet the higher costs of production, and postage, it has become necessary to raise the subscription price of these quarterly *Bible Lessons*. Beginning with the first quarter of 1979, the new subscription price will be 50¢ per copy for quarter of year, or \$2.00 per year, issued quarterly. However, on all present yearly subscriptions the year will be finished at the current price. Please keep in mind this new price when renewing your subscriptions. Thank you!

Theme For Fourth Quarter, 1978

From Antioch, Paul determined to revisit the churches in Asia Minor and Greece. This third tour led him through Cilicia and Lycaonia into Galatia and Phrygia. The journey was largely occupied in establishing the disciples of these churches in the gospel and counteracting the widespread influence of the Judaizers. From thence he went to Ephesus and had a long visit with the brethren at that place. Paul left Asia Minor to revisit the churches in Europe. He spent three months in Greece wanting to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost.

His companions on the journey were seven men representative of his missionary activity in Asia and Europe, who were chosen to help him bear the contributions of the churches to the poor saints at Jerusalem. Luke's use of "us" implies that he, too, joined the company at Philippi.

We will finish with the life of Paul as written by Luke in this quarter, ending with his being in Rome, as a prisoner, living in a house for two years under guard. His influence was widespread and God blessed him as he preached the gospel.

—Sis. Marie Miles

October 1, 1978

PAUL'S LABOURS AT EPHESUS (Part 1)

Acts 18:18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

19:1 And it came to pass, that; while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

Memory Verse: For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. II Chron. 16:9.

Central Thought: God knows who is inclining their hearts toward Him, and will lead His ministers to them.

Word Definitions: *"Reasoned with the Jews":* To say or discuss thoroughly, disputing and exhorting. Apollos "taught diligently" the things of the Lord. The word *diligently here means "exactly or accurately."* *This man had a clear vision of truth.* **Holy Ghost:** Holy Spirit. In light of the fact that the term ghost (although it means spirit) in our modern word meaning

brings to mind a scary apparition or spectre generally associated with something haunted and superstitiously to be feared, we are persuaded that the expression *Holy Spirit* is a much more accurate and consistent expression to be used than the term *Holy Ghost*.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul had been blessed of God with good success at Corinth. In this city he had met and formed a close association with a Jew named Aquila and his wife Priscilla who had recently come from Rome. When he left Corinth he had this couple in his company. They came to Ephesus, where it appears that they parted from each other and Paul went into the synagogue to discuss and reason with the Jews. They desired him to stay longer, but Paul was disposed to journey to Jerusalem at that time and keep the feast. This must have been the feast of the Passover. He sailed from Ephesus and landed at Caesarea. It is evident that he went on up to Jerusalem and saluted the church and the brethren, and then turned back northward to Antioch. After this he went on farther north into Galatia and westward into Phrygia visiting and strengthening the disciples.

It was while he was on these travels that an unexpected blessing appeared at Ephesus. This is one of those scenes that help reveal that this work of God is not carried on through the labors of one man. A man from Alexandria, Apollos, showed up as being on the side of the truth. Notice the things the writer says about him. He was eloquent. The word *eloquent* is here translated from the Greek word "logios" which is a derivative of the term "Logos," which some have deemed such an emphatic and holy term that it should not be translated. "In the beginning was the Logos (Word) . . ." John 1:1. What it means here was that Apollos was a gifted orator, a fluent man capable of expressing words masterfully. Not everyone has this gift. Many have this ability that are not righteous before God and have moved people to wrong purposes. He was mighty in the Scriptures, This means he was capable of expounding the Old Testament writing in their true light. He was instructed in the WAY of the Lord. It means much to be instructed in God's way. He was fervent in spirit. This is a must. We cannot be cold and legalistic with the gospel. He spake and taught diligently (accurately) the things of the Lord. Apollos was limited in one thing—that was in his knowledge. He knew only the baptism of John. This was much

like the twelve that Paul found at Ephesus later. This makes us to know that the baptism of John and the teachings that the forerunner of Christ gave had great benefit to souls. Apollos went from Ephesus to Corinth. Paul instructed the Corinthians in his first epistle to them not to say, "I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos." I Cor. 3:4. Paul planted and Apollos came later and watered. Aquila and his wife took Apollos "unto them" and helped him to understand the way of the Lord more perfectly. Apollos took their counsel and was greatly used of the Lord. It is also interesting to note that although the twelve disciples that Paul found at Ephesus knew nothing of the Holy Spirit, yet when Paul presented them the truth, they were ready to obey and received the Holy Spirit when Paul laid his hands upon them. —L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What business did Paul have in coming to Ephesus?
2. Why did he not tarry long there?
3. Name the commendable traits of Apollos.
4. What did Aquila and Priscilla do when they heard Apollos preach?
5. Who did Paul find at Ephesus when he returned?
6. What was a common condition found in Apollos and the twelve disciples Paul found at Ephesus?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Paul stated in II Tim. 2:19, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Jesus said that in that day many would say, "Lord, Lord have we not done this and that in your name and done many wonderful works?" He said that He would answer them: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." It is one thing to know about Christ, but it is another thing to be known OF Him. It means much to be recognized and honoured of God. The Lord knoweth them that are His. He that names the name of Christ must depart from iniquity and do the will of God. Speaking of children of faith, Hebrews 11:16 says that God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city. God views the hearts of men. He sees everything about us. He knows those who serve Him honestly and faithfully. No pretense or hypocrisy can deceive Him. God knew Apollos before he ever came on the scene at Ephesus. Even down in the great city of

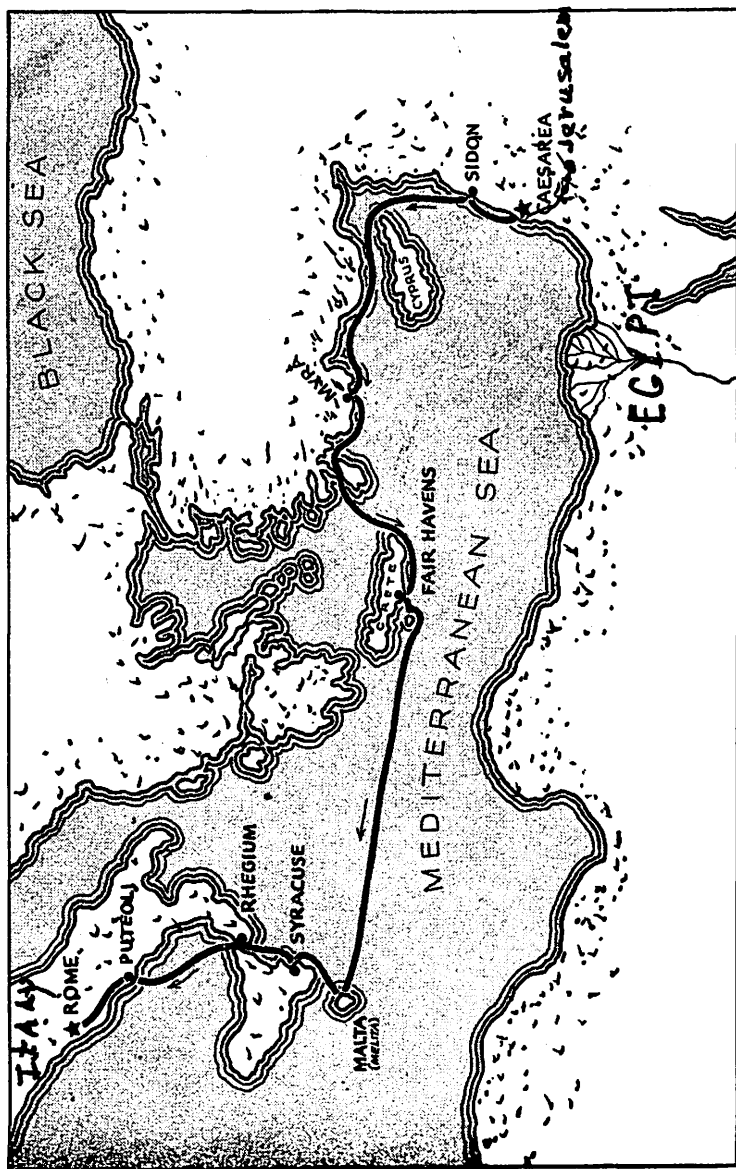
Alexandria on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, God had His eye on this man. The knowledge of God had come to him, and he had received a love for the truth. He had progressed as far as the baptism of John, but he was open for more light and truth. It is wonderful how God can arrange for hungry hearts to find the people of God. He is weighing the spirit of man. Oh, how diligent and earnest we must be in our pursuit of Him and the knowledge of His will. The Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, and her inquisitive and searching heart drew her to make the long journey to see if these things were so. Jesus knew about Zacchaeus who climbed up into the tree to see who He was. Yes, people who are indifferent and careless in their approach to God and religious matters are fooling and hurting no one but themselves. God is looking to see if there are hearts perfect toward Him. He will make a way for them. He will send His ministers to find and feed their hungry souls. Let us be willing to be used of the Lord for this purpose. Elijah thought he was the only one standing for the right, but God made him to know that there were seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed their knee to the image of Baal. God still has a remnant and always will. Are we going to be a part of it? That is the question.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” This is a question that everyone must answer. A person cannot live a victorious life unless he has the Holy Spirit dwelling within. We do know that God gives special help to those who do not have light and understanding about power being given to them through receiving the Holy Spirit. But today, we hear much preaching and instruction to those who have been forgiven of their sins of going on to perfection and being filled with the Holy Spirit. If we do not obey the Lord and the Word of God we will lose ground and go backward. So, it is important for us to answer the question above and do something about it.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is a definite second work of grace in the heart. When we come to God, we ask Him to forgive us of all our volitional sins. But, there is a sin principle in each of us that passed down from the fall of Adam, for which we can't ask forgiveness. That sin principle must be cleansed by the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit to do this, we must submit to Him in every sense of the word. We must give Him our body, possessions, will, and everything. He wants to be first in our lives



PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME

and when we submit and give all to the Lord, then God will fill us with the Holy Spirit. We then have power in our lives to be overcomers and please the Lord.

—M. Miles

October 8, 1978

PAUL'S LABOURS AT EPHESUS (Part 2)

Acts 19:8 And he [Paul] went into the synagogue [at Ephesus], and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul;

12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must see Rome also.

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

Memory Verse: I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. Ephesians 4:1.

Central Thought: As we continue on for God, labouring for His cause, He will work with us and open doors for us to witness for Him.

