

# Bible Lessons



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

**ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE**

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# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Vol. 21

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No. 1

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Jesus Christ and His Church  
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## **Theme For First Quarter, 1989**

We will resume our studies from the book of Acts of the apostles. Our lessons will cover the latter days of Paul's ministry. Paul leaves Ephesus for the last time and labors for the Lord in Macedonia and Greece before returning to Asia on his way to Jerusalem. We will cover his touching farewell message to the elders of Ephesus who met him at Miletus. Then we will trace his journey to Jerusalem and behold his arrest there and his defence before the mob. We will see him before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, the Roman governors and king of Caesarea. We will hear his testimony before being sent as a prisoner on a ship to Rome. Through the terrible storm at sea and the shipwreck upon the island of Melita, we see him go on to Rome where he testifies of the saving power of His Saviour. Most of this history is already familiar to many of us, but it thrills our hearts to see these faithful brethren go forth in their generation with the gospel and see how God blessed souls and brought them through their obstacles which were many. We pray that the Spirit of God will make these lessons precious and real to all who enter into this study.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

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**January 1, 1989**

### **EVENTS SURROUNDING THE MIRACLE 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.

4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

5 These going before tarried for us at Troas.

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, mindful 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:** Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Isaiah 41:10

**Central Thought:** If we are in the battle for the Lord and His truth, His presence and power will accompany us and will sufficiently help us no matter what happens to us or to those with us.

**Word Definitions:** *Exhortation:* Comfort, solace, and encouragement.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson, we saw Paul at Ephesus in Asia in the midst of a great awakening of souls to the light of the gospel. God worked miracles and false exorcists were being discovered in their shame. But Demetrius, a certain silver-smith who had made great gain through the sale of silver

shrines for Diana, the god of the Ephesians, raised a great uproar against Paul. He excited the people and the whole city was in an uproar and filled with confusion. The townclerk finally calmed the multitude down and rebuked them for their rash behavior, dismissing them quietly. The Lord Jesus was with Paul and protected him from being harmed. In our lesson today we find Paul once more desiring to return to Macedonia. This he did, and traveling all through Macedonia and giving much encouragement to the disciples of Christ, he finally came into Greece, which was south of Macedonia. After staying there for about three months, he was about to set out in a ship to journey clear back to the regions of Syria, which lay to the north of Jerusalem. But he learned that the Jews were laying in wait to no doubt do him harm, so he decided to go back through Macedonia again. Several of the faithful brethren went before and waited for the rest who were traveling with Paul at Troas. Paul and his company finally were able to board a ship at Philippi and joined the others at Troas. Here on the Lord's day the disciples came together to worship and to observe the Lord's Supper. It was a lengthy message that Paul preached, extending way into the night. Many lights were rigged up in that upper chamber where they were assembled. A young man fell asleep while sitting in a window and fell three stories down to the ground. He was taken up for dead, but Paul's faith was strong and after earnest prayer, he went back up and preached the rest of the night. Paul left them and the young man revived and the hearts of the disciples were filled with comfort! Paul decided to by-pass Ephesus, not wanting to spend much time there, for he wanted to be at Jerusalem by the time of Pentecost. —Leslie C. Busbee

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. Why do the children of the Lord need and appreciate exhortation and encouragement?
2. What is the first day of the week in the Scriptures called?
3. Why do the true followers of the Lord Jesus love to meet together?
4. Was Paul inconsiderate to hold these people in service so long?
5. What happened at about midnight?
6. Why did this young man fall asleep?
7. What did Paul do when they took the young man up for dead?
8. What did Paul do to show that he believed the young man would be all right?

9. Why did Paul not want to stop at Ephesus?
10. Where was he trying to get to and at what time did he wish to get there?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

It is really wonderful to be in the company of some faithful and courageous brethren when you are in the service of the Master. Sometimes they are waiting for us at our destination and sometimes they catch up with us. There are times of crises and trouble that come upon the servants of the Lord in the ministry. God is so gracious to us poor and frail human creatures. He knows that we get tired in body and mind. The ministers who preach should bear this in mind, and not be vexed and grieved if people get sleepy during their discourse. I am sure that all of us have had times when we got so sleepy during a message that some dear minister was trying so hard to deliver. One brother was preaching in an afternoon service during a camp meeting one time, and he noticed so many were going to sleep on him that he just closed his Bible and sat down. Later he felt convicted of the Lord to apologize for his actions. See how gentle and loving Paul was to the people and to the young man who had gone to sleep and had fallen down three stories to the ground! He embraced him tenderly and prayed for him and believed that Jesus was there to heal. We are frail creatures, so weak and full of infirmity! A sister came to visit Brother D. S. Warner and his wife once. Brother Warner had just come off of a trip and was very weary. This sister needed counsel and help, but as she tried to explain to him her burdens, Brother Warner went to sleep. His wife awakened him and he apologized, but went to sleep again as the sister resumed her talk. During this time the washer woman came in to pick up the laundry. After another try or so, the sister saw that Brother Warner was not able to help her right then, so she left. As she went up the street with a heavy heart, she heard someone praying. It was the washer woman praying in one of the houses, and this sister went in, and in their agreement of prayer she found victory. How sweet the service of the Lord is! We never know just how things will go, but we know that with Jesus it will all turn out right and for the best.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

In our lesson today we once again see the church effectively operating as God set it in order. We find the brethren offering encouragement and the minister exhorting. It is difficult for a minister to exhort if he is not encouraged, and there is a slim chance that the laity will be in a position to

offer encouragement if they are not exhorted in the things of God.

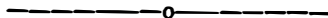
After the uproar at Ephesus, Paul called the disciples to him and embraced them. Although Paul was aware that there were those who backed him in his beliefs, he evidently felt a human need of letting his eyes and arms embrace them. The story is told of an old mountaineer who was persuaded to leave his mountain home and live with his daughter in the city. Several weeks later, expressing his dissatisfaction, he returned to his own property. When asked why he returned, he said: "I just had to have something to lean my eyes against." We all have the need to be in familiar surroundings and company, especially if we must produce something to give out to others.

God does have a way of providing encouragement. If we will keep our heart true and faithful, God will fill us with what it takes to do that for which he calls us.

Exhorting plays an integral part in the church. We read the advice in Heb. 3:13, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." One of the qualifications of a bishop is that "... he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Titus 1:9.

The church has been fueled by these two functions, and it will continue thus until time is ended. Reportedly, an encouraging sign, for apprehensive drivers, next to a very narrow road leading to the "Cave of the Winds" near Colorado Springs, reads, "You can do it as millions of others have." The church of today is just a small spot on the scale of the church's history, yet we can be just as faithful in our exhorting, offering of encouragement and faithfulness as the early morning church and the host of God's people since then.

—Wayne Murphey



**January 8, 1989**

**PAUL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS 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 shewed 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.

**29** For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

**30** Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

**31** Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

**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.

**33** I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

**34** Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

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:** . . . 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. Acts 20:35

**Central Thought:** Paul, knowing that he would see their face no more, reminded the Ephesians of his labors in the Lord for them, and warned them of the troubles ahead, and commended them to God and His grace.

**Word Definitions:** "*Bound in the spirit*": Pressed, moved, constrained by the Spirit of the Lord. "*Bonds and afflictions abide me*": Troubles and hardships were to meet him in every place, seeming to abide with him continually.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul's decision to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost seemed to be to him of great necessity and importance. As we shall see in next Sunday's lesson, he was to be warned on two different occasions against going there. He, himself, was bound in