Word Definitions: *Disputing and persuading:* reasoning with and seeking to convince. *Handkerchiefs:* these were towels or napkins. *Aprons:* these were narrow coverings wrapped about the body, half of which was larger to form protection in work, etc. They were much like the aprons of today, perhaps not as large. *Vagabond Jews:* these were wandering people, who seemed to have no real purpose or cause in life. *Exorcists and adjure:* These two words are similar in the Greek. *Exorcist* is a Greek word which means one who binds with an oath or spell. To adjure is to bind with an oath. *Curious arts:* Magic works, but it is interesting to note that this is the same word which is used for the term "busybody." What it adds up to be is a human system of persuasion and influence employed by men and women who sought to dominate and rule the lives of others. Without the Spirit of God man fell into many sorts of methods to promote his causes! The plain unadulterated gospel needs none of these devices.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul was surely in the center of the will of God in his labours at Ephesus. It is evident from what Paul said later that he spent about three years there. Paul was on the side of the truth, and the truth will undoubtedly ultimately prevail. All opposition will fade before the truth. God was giving great witness with Paul. Even the effort of the vagabond Jews to cast the evil spirit out of a man proved to be an asset for the truth. When people saw and heard what had happened it brought great fear upon them. They made a big bonfire of all their evil books. The word of God grew mightily and prevailed. Somehow at this time Paul conceives the

premonition of a trip to Rome. Ephesus was a mighty city, but Rome was even greater. Paul longed to preach the gospel there also. Here is setting the stage for the move toward Jerusalem, the farewell to the dear Christian Churches that he had helped to raise. The burden increases as time goes on and we will see Paul pressed in the Spirit to go once again to Jerusalem. From there it will be toward Rome. The prevailing of the gospel brought much stirring among the people at Ephesus. A silversmith named Demetrius, fearing the loss of gains he had received by making shrines unto Diana, goddess of the Ephesians, stirred up the people against Paul. It was quite an uproar, but was quelled by the townclerk. The gospel had prevailed again. Opposition to the truth is usually stirred by the carnal reaction of unregenerated and proud people who lack understanding and consistency. The townclerk saw that Paul and his companions were harmless and peaceable men. Thus he dismissed the assembly, warning them of the danger of such uprisings.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the people do who hardened their hearts against the truth?
2. What was Paul's course of action when he was repulsed by the hardened Jews?
3. Why did the seven sons of Sceva want to cast the evil spirit out of the man?
4. What did the evil spirit answer them?
5. What effect did this have upon the people at Ephesus?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

There are many odds against which the Word of God must prevail in this world. Many ideas and beliefs infest the souls of men. Many superstitions and weird practices hold them in their sway, but there is something unique and outstandingly different about the gospel of Jesus Christ, the true gospel. It satisfies the heart of man as nothing else will. When backed with the signs and wonders that Christ promised to accompany the gospel, the message of salvation has a great appeal to the heart of man. Even then there are elements that will assert themselves in contradiction. Hearts will harden and wills will stiffen. It takes an humble heart to receive the Word of God. It takes a broken heart and a contrite spirit to be a recipient of the truth. Thus it requires much courage and diligence and faithfulness on the part of the heralds of the

gospel. Not running away in the face of opposition is indispensable. The people get stirred, an uproar will come, things will be said, and souls will be offended; but the servant of the Lord must not strive. He must give God time to work. Paul separated from the synagogue where the people hardened and talked against the way of the Lord, but he got hold of a place to continue his labours. Perhaps he rented this school of Tyrannus. Nevertheless, he continued to openly declare and fully preach the truth about Jesus. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." May we who are endeavouring to preach the truth today take courage! There is still much opposition, and poor benighted souls will fight the very thing that they need. Our only hope is that God will deal with hearts, and seek out the honest and open-hearted ones who are groping for the light. Not all will be saved, but all will have an opportunity to accept the Lord and to walk in His ways. It is not up to us who will be saved, but it is up to us to declare the Word of God and live the life to which His Word is calling us. God is still on His throne and the government is still upon Christ's shoulder.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Today our land is full of the same kind of evil spirits that were in Paul's day. Many books need to be brought together and burned. Many homes need to be searched by godly parents to see what kind of books their children are reading or what they have hidden under their mattresses. How sad that such filthy books are for sale! One time I was sitting in a bus station and as another sister and I looked at the big rack of books, I mentioned to her about the filthy books of the day. I told her that I felt I could go over there and just pick a book at random and it would have something in it that was filthy reading, that would be directly against anyone's purity of mind, and would be shocking. To prove my point I went over and picked up a book. To my amazement, it was even worse than I had thought and it grieved my very soul to think of our young people, and even older people, reading such trash. Oh, how there needs to be a great bonfire in my town and in yours. Surely, we are living in an evil day and we only see some of it, but God looks down upon it all. I am convinced that the closing of time is at hand. Let us be ready and live carefully before the Lord. Let us hold up the Word of God, as did Paul. He did not let down because many went out and "spake evil of that

way before the multitude." (Verse 9) Many will speak evil of us and the holy way that we teach, but that doesn't change the Word of God nor the holy way. God's truth will stand when this old world is on fire. We must measure our lives to the truth or we will not be ready. Adults, as well as young people never need to read any kind of book that will bring false teaching into their minds or allow such books to be read in their homes. If a book that contains false teachings is read, the Word of God should be definitely searched to prove that they are false. We must have truth or we will be lost.

—M. Miles

TABLETS OF EBLA

My heart began to beat just a little faster, I'm sure, when I saw the headlines on the left column of page 1, of the *Los Angeles Times* of June 7, 1976.

4,000 years old . . . TABLETS SHED NEW LIGHT ON THE BIBLE.

After reading the article I was even more excited. Soon, I went scurrying to my old Bible Atlas that I studied in school more than forty years ago. It is a manual of Biblical Geography and History.

There are five general periods of Biblical history.

Period I is called: THE PERIOD OF THE EARLY RACES. This period is from the Deluge, or great flood of Noah's day, in which God destroyed humanity because of its sinfulness, saving only Noah and his family to again perpetuate the human race. The exact date of the Flood is as yet unknown by man. In Noah's day, men scoffed at the old bearded eccentric who steadfastly built an Ark in the middle of a waterless wilderness. He said a flood *was* coming. The sinfulness of man on the earth had gotten completely beyond decent bounds and the God of heaven would no longer stand for it. Therefore, He would destroy them from the face of the earth. That's what Noah told his skeptic friends who gathered around him from time to time to see how the old man was doing with his big boat.

The Bible tells us that indeed the flood came. And Noah's old Ark kept him, his family, and two of every kind of animal, in safety until the waters that poured on the world for 40 days and 40 nights had receded.

"The earliest Biblical date that can be fixed with any degree of certainty is 2500 years before Christ," says my Bible

Atlas. Actually, no dates earlier than 1000 B.C. up to now have been regarded as established.

But now, the stone tablets recently discovered in Tell-Mardikh, Syria, take us back more than 4,000 years into civilization past! Which approaches the period of time when Biblical scholars believe the great Deluge, or flood, which destroyed the first race of sinful men, took place.

It is rather exciting to read that the Tablets of Syria, recently discovered, include stories recounting a great flood and the creation of the world. Both of the stories told on the Tablets correspond to Noah's Deluge and the account of the world's beginnings in the Old Testament.

A widely regarded expert in the field of Biblical archeology, Dr. David Freedman, of the University of Michigan, travelled to Rome to speak with the two discovering scientists personally. Upon his return, Dr. Freedman said:

"Previous reports and rumors do not begin to indicate the true dimensions of the discovery and its importance for ancient Near Eastern and Biblical studies. A new chapter in the history of the Near East has been opened and it will not be closed for some time."

Exciting! Thrilling! The stones cry out . . . when man is silent . . . or refuses to believe God.

What will it take . . . to make men believe that God's Word is true . . . and all men need a Saviour?

The Book of Job is the oldest book in the Biblical canon. It is said that it was written 1500 years before Christ was born.

In it Job asks the question: "But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?"

Perhaps he answers his own question in a previous verse of chapter 28, verse 3:

"He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection. The stones of darkness . . . and the shadow of death."

From under the darkness of 4,000 years of decaying civilization, the 'stones of darkness' buried in an ancient kingdom called Ebla, are today speaking the wisdom of God.

Heavenly Father, when man will not respond by faith to You, then You speak in other ways. The stones of archeological discovery will speak to the heart of sinful man.

God is real. Your dealings with man over his sinfulness through all history have been real.

Your love for him . . . even in the face of his sinfulness, is real. And Jesus Christ came from Your heart and home two thousand years ago . . . to redeem us.

Your Word and the stones recently uncovered at Tell-Mardikh in Syria, tell us of a flood in which you destroyed man for his sinful rebellion.

We are sinful in our generation . . . it is as it was . . . and worse . . . than in the days of Noah.

Now, Jesus Christ is our Ark of safety. Grant some to respond to Him and receive Him into their lives just now . . . Amen.

—The Log of the Good Ship Grace

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October 15, 1978

PAUL PREACHES ALL NIGHT AT TROAS

Acts 20:1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

3 And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.

16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

Memory Verse: Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. Luke 8:18.

Central Thought: The preaching of God's Word brings great blessings, delegates great responsibility, and is a joy to the Christian, even though the body becomes weary.

Word Definitions: *Exhortation:* Exhortation and comfort are two words in the Bible that usually come from the same Greek Word "parakleo." It means an invoking, an inviting, and a solace. It also implies *hortation*, which means "encouragement." *Preach:* To announce good news, the gospel, to declare (evangelize), to proclaim, to herald, to make known.

LESSON BACKGROUND

After the victory of the gospel at Ephesus in our previous lesson we find Paul tarrying there while he sent Timotheus and Erastus, two of the brethren, on into Macedonia determining to join them there later. It was while he tarried at Ephesus that an uproar over his preaching broke out in Ephesus. The whole city was filled with confusion. At one point for two hours the multitude cried with one voice "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." This was the darkness and ignorance that Paul faced in preaching the gospel. When Paul would have gone out to speak to the people, the brethren would not let him. It was the townclerk that appeased the people and gave them some wise words of counsel, warning them that they would get into trouble for the uproar that they had no real reason to stir up. After this Paul embraced the disciples and bid them farewell for to depart to Macedonia. He went over all the parts of that area of the country, giving them much exhortation. It is at Troas that an interesting and fearful thing happened, but God was present with His help and Paul's faith was steadfast. A young man went to sleep because Paul's message lasted until midnight. This young

man, Eutychus by name, was sitting in a window endeavoring no doubt to keep up with Paul in his message, but sleep overtook him. He could have gotten up and left or sought a more convenient seat. He did not. Notice Paul's reaction to what happened. When the report came to him of what had happened, Paul went down and embraced him, and no doubt prayed for him, also. He could have tarried down there waiting for the young man to come around. Instead he made a statement of faith: "Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him." He then went on back up and resumed his discourse and continued preaching until the breaking of the day. They brought the young man up alive and were greatly comforted. A large part of the party went by ship to their next stop, Assos, but Paul wanted to go on foot. No doubt he wanted time to meditate and pray as he walked. One can do that very well. It is a proven fact that people do not do enough walking. Everyone is in too big a hurry to walk today. Walking is good for the soul as well as the body. Paul decided to pass by Ephesus because he is pressed in spirit to go once more to Jerusalem by the time of the feast of Pentecost. Desiring to see the brethren at Ephesus again, he called them to Miletus where he had docked ship, and in our next lesson we will view his tender and touching farewell to them. —L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What were Paul's feelings and relationship with the Ephesian brethren?
2. Is getting sleepy in church services a sign of backsliding?
3. What was Paul's feeling toward the young man who fell asleep?
4. What was the idea of the all night preaching service?
5. When God raised the young man up, how did it make the brethren there feel?
6. Where was Paul in a hurry to go?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

In this wicked world where Satan has the upper hand in the majority of people's lives, the true saints of God are under great pressure and need much soul food to keep nourished and strong in the faith. God has sent His Holy Spirit to be our Comforter. The Holy Spirit has given gifts to the members of the Church to function for the edifying of the Church and the work of spreading the gospel to others. No matter how strong and close to God one may be, he will never be without need or

appreciation for solace, comfort, exhortation, or encouragement. We need much comfort today, from God and from one another. The gospel needs to be preached, re-preached, and continually held up before the Church and the world. The hungry and thirsty heart who is reaching out for more of God will never grow weary of hearing the gospel preached under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The flesh will grow weary, but the spirit of man is ever reaching out for the bread of life. It is tiresome to the flesh to attend a campmeeting or revival. Many lose interest and concern as their mind is taken up with the material side of life. This has always been true and still is. One must keep a hunger for the things of God and this hunger is satisfied through the ministry of the Word of God by reading, studying, or listening to it preached.

It is the life and duty of a preacher of the gospel to keep his heart filled with messages of truth to feed the souls of men. The Word of God is quick and powerful and we all need to keep in good contact with the Word. It will search our lives, and being inspired of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Thus it needs to be taught, preached, expounded, declared, and proclaimed until the end of time. We always need to have a listening ear to hear the Word of God. The young man at Troas fell from the third story. God had mercy on him because he was endeavoring to listen to the Word of God. Many people cannot sit through an hour's message from the anointed minister. They murmur when it seems time for them to go home and the preacher is not through yet. If the preacher is not anointed they have cause for unrest. Let us be sure that it is not our own lack of interest and carelessness. God's Word will do us good that nothing else will, so let us listen carefully and receive the good to our eternity-bound souls.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The first sentence of our lesson speaks of the uproar's ceasing. This was the uproar at Ephesus over the testimony of Demetrius of how effective the work of Paul for God had been. He and his craftsmen were losing their trade of making silver shrines for Diana their goddess. Demetrius caused an uproar in the city over this loss of trade. (Acts 19:24-41). In our previous lesson we noted that many believed on Christ and

burned their evil books worth "fifty thousand pieces of silver."
(Acts 19:19)

Let us take note of the great falling away of the belief in idol worship, and turn to the 12th chapter of Revelation. There, we see the great red dragon mentioned which is the symbol of heathen worship and paganism. This was what was going on in most of the world when Jesus was born. As the disciples, Paul, and his companions went forth to tell others about Christ, the dragon, or the idol worshippers, fought against them. In verse 7 we read about the war in the church heavens, or the war against the dragon by Michael and his angels (ministers) against the pagan worship. We note the dragon did not prevail but was cast down. That old dragon "called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." The lessons we are studying now show us that this came to pass. Paul went forth teaching that Christ was the Saviour of the world and many believed and were saved from the sin of worshipping idols. So Satan, the dragon, lost his high place in the world and was cast out.

In Rev. 20:2 it speaks of "the dragon, that old serpent which is the Devil, and Satan." In verse 7, it says that "Satan," which is the old dragon, anti-God or pagan spirit, will be "loosed out of his prison" to "go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth." (Verse 8) Today we see witchcraft, communism (which is anti-God), and other pagan or idol worship again becoming prominent in the world. Surely we are in the last days and we need to keep our hearts filled with the love of God.

Our lesson today speaks of Paul's continuing to wage a war against that old dragon, paganism or unbelief in Christ and the true God.

—M. Miles

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(NOTICE! It is important that we have your order for the next quarter by Dec. 1, 1978. Order early and be sure to remember the new prices mentioned on the first page of this quarter.)

October 22, 1978

PAUL'S FAREWELL TO THE EPHESIANS

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,

38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Memory Verse: Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts 20:28.

Central Thought: Although a minister labors with a people, there comes a time when he must depart for other fields of labor as God calls him, and he must commit those left behind to God and to the word of His grace.

Word Definitions: *Bound in the spirit:* constrained and pressed, directed and charged by the Holy Spirit. *Bonds and afflictions abide me:* Captivity and sufferings await me and will continually be my portion.

LESSON BACKGROUND

This is a touching scene in the life of Paul. God had made known to him that he would bear witness for Christ at Rome. The Holy Spirit was strongly moving him to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost. He showed Paul that much suffering and hardship lay ahead. Paul's zeal and love for the Lord superceded all threat of bodily harm and loss. He was leaving the brethren that God had used him to reach with the gospel. They were dear to him, and much rather would he remain in their presence. It was hard to leave them, but the Lord was calling him to other fields of labor. He had to commit these brethren and the fruit of his labors to God. God could be as real to them as He had been to him. It is interesting to note that Paul quotes from the Lord Jesus' words that are not found in the four gospels. The effect and principle are contained in the Biblical account of Jesus and His teachings. Thus, as John said, many more books could be written of what Jesus did and taught. John 21:25.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Paul serve the Lord among the Ephesian brethren?
2. Where did he teach them?
3. Why was Paul going to leave them? Where was he going?

4. How did Paul feel about his labors at Ephesus?
5. What did he charge the elders to do?
6. To whom did he commend them?
7. What saying did he quote from Jesus?
8. What did they all do as they were saying farewell?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Serving the Lord is the greatest accomplishment in life. But He must be served aright. Paul served the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears. He sought to uphold the standard of the gospel as it was in Christ Jesus. He was able to say that he was pure from the blood of all men. He was leaving the people with a clear mind and heart. His work was finished there and he was ready to depart. What a challenge this is to us!

How courageous we must be in the Christian life and service! Paul knew that sufferings lay ahead. He knew that the road was not going to be easy, but he took no account of this. The Lord was leading him, and he purposed to obey. His life in this world meant nothing except to serve the Lord and to do His will. This is our mission in life as the servants of Christ. Speaking of the past, looking into the future, he then deals with the present in commending the brethren to the Lord and to the word of His grace. Paul knew that it was not he, himself who could build these people up. It was God and His word of grace that Paul had been preaching and upholding. Now that Paul was to be taken off the scene, he knew that the Word he had preached would live on in the hearts of these brethren. This is true for us also. We must not look at the preacher, but listen and give diligent heed to the truth that he or she preaches. A true Holy Spirit anointed minister does not want people to look to him anyway. We must look to God and let His Word dwell in us richly. Paul wanted them to remember the words of the Lord Jesus. Oh, what good counsel this was! Jesus has the answer for all of our needs in life. His words are spirit and life. We would do well to search, study, and meditate, and then obey the counsel of our Saviour. Thank God, we have on record ample knowledge of all that Jesus did and taught. It is our responsibility to be attentive and to obey His teachings.

Saints of God love each other and love to be together. At the close of a good campmeeting our hearts are sad to have to

part from one another. If we keep true to the Lord there will be a better meeting in heaven. What a great day that will be!

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"None of these things move me." So many today are moved by "things." There are many things that touch our lives that can move us. Many have a great desire to live for God but they let "this" or "that" move them from their desire. Sometimes people will purpose in their hearts to live closer to God but they are moved by things that come in to take away that purpose. Surely we need to be like Paul, "none of these things move me."

Paul had to face those who hated him because he loved God and the ways which Jesus Christ taught. The Jews awaited him nearly everywhere he went to cause him trouble, but he did not let their troublemaking cause him to change his course. He continued to love Jesus Christ and preach to all who would listen. He preached that Christ was the Saviour of all who would turn to Him, repent of their sins, and with godly sorrow confess the errors of their ways. Troubles, which were "things," did not move him.

Today Satan is setting traps for our feet and trying in every way possible to cause us to turn away from the ways of the Lord, but we must say with Paul, "None of these things move me!"

A little slackness, a little edging toward the world, a little of this and that, which will come into our lives can move us away from the love of God. We must be as one of old who "set his face like a flint" toward heaven.

—M. Miles

October 29, 1978

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

Acts 21:1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

Memory Verse: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. John 13:35.

Central Thought: The Holy Spirit generates care and concern in the hearts of God's people for one another, yet He leads each one individually and must not be hindered in carrying out His purpose for our lives.

Word Definition: *"Took up our carriages":* packed our baggage.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Holy Spirit is impressing Paul to journey once more to Jerusalem. Paul was persuaded fully that this was the will of God. At Tyre and at Caesarea he met with opposition to his going up to Jerusalem, and it is very evident that the Holy Spirit was moving the hearts of the brethren to feel this way. This can be a very difficult and confusing situation. The Holy Spirit in one moves with compassion and earnest care for a brother in need. This is normal and the way God planned for His church to function. It is good for us to be respectful to the admonitions and counsels that come from our fellow-labourers in the Lord. There also is such a thing as being personally and individually led and moved by the Holy Spirit over and above all that others say. We must be very careful at this point. Some have overridden the counsel of others being persuaded of Holy Spirit leading, but have found out at length that they were mistaken in their own minds about the leading they felt they had from the Lord. Thus great trouble was brought upon them and they suffered discouragement and spiritual defeat. Then there are times when God leads us in a certain direction and we are hindered from obeying by brethren who are concerned for our bodily safety and material advantage. It can also be noticed in our lesson that at both of these places where Paul was advised not to go to Jerusalem, he tarried there several days. He was in no hurry. He was waiting on God. After all the counsel and warning was given (and doubtless he was praying much all the while) Paul yet was persuaded that it was the will of God for him to go on to Jerusalem. The brethren relinquished their hold on Paul and said, "The will of the Lord be done." This should be the attitude of us all, over and above all our feelings, sympathy, ideas, and concern. Let us remember then that there are times when we should consider and follow the counsel of our brethren in Christ, and then there are times when we are going to have to go ahead and obey the definite leadings of the Spirit. May God help us to know the difference.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the brethren at Tyre say to Paul?
2. What did these brethren do on the day Paul left them?
3. Who did Paul and his company stay with at Caesarea?
4. What kind of daughters did Philip have?
5. What did the prophet Agabus from Judea say to Paul?

6. What did Paul answer to those who sought to keep him from going to Jerusalem?
7. What did they say when they saw Paul could not be persuaded?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We see in our lesson that the brethren in Tyre and in Caesarea were much opposed to Paul's going to Jerusalem because of the dangers and harm that were inevitable to him. The Holy Spirit through them verified that which He had revealed to Paul, that bonds and afflictions awaited him. Of course they did not want to see such things happen to Paul, so they put forth great effort to persuade him not to go. This was a normal reaction. There was nothing wrong with their endeavoring to keep Paul from going on this hazardous journey, but it was up to Paul. At this point he could have done either of two things and been wholly justified. He could have heeded the brethren's warning and tarried a little while longer. If the Spirit would have continued to impress him personally to go on to Jerusalem, he could have gone then. He did tarry with them for several days, but he still believed that it was God's will for him to go. God understands. Jesus knows. There is an ultimate end that sometimes lies beyond our human sight. God wanted Paul to bear witness at Rome, and this was the path He was choosing to get him there. As we shall see later, it was far better for him to be escorted to that strange and distant city as a prisoner under the protection of the Roman government than to have gone on his own. God's way is best, but He does not override our wills in having His way. We must submit with a free will. We always have our ways and our wills with which to contend. Our ideas are ever present to assert themselves, but we must submit to God. Those who do not learn this lesson in Christian living have missed a most vital factor to success. Stubbornness and stiff-necked attitudes, along with hesitancy to acknowledge mistakes, keep many souls from enjoying and knowing what it means to be truly led by the Spirit of the Lord. It is easy for us to look on the human side. In this we must be careful. Peter was looking on the human side when he rebuked Jesus for talking about being crucified. What did Jesus say? "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Matt. 16:23. Let us seek earnestly to be led of the Spirit, for we know that He alone leads to victory.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone, Dare to have a purpose true and Dare to make that purpose known." We need men and women, young people and children who will love God so very much that they will be willing to lay down their lives for Him. I read that even some children refused to deny their love for Christ and because of this, their tongues were cut off.

"When Martin Luther entered a town the people flocked together to see the wonderful man who was so brave and who dared make a stand against the Pope and all the world that held him to be a god in opposition to Christ. Some gave him poor comfort, telling him that, because there were so many cardinals and bishops at Worms at the Diet, he would speedily be burned to powder, as Huss had been at Constance. But Luther answered such men as follows: 'And if they should build a fire between Wittenberg and Worms that would reach to heaven, in the Lord's name I would appear and step into Behemoth's mouth, between his great teeth, and confess Christ and let Him do His pleasure.' "

So it is, down through the years since the Apostle Paul, we have men and women who have dared to stand up and obey the Lord even if they knew they faced death. We never know when our time will come as we truly are living in the last days. May the Lord help us to have it settled to trust God all the way and obey His Word. He will see us through to a victorious passing into the heavenly realm to be forever with Him in glory.

—M. Miles

Jim Hodges' Funeral

Everybody knew Jim Hodges. He grew up in our town, and not a Saturday passed that the loafers down at the grocery store did not have some new tales to tell concerning his deviltry. Well, he wasn't exactly a bad boy; just sort of irresponsible and inclined to run about too much. That was before he started to make a hog out of himself drinking liquor. We just put it down to the devil in him and let it go at that.

Of course, we tried to get him converted at the yearly protracted meeting. When he was in his teens, he even came as far as the altar once. His father worried about his wayward son, and at times asked the congregation to pray for him. Whenever this would happen, Mr. So-and-So would say to himself, "The old goat had better be looking after the boy

himself, rather than trying to put the responsibility on the Lord and the congregation."

One night Jim was out with a bunch of tough fellows and Jim was killed. One big fellow started to pick a fight, and soon they were all tangled up in it. When the police got there, the rest were all gone, and there lay Jim with a bullet in his head.

Arrangements were made for the funeral to be held the next afternoon. The folks came early and by two p.m. the church was filled. The undertaker had a hard time getting the hearse up close to the front steps, the crowd outside was so thick. Most of them came, not because they loved Jim, but to see what the preacher would say about him.

When the singing was over, the pastor stood up. Everybody was tense, and nearly dying in suspense. You could feel something was going to happen. The pastor walked down from the pulpit and looked down upon the pale face of the dead man lying there. He paused for a moment, then began to talk just like Jim was there beside him, quietly, and sort of soft and sad. "Jim," he said, "we're here this afternoon to say goodbye to you. Lots of us did not pay any attention to you when you were alive, but now that you are dead, it seems everybody is anxious to see you. You have become a famous character, Jim. You might like that, but I doubt it. I think you're wanting to say something to us now, that we will never forget. Well, if you want me to, I'll tell them what you want to say.

"I remember when I first came here, three years ago, you were a fine young chap. Oh yes, you got into lots of mischief, but that was to be expected of a boy whose mother is dead, and his father is too busy to bother with him. You did a lot of things you ought not to have done, but none of us tried to help you. Of course we talked about you, and you heard about it, and it made you feel that everybody was against you. They called you a drunkard, Jim, and I suppose you were; but they forget what made you one. They did not say anything about the fact that your father drank like a fish, and your brother did the same.

"You're dead now, Jim, and we are the ones that killed you. We made it possible for you to become so miserable that you took to drinking. You seemed to think this was the only way out. Just what did we do to help you, Jim? Not a thing. Oh, yes, at times we prayed in general for everybody; you might say you were included then. But even then as we prayed, we did not really mean it. If we had, we would have done something about it. We would not have let you kept on going

until you drank yourself to death. We'd have stopped putting temptation in your way, by cleaning up the town, so it would have been hard for boys to get liquor. We might have stopped having such terrible places as the one where you met your death. Jim, today we are admitting that we are guilty of your death, yes, even your eternal destiny. I, as the preacher, did not do my duty, the church did not do theirs, and poor Jim's father did not do his."

Just then there was a shout from the front seat where Jim's father sat. The old man stood up with tears streaming down his cheeks. He held on to the seat in front of him, as if he was afraid it was going to get away from him. His voice was cracked and broken, but we managed to understand what he said. The old man called out,

"Hold on, Pastor, you said enough. Let me talk now. I guess I ought to be mad at you. I guess we ought to feel like running you out of town; for certainly nobody ever heard such a sermon as this. BUT you are right, Pastor, you're right. We are to blame for Jim's death. We citizens of this town have let him kill himself before our very eyes, and have done nothing about it. I, as the father, deserve most of the blame. I didn't understand what I was doing."

Just then Jim's father went up to the altar by the side of Jim's coffin. When I looked again, there was Jim's brother and a large number of the congregation. Many more were trying to come up, but the aisle was filled. I never saw such a funeral in my life, but it was the start of a real spiritual awakening in that community that later swept the country. Somehow we forgot that Jim's body was there; we just remembered our sins, and asked God in mercy to forgive us.

That very night a crowd of men went down to this place, where Jim got his whiskey, and told the man to close up; but he had already heard about the funeral, and had already started to board up the windows when they arrived. From that day to this we have never forgotten Jim's funeral.

So ends the tragic story of Jim Hodge's life and death. Just what are we doing today to make it hard for our sons and daughters to go the way of the transgressor? First, we must seek to lead them into a living experience with our Lord and Saviour, and, as Christian citizens, do all within our power to eliminate such places from our community.

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper? And He said, What hast thou done? the voice of

thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth. Genesis 4:9-11.

Through legalized vice the voices of a multitude of criminal boys and girls, men and women, are reaching God's ear, in condemnation of fathers and mothers and kin and friends and citizens, who permitted taverns, vile movies, jazz dances, gambling, and licentious literature to flourish in their community. While the church is seeking to promote the kingdom of God through great programs and building projects, she is sending multitudes to hell by her stark indifference and inaction concerning social conditions which defile men's bodies and souls and multiply empty pews. All our works are abominable if we neglect the most needful things.

Reader, are you truly saved? Do you love Jesus? Are you living a holy life, apart from the ways of the world? "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, . . . honest, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. . . and the God of peace shall be with you." Philippians 4:8,9. —Sel.

November 5, 1978

PAUL SEIZED AT JERUSALEM

Acts 21:17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar:

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

Memory Verse: The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. Prov. 12:15.

Central Thought: Persecution against God's people arises from ignorance on the part of the persecutors. Ignorance promotes indignation, and indignation leads to rage and anger because of seeming violation of certain principles that are ignorantly held to. Religious persecution is sometimes the worst kind of persecution.

Word Definitions: *Suppose:* To think or regard or imagine (many times without definite proof). *Uproar:* Disorder, confusion. *Tumult:* Disturbance. *No mean city:* Paul meant that Tarsus was a well-marked and well-known city.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we find Paul in Jerusalem. At the first all seems to go well, but one day the Jews saw Paul in the city

with Trophimus (a man no doubt that had come with him from Asia), and they imagined that Paul had brought this Gentile man into the temple. On the basis of this supposition they raised the city against him. Their agitation took hold of the prejudiced minds of the people, and soon all Jerusalem was in an uproar. They sought to kill Paul, but he was rescued by the soldiers. The chief captain thought Paul might be a certain Egyptian man who had previously made an uproar. Josephus mentions this man whose name is not known and how that he, under pretense as a prophet, told his followers that the walls of Jerusalem would fall down before them if they would go with him in an attack on the city. He influenced a great host of followers, who advanced as far as the Mount of Olives, when Felix, the Roman governor, came suddenly upon them with a large body of infantry and cavalry (on horse). The mob was dispersed, 400 killed, 200 taken prisoners, while the Egyptian and his most faithful friends escaped to the wilderness and were never heard from again. The chief captain wondered if Paul could be this man returned. Paul assured him that he was not that man, but was a Jew from the well-known city of Tarsus, and that he desired to speak to the people. The people gave him silence as he beckoned with his hand, and in our next lesson we will consider what he had to say to them.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What caused the Jews to suppose Paul had done wrong?
2. If you are looking for fault and evil in a person is it hard to find?
3. What does ignorance cause a person to do many times?
4. Does God overlook and excuse ignorance today?
5. Who was to blame for the uproar?
6. Were the Jews right in being displeased about the temple's being polluted with the presence of a Gentile?
7. Of what were they ignorant?
8. Was their attitude right?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is very common with humanity to develop and hold preconceived ideas about anything. This is especially true when there is any degree of strife or resentment in the heart toward anything or anybody. Here is where the true people of God stand forth in excellence. True people of God will not persecute. True enlightened saints are harmless, and yet bold

and strong for the right. They are aware that the fruit of righteousness can only be sown in peace by them that make peace. When an uproar and confusion is generated, you can be sure that someone is out of the will of God. Now a stand for truth and right will provoke a reaction in the heart of those who are not willing to take the truth, but the servant of the Lord himself will not strive. It is the reactionaries who will stir up the trouble. As it is here in the case of Paul, the persecution will stem from supposition and imagination. I have my doubts that Paul actually brought the Ephesian into the temple. Paul knew how the Jews felt about the temple. He was acquainted with the law. We do not really know whether he did or not, but the surmising Jews supposed that he did, and on this supposition they founded their uproar and complaint. Just think! An innocent man was nearly killed because of an unqualified supposition! Shame on the ridiculous ways of men! Their folly and their error is made truly manifest. God is on the side of the truth and the right way. God stood with Paul and He will stand with us today. We, as Paul, who are on the side of the truth, can bear witness of the truth without fear. It took courage on Paul's part to endeavor to speak to the people. Here is an exciting scene: Paul on the stairs that lead into the castle beckoning with his hand to the raging mob and gaining their silence and attention. There will be exciting and dramatic scenes in our lives, also. We must have courage, and not be daunted with the opposition and persecution that we meet. Man is plagued with ignorance, and we all are more ignorant than we realize. Therefore, we must look to God to teach and enlighten us, and walk earnestly and faithfully in the light that He gives us.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Sometimes plans made by man which are meant well turn out ill. The recommendations of James and the elders, and the compliance of Paul, were intended to insure Paul's safety, but they actually led to his arrest. When a plan turns out badly it cannot be safely argued that the plan was not good. We agree with the view which thinks that James's counsel, and Paul's practice were not, in this instance, the best, but we cannot pronounce them sinful; even had they been the wisest, they might have failed. The success of a plan does not necessarily demonstrate that the plan was good. It is common for the

counsels of the wicked to prosper on earth, though they will eventually be overthrown.

We note that the troubles of a good man (Paul) was that he was charged with apostasy in religion and blamed for committing sacrilege. He was nearly murdered. He was violently dragged from the court of the women and mercilessly beaten by the angry mob. He was innocently bound just like a dangerous criminal though no one could tell for what. He was ignorantly suspected of being an Egyptian when he was a Jew and of being a leader of assassins when he was only a peaceful citizen. He was accused of stirring up a sedition, when in truth he was a preacher of peace. But God was looking down upon him and knew what He had in mind for Paul. In this way Paul could get a free passage to Rome and there witness for God and while so doing live in a house with someone to protect him. God does perform His will in mysterious ways, at times. The main thought is that we, as children of God, take an example from Paul and be willing to live for the other world rather than for this world.

—M. Miles

November 12, 1978

PAUL'S DEFENSE AT JERUSALEM REJECTED

Acts 21:40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

22:1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.

3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

Memory Verse: But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. I Cor. 2:14.

Central Thought: The true testimony of Jesus Christ will be rejected by men who are ruled by the carnal mind.

Word Definitions: *Licence:* to allow, give liberty, permit. *Persecute:* to press or pursue. *Trance:* from the Greek word "ecstasy" which means a displacement of the mind, bewilderment. It is no doubt a state of the mind when one is carried away and absorbed in thought being totally unconscious of the surroundings.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson Paul is standing on the stairway leading into the castle (which was probably the headquarters of the chief captain) and is giving his defence to the angry mob of people from whom he has just been rescued, a mob that would have killed him. In this defence he recounts his conversion to Christ. Paul spoke to them that day in the Hebrew language, and this drew their attention all the more and they listened. Paul told how Christ revealed himself to him and also related how Ananias came to pray for him after his conversion. These things we have already heard about in previous

accounts, but then he tells something else. In Acts 9 we studied how that after he was run out of Damascus and had gone back to Jerusalem for awhile to acquaint himself with the brethren, he was forced to flee from there also. But here he relates the time when he was praying in the temple and the Lord spoke to him and told him to leave Jerusalem and go far from the city of the Jews to preach unto the Gentiles. When Paul said this the anger of the mob was aroused afresh and how terribly ugly did they act! These people were ruled by the passions of the carnal mind. They could not stand to think that God was going to have anything to do with the Gentiles. In their proud and darkened minds THEY were still the chosen people of God. They did not realize that they were rejected of the Lord. How sad! It is true even today. We can reject the way of the Lord and grieve His Holy Spirit just like they did. Let us take warning and be on our guard.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Paul first say of himself to the people?
2. Why did he give the testimony and account of his conversion?
3. What happened while he was praying in the temple?
4. What did Christ tell Paul to do?
5. How did the Jews react to Paul's defence?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We sometimes wonder as we survey the chain of events that took place in Paul's life just why he had to make one more visit to Jerusalem. Especially we might wonder about it as we consider Paul's account of what the Lord spoke to him in Jerusalem after his conversion. As in our previous lessons, not long before this (perhaps just a matter of weeks and months) Paul was in the far lands of the Gentiles, preaching the gospel and ministering to them. But here we see him again at Jerusalem, and this time not for long. It could very well be that the Lord wanted one more witness against the Jews before forever separating the Apostle from the once holy city. When Paul leaves this time, he will be leaving as a prisoner of the Roman government, under their escort and protection, and his final destination will be Rome itself. The Jews rejected his testimony concerning Christ. Thus, he turns his back forever on Jerusalem, and is setting his sails for the far reach of the nations. For the Jews, whose faces had gathered blackness, are to go on with a desolate and cold religious system, a form

of godliness, a shell, a lifeless image. The Holy Spirit has moved out. They said that Paul was not fit to live, but it was they themselves who were not fit to live. Their carnal minds, unregenerated and unenlightened, could not perceive the truth that Paul was promoting. Thus, they rejected him and the Christ that he preached, judging themselves unworthy of eternal life and unfit for the kingdom of God. Now the same spirit that dwelt in these people is not dead in the world yet. People still fight against the truth, but it is because of their carnal minds that they do so. "They know not what they do." As Paul said in II Cor. 3 that the veil was upon the hearts of the Jews back then, even so the veil yet hangs over the hearts of men today. If they would turn and seek the Spirit of the Lord earnestly the veil could be taken off their eyes and they could see the way of the Lord. Let us look with an open face at the glory of the Lord and let its transforming power alter and fashion our lives to His own divine image. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Let us look at the qualities of Paul and the qualities that each Christian should have. Notice the spirit of courage that Paul had. He was neither defiant nor arrogant. He had a calm fortitude which feared not man. He was not accepting man's flatteries nor his frowns, neither his threatenings nor his bribes, but was resting on God for his support. He had faith that God would take care of him in the most alarming dangers. This is the fortitude that Paul had when he stood on the castle stairs facing the mob.

Notice Paul's meekness and may it be ours. It is a true self-forgetfulness, which overlooks all the faults and failings of the hearers and their injustices. Notice that he addresses them as brethren and fathers on account of the covenant and promises of God, yet they were none other than his persecutors and murderers. He showed a spirit of love. It was not a gushing sentimentality, but a true, manly, and religious affection, seeing each person as a soul for whom Jesus died on the cross to save from sin and to bring peace to them. He didn't hold himself above them but on their level, as being a human being whom God had called to help them know that Jesus Christ was really the Messiah. Truly Paul had a spirit of simplicity and speech that was easily understood.

Let us think of that glorious light that shone around Paul on his way to Damascus. It was a great light and was beyond the brightness of the sun. Noon was to it as midnight is to

regular day. It came with blazing glory from heaven. No doubt it was the same light as shone on the transfiguration hill; possibly the same light the patriarchs saw. No doubt it was a symbol of something more glorious, which would be the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

—M. Miles

November 19, 1978

PAUL BEFORE THE JEWISH COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM

Acts 23:1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

Memory Verse: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. Luke 21:15.

Central Thought: Though opposition to truth may be difficult to avoid, it can be frustrated with wisdom.

Word Definitions: *Thou whited wall:* This is like what Jesus called the Pharisees in Matt. 23:27 when He labeled them as likened unto whited sepulchres that appear to be beautiful outwardly, but inwardly are as dead men's bones and all uncleanness. The Greek word for *whited* is "white-washed." *I wist not:* I did not know.

LESSON BACKGROUND

After Paul had made his defence to the mob of people who had sought to kill him, another uproar ensued. The chief captain decided to scourge Paul as a way of examination, but decided against that when he learned Paul was a Roman citizen. Next, however, he decided to bring the chief priests and all of their council together in order to find out just of what Paul was being accused. He brought Paul and set him before the council. It is interesting to note that Paul made but four statements before the council, each statement revealing a different aspect of Paul. First, he stated that he had lived in all good conscience before God until that day. This revealed his integrity. Then he rebuked the high priest for having him smitten. This revealed his indignation against wrong and injustice. When he was rebuked for speaking thus to the high priest, he apologized. This revealed his humility. Then he showed his shrewd wisdom by making a statement about what he was standing for, and it threw the whole council in another uproar. Paul saw that both factions of the Jewish religion were present in the council. He presented the issue of the resurrection from the dead, an issue that he knew would split their ranks wide open. And it did. This showed more clearly their folly and error. Their beastly hatred of Paul was more clearly seen later when forty Jews conspired to neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. Paul was on the side of the truth. He knew he was, and this gave him confidence. God

protected Paul from this conspiracy, and in our next lesson we will see Paul on the first lap of his journey to Rome.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Paul able to testify concerning his relationship with God?
2. Why do you think the high priest wanted Paul to be smitten?
3. Was it wise for Paul to speak as he did to the high priest?
4. Was it wise for him to apologize as he did?
5. What was the method Paul used to throw the council into confusion?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Sometimes we ask the question, "Just what did the Jews have against Paul and what was the basis for their opposition?" We must realize that the veil was hanging on their hearts. This veil Paul speaks about is in II Corinthians 3. They were blinded to the truth. Unbelief and pride had them blinded. It insulted their national pride as a nation to be told that a lowly Galilean was the Messiah. It infuriated them to be told that this Jesus whom they had crucified was resurrected and at the right hand of God as Lord and Christ. The main provoking element that charged them so full of bitterness and anger was that their fellow co-hort, Saul of Tarsus, had turned Christian and was promoting the cause that they desired to put down. As we study these men through the account given of them here in their relentless persecution of Paul and the saints, we see just what shallow, vain, and evil men they were. We see the height of their fury manifested when they bound themselves with a curse, purposing to not eat nor drink until Paul was out of the way. What vehement indignation and unrighteous anger! We have wondered what ever happened to these men in this conspiracy. They did not get to kill Paul; of this we are sure. They either starved to death or somehow got out from under their curse. Paul had something on his side that they did not have. This was Jesus and His blessed truth. We had better be sure in our endeavors that we have this also. If the truth is on your side, you do not have to put yourself under a curse to put it over. The truth will stand unsupported by human means. It is what will make people free, and it has its own appeal to the hearts of men. God will back up His truth. Everyone who is of a true heart and will be honest with himself will hear His voice. They

who fight against the truth do it to their own hurt and destruction. Pilate asked, "What is truth?" There he was, a grown man with the governorship upon him, knowing not what the truth was. It is a quest that all should take upon themselves in life: to seek and find what is the truth. It is costly to find, but once gained is not to be sold. Prov. 23:23.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Paul severely rebuked the high priest, Ananias, because he had used his office contrary to the law that the high priest was supposed to represent. Paul was a student of the law and knew exactly what the duties of the high priest should be. Although he rebuked the high priest, he knew that he should not have done it. We notice in verse five that he was truly sorry by calling all of them brethren, which they were in the flesh, in attempt to let them know that he was sorry. If a child of God gets into close places and does not use wisdom, it is a good thing to correct that error right at the time or even later if it is shown to him that correction is necessary.

Someone has said that the Sadducees were named rightly because truly it is sad not to believe in a resurrection. If there be no resurrection then Christ is not raised and Christ's people will not be raised hereafter. After Christ's body was laid in the grave, He appeared unto Mary. On the cross Jesus told the one thief that believed on Him as His Saviour "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." Jesus' spirit and the spirit of the converted thief both went to the spirit world when the souls left the bodies that were laid in the tombs. "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept (the spirit is alive in paradise and the body sleeps in the dust) . . . Christ the firstfruits: afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." I Cor. 15:16-23. Oh, such glorious truths! We who are Christ's will arise in the last day and we will put on new bodies and live in eternity with the Lord forever.

—M. Miles

November 26, 1978

PAUL AT CAESAREA BEFORE FELIX

Acts 23:31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle.

33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

24:1 And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

Memory Verse: And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. Acts 24:16.

Central Thought: God designs the gospel to be presented not only to the lowly and poor, but often arranges for His servants to bear witness before kings, governors, and men in important places.

Word Definitions: *Orator:* A person with good speaking ability. *Felix . . . deferred them:* he dismissed them. *Righteousness:* equity, justice, that which is right. *Temperance:* self-control. *Judgment to come:* The great judgment day we are all facing.

LESSON BACKGROUND

At the close of our last lesson we learned that about forty Jews were plotting to take Paul's life, binding themselves under a curse to do so. Paul's sister's son learned of their plot and he told Paul. Paul in turn arranged for his nephew to be taken to the chief captain about the matter. The chief captain took action at once, and arranged for two centurions to provide two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to convey Paul safely through the night with a letter to Felix the governor at Caesarea. At Antipatris (about halfway to Caesarea) the horsemen took Paul on while the 400 soldiers and spearmen returned. This was the hand of God protecting Paul from the murderous designs of his persecutors. Paul was afforded the protection of 470 men for his escape from Jerusalem. This was the beginning of his journey to distant Rome. Felix received Paul and gave him safekeeping and sent word to those Jews at Jerusalem to come and level their case against Paul. Five days later they arrived, bringing with them a certain orator whom they no doubt hoped would sway the mind of Felix against Paul. It should be noted that this smooth talker had no bearing on Felix, especially after Felix had heard Paul's testimony. Also, notice that Paul says that it has been only twelve days since he came to Jerusalem to worship. He also stated that he had come to bring alms to his nation, and offerings. Paul had a great opportunity to deal with Felix and that he did. Felix had his chance here to do something about his eternity-bound soul, but alas, like so many, he sought for a more convenient season.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Which proved the most successful, Tertullus's polished accusations or Paul's simple story of truth?
2. Discuss Paul's speech and what did he mean that after what they call "heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers"?
3. How can we always have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man?
4. Discuss righteousness, temperance, and judgment as to their relations to us today?
5. What was Felix's conclusions of Paul's speech and plea to him?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Felix was the Roman governor of Judea. His wife was a Jewess. According to the speech of Tertullus, the orator, Felix had graciously done much for the Jews and showed them great favor. The Lord Jesus was now showing Felix a special favor in having His servant Paul to be in his presence to speak and reason with him concerning the faith of Christ. It is no doubt true that despite his favor for the Jews and his good ability as governor, Felix was a sinful and very indulgent man. Paul reasoned with him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. We all today need to face these issues. We need to live right. We need to treat our fellow man right. We need to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Having cleansed and purified us from our sins, God is expecting something out of us. He has plenty of grace to enable us to do so. We need to be temperant. Temperance is self-control. Our appetites, passions, emotions, and desires must be held in proper bounds. A person can be drunk on many more things than whiskey. We can overdo and step over the bounds in many legitimate functions of life. We are going to be judged for the deeds done in the body. Judgment is coming to everyone. We need to take heed as to how we live. There are the things that Paul reasoned with Felix about. Felix trembled. "Go thy way, and when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee." Did the more convenient season come? No. The most convenient season was before him right then. Thereafter his heart grew harder. He hoped to get some money from Paul, and it was for this cause that he sent for him often and communed with him. This is a serious problem with the human race. Coming face to face with the facts and the responsibility of life is to meet everyone. We can

face and accept it and do something about it, or we can evade the issue and go our way. But this does not excuse us. The same old issue will confront us all along the way, rising up at times when we least desire it to. It takes effort and strong will-power to accept it and take proper action. It is very doubtful that Felix ever was saved. Where is he now? He is in eternity. He will be at the judgment. God will have the last word about every one of us, also.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Paul asserted, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward man." (verse 16). Paul had true faith in Christ who had forgiven him of his sins. He also had the Holy Spirit dwelling within. He knew that God was leading him and was on his side. "If God be for us who can be against us?" was a truth that he believed sincerely. He also was assured that God had called him to a work and he was performing it. This gave him a clean conscience. He possessed inward peace before God and this established his heart in the hour of danger. This gave him strength to perform his duty.

We can have a conscience that is void of offense toward God and man. In fact we must always see to it that we have this kind of conscience. By obeying God's Word, and not trying to merely get by, we can have favor with God in the time of need.

We must know that we cannot live by our conscience unless it is a regenerated conscience. Some may say that their consciences don't bother them to do this or that but if the Word condemns it then their consciences are seared. They cannot safely go by that kind of thought. God requires obedience to His Word, not only by the letter but by the principle laid down in the Word on things not mentioned. May the Lord stir our hearts to perfect obedience to the Word of God and live according to it before God and man.

—M. Miles

December 3, 1978

PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

Acts 24:27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

25:1 Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea: and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

Memory Verse: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Romans 10:15.

Central Thought: God moves in mysterious ways to perform His wonders. He treasures up His bright designs and works His sovereign will in our lives as we yield unto Him.

Word Definitions: *Festus came into Felix' room:* Felix was removed from the governorship, and Porcius Festus took his place.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Another governor had come and taken the rule of Judea. His name was Porcius Festus. It is revealed in *Josephus* that Claudius Caesar was unwilling to commit the governorship of Judea to just anyone, so he kept it more immediately in his hands and governed it by procurators sent from Rome. (*Josephus* 50:20). After Festus had arrived to take up his abode at Caesarea, he tarried three days, and then made the trip (about 50 miles) to Jerusalem to acquaint himself no doubt with the nature of the government of the Jews, so that he could be of better administration of judgment to them. Doubtless, feeling that the new governor might afford them better opportunity of ridding themselves of the influence of Paul, the Jews once more brought up their charges, even scheming to have him brought to Jerusalem, hoping to kill him on the way. But God's favour and protection was over Paul, and He did not permit Festus to yield to their desires. He did invite any of the Jews to return with him to Caesarea and there he would sit in judgment concerning Paul. Here no doubt, Paul surprised them when he refused tribunal at Jerusalem, but rather appealed unto Caesar. This was Paul's privilege as a Roman citizen. The Jewish hopes of avenging their anger on Paul faded. Festus gave the decree that Paul was to go to Rome and to appeal before Caesar. This was God's way of getting Paul to Rome. We ought not to question the ways and workings of God. On the surface we see a man on trial innocently and wrongfully accused. Under the surface we see the will of God providing and directing the way for him to be a better servant and witness for the truth. —L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who came to be governor in Felix' place?
2. Where did he go after arriving in Caesarea?
3. Who sought his favor at Jerusalem?
4. Did he comply with their wishes?
5. What did they have in mind?
6. What did Festus agree to do?

7. Who did Paul appeal in judgment to? Did Festus comply with Paul's appeal?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Here is another step taken in Paul's transport to Rome. God works in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. Deep in unfathomable mines of never-fading skill He treasures up His bright designs and works His sovereign will. God has to work through people many times to bring about His design for us. This is because we live among people. We cannot be isolationists. As He works with people concerning His will for us, we are given opportunity to bear witness for Him. There will be many people contacted on this journey to Rome that perhaps would not have been reached had Paul been left to choose his own course. Paul was yielded into the hands of God. Yet he felt it expedient to request and appeal his rights as a Roman citizen just as long as it did not transgress the law of righteousness. No doubt he is not aware at this point of what God has in store for him on this journey. But it matters not with him. He has it all committed to God. Oh, the joy of a surrendered life to the will of God. It is joy because we are assured that the great loving Being that created us is ever guarding and watching out for our good, choosing for us things that will work for His glory and our benefit. How much calmness Paul must have had to endure the emotional strain he was going through in those days. No doubt he knew the Scripture in Isaiah 30:15 where it said that "in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." This is a challenging thought! So much unrest, anxiety, and fretting spoils the peace of God in so many. We must learn these lessons. We do not know them automatically. Life is a school of learning. Paul was a good student, an apt pupil. So must we be. Many stumble and flounder in melancholy and depression because they have failed to learn vital lessons in Christian discipline. God loves us, and is interested in us, whether we feel that way or not. We must believe Him, and not be afraid. Let us cast all our care on Him, for He careth for us. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Let us think of the contrast between Christ's judgment and Caesar's. Caesar's authorities were appointed by kings and emperors of the earth, but Christ's workers, ministers, etc.,

are appointed by the King of Kings, the Lord of eternity and Sovereign of the universe. The judges in the case of Caesar that were entrusted with court procedures were mortal, fallible, and sinful men. Christ sits on the judgment seat and is the Divine Son, who liveth evermore, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and with whom is no respect of persons. At the judgment seat of Caesar the business which was transacted pertained to temporal affairs of men, so far as they affected men's mundane interests; Christ's the concerns of the soul and the transactions of life. The verdicts which were issued at the judgment seat of Caesar were often such as were false and oppressive; but from Christ's always such as are just and true, and there is no appeal to higher authority, while in Caesar's there could be an appeal. We know that the same parties who appeared before Caesar's judgment seat must appear before Christ at the last day when all will be judged by the Judge of all judges.

—M. Miles

If Jesus Came to Your House

If Jesus came to your house
To spend a day or two—
If He came unexpectedly,
I wonder what you'd do.

Oh, I know you'd give your nicest room
To such an honored Guest,
And all the food you'd serve to Him
Would be the very best,

And you would keep assuring Him
You're glad to have Him there—
That serving Him in your own home
Is joy beyond compare.

But—when you saw Him coming
Would you meet Him at the door
With arms outstretched in welcome
To your heav'nly Visitor?

Or would you have to change your clothes
Before you let Him in,
Or hide some magazines and put
The Bible where they'd been?

Would you turn off the radio
And hope He hadn't heard,
And wish you hadn't uttered
That last, loud, hasty word?
Would you hide your worldly music
And put some hymn books out?
Could you let Jesus walk right in,
Or would you rush about?
And I wonder—if the Saviour spent
A day or two with you,
Would you go right on doing
The things you always do?
Would you keep right on saying
The things you always say?
Would life for you continue
As it does from day to day?
Would your family conversation
Keep up its usual pace,
And would you find it hard each meal
To say a table grace?
Would you sing the songs you always
Sing and read the books you read
And let Him know the things on which
Your mind and spirit feed?
Would you take Jesus with you
Ev'rywhere you'd planned to go,
Or would you maybe change your plans
For just a day or so?
Would you be glad to have Him meet
Your very closest friends,
Or would you hope they'd stay away
Until His visit ends?
Would you be glad to have Him stay
Forever on and on,
Or would you sigh with great relief
When He at last was gone?
It might be interesting to know
The things that you would do
If Jesus Christ in person came
To spend some time with you.
—Mrs. Lois Blanchard

December 10, 1978

PAUL'S TESTIMONY BEFORE KING AGRIPPA

Acts 26:1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

29 And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

Memory Verse: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. Acts 26:23.

Central Thought: It is very vital that we have a clear, clean, definite testimony of divine grace and also that we have a life to back such a testimony.

Word Definition: *Almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian:* "Within a little me thou persuadest a Christian to become." This is how the statement is formed in Greek. Agrippa was almost persuaded. I wonder what were the little matters that held him back.

LESSON BACKGROUND

This king Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa mentioned in chapter 12 who had James killed with the sword and who undertook to have Peter killed also, from which Peter was miraculously delivered. Josephus says that Agrippa was strongly attached to the Romans and worked for their interests in his dealings with the Jews. This Bernice who was with him before Paul, was his sister. She had been married to their father's youngest brother, but had, after his death, come to live with Agrippa. It is violently suspected that these two lived together as man and wife, and doubtless were very sinful in their habits. Regardless of the plain and distinct teachings and testimony of the prisoner before him, and his own persuasion of the law and the prophets, Agrippa was unwilling to submit himself to divine laws and take up his cross to follow Jesus. He knew what he would have to do, and it seemed too great a price for him to pay. But it is greatly evident that he was impressed with Paul's innocence, and desired to release Paul. But he could not because Paul had appealed unto Caesar, and doubtless the legal writing on the matter had already been sent to Rome, and the case had to go on through. Some research has concluded a possibility that Agrippa gave a good word for Paul at Rome, thus helping

him to have at least two years of good liberty when arriving there besides the courteous treatment of Julius, the centurion who had custody of Paul on the succeeding voyage.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Paul feel about the privilege of testifying before Agrippa?
2. How bright did Paul say the light from heaven was that shone around him?
3. For what did Jesus say he was sending Paul to the Gentiles?
4. How did Paul feel about Agrippa?
5. Did Agrippa embrace Christianity?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Paul has the background, the experience with Christ, the boldness and calmness, the wisdom and Holy Spirit anointing to speak to Agrippa and the great host of hearers on this day. Notice how clear and clean-cut his statements are. Agrippa feels the weight of this, also. All of the Jews' arguments and accusations against this man are vain. The truth that he is speaking rings clear. There is no doubt. Agrippa is almost ready to embrace the cause of Christ. He is almost ready to become a Christian and be a partaker of the richest kingdom of all. Almost he is persuaded to become a Christian. Who can deny that this man Paul has the truth? Alas! something pulls Agrippa back. He thinks of his prestige and honour of men. What would they think of his taking up with that despised way? Perhaps he glances at the woman beside him. What would she think? Though it is just a little, it is enough to turn him aside. Very little possibility there is that he ever became a Christian. To become a Christian! Oh, what a thought! To embrace the Son of God and allege one's self to His glorious cause and kingdom! Oh, what riches to be gained that will never fade! Eternal life in that blessed world without end! But, oh, the great step to be taken! Think of the ties that must be severed and the things that must be given up. A great change it will have to be. Jesus knew that, and Paul knew that. If a man is unwilling in the face of the facts and the truth to voluntarily step forth into such a life, it is futile to waste time trying to persuade him any further. Paul steps back after expressing his desire not only for Agrippa and Festus, but for all that heard him. It is still the same today. The gospel

of Jesus Christ brings us to a place of decision. We have to take it or leave it. We cannot be neutral. We must take up our cross and go with Christ, or we must turn it aside. How sad that the majority of mortals when they are brought face to face with the issue are unwilling to obey the gospel. Paul was willing, because he had counted the cost. He knew that to continue to persecute the followers of the Lord was kicking against goads and sharp realities that would bring sorrow and injury to his life. It is the same today. What are we going to do with the Saviour? —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Let us notice the hidden impulse of Paul's ministry—the heavenly vision of the glorified Saviour who had appeared to him, pardoned, called, and appointed him to his special lifework. Captivated by that "vision," he felt himself to be no longer a freeman, but the bond-servant of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:10). The vision remained with him, a memory unfading, which cheered him in solitude and depression, strengthened him in weakness and weariness, and generally rendered it an absolute necessity to preach the gospel and keep ever moving toward regions beyond. (I Cor. 9:26; 2 Cor. 10:16). It accompanied him wherever he wandered, supplying him at every stage and in every time of need with fresh inspiration, zeal, and courage. Whatever he had been and done since that memorable day, he told the king, had been due to that "heavenly vision" to which he had not been disobedient. In like manner, if Christ's people evince the joyful submission to, and cheerful following of, the "heavenly vision" which shines in upon their souls they might emulate the apostle in lofty characters and noble deeds.

Paul went forth to obey the Lord. His ministry commenced in Damascus, then advanced to Jerusalem and extended throughout Judea, finally passing to the Gentiles. Can we not say that Paul's ministry has passed even to you and me today? What a wonderful privilege to have an account of his works and labors! God revealed to him precious truths which are life-giving to our soul. —M. Miles

December 17, 1978

TOSSED WITH A TEMPEST

Acts 27:1 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.

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 a haven of Crete, and lieth toward the southwest and northwest.

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

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

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.

Memory Verse: Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Psalms 107:8,15,21,31.

Central Thought: It is dangerous to chart our course on the sea of life without committing ourselves to the Lord for His guidance and providence.

Word Definitions: *Sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past:* Adam Clarke mentions that this fast is generally believed to have been that of the great Day of Atonement, which was always celebrated about the time of autumnal equinox, when the Mediterranean Sea was sufficiently tempestuous. The Jews held this time to be a dangerous time to sail. *Euroclydon:* In the Greek it means a storm from the east. It blew the vessel that carried Paul and the others pretty well due west.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have in our lesson the embarking of the voyage to Rome, Paul's warning to not continue the voyage, the rejection of his counsel, the sudden rising of the storm, the dark tempest that seemed to take all hope away, and then the ray of comfort to Paul afforded by the visitation of the angel of God. The Lord had caused Julius, the centurion, to favor Paul, and to grant him the privilege at Sidon to go ashore and visit his friends. After sailing past Cyprus, they came to the city of Myra, of Lycia. There they found a ship whose destination was meant to be Italy. They embarked on this vessel. After sailing slowly many days they came to the island of Crete and stopped at a place called The Fair Havens, near to the city of Lasea. It was here that Paul advised them to not continue on their voyage, perceiving that trouble lay ahead. The men in charge did not heed Paul's counsel. The haven was not very commodious, so the most part thought it best to try to get to Phenice, which was a haven on the western end of the island of Crete, and winter there. The soft, south wind began to blow, and they supposed that they had obtained their purpose. They loosed and endeavored to keep close to the island and make their way to Phenice. It was then that the great storm hit them. They could not control the ship, but just let her go. It appears that as they passed by the little island of Claudia, the boat (which was the small vessel used in transferring from ship to shore) somehow got blown or washed overboard and they almost lost it. After undergirding the ship with strong ropes, they lowered the mast and were driven by

the storm farther and farther west. Notice that all hope that they should be saved was then taken away. They had not seen the stars nor the sun for many days. Oh, the awfulness of a storm at sea. It is indescribable! But God was with Paul, and comforted him with assurance that they would be saved.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Paul advise them not to continue the voyage at that time?
2. Why did they not want to tarry at the Fair Havens?
3. What caused them to think that they had obtained their purpose?
4. Where were they trying to go?
5. Why were they not able to reach Phenice?
6. How serious did their situation become?
7. What did Paul tell them?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Contrary winds and storms of life can sweep upon us when least expected. Much anguish and sorrow of heart can be avoided if we will learn to wait on God. Yet if we will take courage and maintain faith in God's great goodness, He will take us through the raging storms to our desired haven. Read Psalms 107:23-31. Here we have a scene on the raging seas much like Paul and those with him were in the midst of. I have never been on the high seas, but I have gathered from the reports of others that there is nothing as terrifying and horrible as a raging ocean. To be out there lost and beyond the reach of firm soil is a most distressing and fearful predicament. With waves mounting up on either side and the ship rising and falling, tossing and turning, threatening to overturn; with waves dashing over the deck; with so many seasick (and it is said that it is such a terrible sickness that one wishes to die); with clothes soaked to the skin and a cold wind chilling—yes, it is a plight, an awful situation to endure. Dry land is longed for. We may not ever be on the stormy seas like Paul was, but let us remember the stormy seas of life. The tempest can break upon us when we least expect it. Adversities and reverses come. The sun refuses to shine upon us, and we come to our wits' end. But, as our next lesson will reveal, the storm can serve but one purpose if we keep the right attitude and spirit toward God. It can take us to places of great benefit and service to us and to our fellow man. He is the

master of the sea, billows His will obey. They threw many things overboard. There are things we will have to throw out of our lives, weights and hindrances, things that the Spirit of the Lord puts His finger on. It will mean much to make it to our desired haven. It will mean much to make heaven our home. The Lord is our only hope. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Calmness in the stormy trials, afflictions, and problems of life can only come from an assurance that God is abundantly able to take care of all things that concern one's life. It is easy to be cool and calm when sailing over placid seas; but to be caught in a Euroclydon, which whistles through the canvas, makes the cordage rattle, strains the timbers or iron plates of the ship, and tosses it about upon the boiling waters like a plaything, is sufficient to try the nerves of the strongest, bravest, and best men. Even the disciples in similar circumstances were afraid. (Matt. 8:23-27). Yet, Paul was a calm prisoner. He was working all day (ver. 19) and at night not sleeping, though he could have done so as peacefully as Jonah (1:5), but waking, visited by angels, communing with the heavens, praying for himself and his fellow-voyagers. Could Paul not say that Jesus, who stilled the sea of Galilee, was with him?

Paul had heard from heaven and he believed the promises of God. God had sent His angel and told him that none would be lost. He said, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." Praise God! Do we believe or are we too proud to simply believe? Can't we, with child-like faith, believe God's promises? When problems arise, can we get hold of one of God's promises and say, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me"? Believe God. Believe what His Word says and that it is for you. Act in belief and rest upon it. —M. Miles

December 24, 1978

SHIPWRECK AND RESCUE

Acts 27:27 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;

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.

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.

28:1 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 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.

Memory Verse: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28.

Central Thought: The raging storm and shipwreck proved to be the hand of God putting Paul on an island where there were people needing the influence and help of the gospel of Christ.

Word Definitions: *Creek*: an inlet of water from the sea, a bay. *Barbarous*: foreign, one of another tongue. *Viper*: adder. *Bloody flux*: Dysentery (Greek word) painful inflammation and bloody discharge.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Here is a case when God took matters in His own hands and by means of a raging storm conveyed His servants to a place they would not have chosen to go. Paul and the brethren were not aware of the needs of the people on this island of Melita, which is due south of Sicily. Sicily is the "ball" at the toe of the "boot," which is Italy. A very small island it was, twenty miles long, about twelve miles broad, and about fifty miles from the coast of Sicily. A small insignificant place it might have seemed to be, but there was a society of people there who was precious in God's sight. God wanted them to know and be blessed by the healing of Christ. God designs that the will of man be involved in His ways, but there are times when His will moves beyond the reach of man. These people were helpless at the terror of the sea. There was nothing they could do in themselves about it. The ship was lost. Paul knew that it would be. In those last hours as day was coming on, Paul encouraged them to take some nourishment, telling them that all would be well, and that not a hair of their head would perish. When the day broke, they saw a place where they thought they could thrust the ship. Taking up the four anchors that they had cast the night before to hold the ship in place, they made toward shore. The front part of the ship struck aground and remained steadfast, but the hinder part was broken to pieces. Thus the ship was lost but the outcome was that all 276 people on board that ship escaped safely to land. Doubtless there were people on shore who had observed the stricken vessel and they took pity and showed kindness to them. It is wonderful to think that God made that special effort to have His servants contact these people. God loves all men wherever they are. So we see that the terrible storm that they had ridden out those long dreary days proved to be a great blessing to all.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Look on a Bible map and find the distance from Claudia to Melita.
2. What did the soldiers want to do with the prisoners?
3. What did the centurion want to do?

4. How many were saved?
5. What happened to Paul while he was gathering sticks?
6. What did the people think about it and what changed their minds?
7. What work for the Lord did Paul find to do on the island?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." He gave His disciples a great commission that could only be carried out with the help of God. He works under cover, though. It was God's hand that put Paul and those with him on the little island of Melita. He did it in the disguise of a raging storm. Paul had no authority over where the ship went, but God did. He saw that those poor people at Melita needed to know about Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Paul was on his way to Rome as a prisoner to be tried before Caesar. We see that this also was a disguise. In reality he was going there to bear witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God works in a disguise. People do not realize when He is working. He has a reason for doing this. If He worked out in the open all the time, man would be intruding and meddling, but as He works in secret, man cannot hinder. David said in Psalms 18:11, that He made darkness His secret place. We must have a mind to be ever beholding and searching for the workings of God in our lives, also. He will be covered up under many things that we will not be inclined to think as His doings. It is a great joy and secret of success in the Christian life to be able to see God in all things. Jesus was a prisoner, taken and nailed to the Roman cross. To the human eye, he looked like a victim of wrong. This was a disguise. The real function was the salvation of men and women from sin and death. It pleased God to have it carried out just this way. There are too many unholy eyes and haughty hearts scorning and searching for fault. The kingdom was promised to come to Israel, but it came in a disguise. It came not in outward show, but through inward grace. These are God's ways of working. Accept them, and seek earnestly to understand the ways and workings of God. Paul said in Romans 11:33 that His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out. His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known. (Psa. 77:19), But He will make known His ways to us, if we seek Him earnestly with all of our hearts. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Maltese onlookers, as they saw the reptile springing from the flames and fastening on Paul's hand, reasoned, probably observing his fettered wrists, that he must be some notorious criminal—a murderer, for instance—whom, though he had escaped the waves, Divine Justice, that minister of Heaven that ever follows on the heels of crime, would not permit him to live. This suspicion, which they whispered to each other, bore a striking testimony to the sense or apprehension of Divine justice which sleeps in every man, even the most degraded, supplied a signal instance of man's readiness to lapse into error when interpreting providential occurrences or pronouncing upon the characters of others, and gave a salutary reminder to all that even the best of men may be misjudged by their fellows.

When the natives remembered what the bite of a viper signified, they expected to witness the apostle's either dropping down before them a dead man or swelling up along his arm and throughout his body with a strong inflammation. In this also they were at fault, because of not knowing Him who had promised, "They shall take up serpents, if they drink any deadly thing it shall in no wise hurt them." Verily there were more things in heaven and on earth than had been dreamed of in their philosophy! Then they found, as they kept looking on to witness the final collapse of the apostle's vitality, that nothing happened, and certainly that nothing amiss befell him. They changed their minds, and said to each other "He is a god!" Once more they were as sadly astray as when they had pronounced him a murderer. Thus "the multitudes know no moderation; it either exalts one to heaven, or thrusts him down to hell," one has said. If Paul had understood what the natives said about him, it need hardly be doubted he would have corrected their misapprehension, as he did that of the men of Lycaonia which we studied about. —M. Miles

December 31, 1978

PAUL AT ROME

Acts 28:11 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.

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.

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.

Memory Verse: Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. II Timothy 4:2.

Central Thought: Paul not only found brethren in Rome, but he also met with Jews who were unable to grasp the truth contained in Christ. The same antagonism is facing the preaching of the gospel today. It is a direct fulfillment of prophecy.

Word Definitions: “. . . ship . . . whose sign was Castor and Pollux”: Castor and Pollux according to Roman mythology were children of Jupiter, the chief Roman god. The Romans believed that these two gods were transported to heaven and made a constellation of stars, which was beneficial to sailors. It was customary to have images of gods at the head and stern of the ship; it is concluded that this means that the ship Paul was riding on had these two images as ensigns. “*From thence we fetched a compass*”: The Greek says, “Whence we coasted around.” Syracuse was on a jutment of land on the eastern coast of Sicily. Perhaps before the south wind began to blow they had a struggle making it to Rhegium. Rhegium was on the western shore of the tip of the “boot” of Italy. There was a strait of water between this part of Italy and the shores of northeastern Sicily. The brethren at Puteoli invited them to tarry with them seven days. “*His own hired house*”: Paul was allowed to rent a house to live in and was guarded by a soldier.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The final lap of Paul's journey to Rome is a touching one. Especially is it touching when we see the brethren from Rome coming as far as Appii forum to meet him, a distance it appears to have been about 60 miles. Being guarded by a soldier, yet allowed to dwell by himself, Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. They told him that they desired

to hear what he had to say, and that they had heard what he taught was everywhere spoken against. So on a set day Paul expounded, testified, and sought to persuade them concerning Jesus from the Old Testament Scriptures. Here he met the same problem that had been everywhere. It is the same problem that we have today in dealing with souls. Some believed, and some believed not, and when they did not agree, they departed. Paul reminded them then of a Scripture in Isaiah, a Scripture that applies to mankind in general, not only the Jews. The hardness of hearts, the blindness and darkness of spiritual perception, the absence of hunger for truth and obedience to walk therein was a condition that Isaiah faced, Jesus faced, and Paul faced. It is a condition that we face today, but thank God for the few who are hungry for truth, who are willing to heed the heavenly call.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Paul do when he saw the brethren who had come to meet him?
2. What did Paul want to talk to the Jews about?
3. From whence did Paul seek to persuade them concerning Jesus?
4. What was their reaction?
5. What Scripture did Paul quote concerning them?
6. What did he say the Gentiles would do with the message of salvation?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The Scriptures that Paul quoted to the Jews from Isaiah 6:9,10 is one of the most quoted Old Testament Scriptures in the New Testament. It was originally given to Isaiah when God made Himself known in the glorious vision. After the angel had touched Isaiah's lips with the live coal and had pronounced him clean and pure from his sin, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord calling for someone to go for Him. Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me." Then the Lord said, "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed [in hearing], but understand not; and see ye indeed [in seeing], but perceive not." He went on to say that their ears were to be made heavy and their eyes were to be shut, lest they hear and see and be converted and healed. Does this not seem strange that rather than try to get the people to see, Isaiah is ordered to preach and speak in such a manner that they will NOT see? Isaiah then asked how long he

would have to do this. The Lord answered, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, etc." Then He gave a ray of hope. "Yet in it shall be a tenth (a small part, a remnant) and it shall return." Jesus applied these Scriptures when dealing with the multitude. He told His disciples that it was given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to the multitudes it was not given. Who were the multitudes? It was the common run of the people—heedless, careless, indifferent, taken up with worldly desires, inquisitive and curious, many following for the loaves and fishes. They fulfilled what Isaiah was talking about. Now here Paul in Rome meets with the same situation. The leaders of the Jews are cursed with darkened eyes and minds concerning the truth of the Scriptures. It is a general, universal state of mankind. What will make the difference and turn the tide toward salvation for the soul? Humility, hunger, and thirst for righteousness, meekness, forgiveness, deep heart-felt sense of one's personal need, yearning and fervent desire, brokenness and poverty of spirit: these things make the difference. How is it with us today? Is the gospel preached and taught in our hearing and do we prove to be as the people back there? Take heed, dear reader, to the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to all that believe and obey.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In verses 16 to 29 are the last words of Paul written by Luke. In verses 17 to 20 we read his last testimony of his innocence. In verse 23 we read Paul's last recorded confession of Jesus Christ. In verses 17, 19, and 20 we read of great love toward his people, the Jews. In verses 25 to 28 we read about the last stroke of the hammer on hardened hearts.

The historian Eusebius writes in A.D. 320, "After [Paul] defending himself successfully, it is currently repeated that the apostle again went forth to proclaim the gospel, and afterwards came to Rome a second time, and was martyred under Nero."

—M. Miles

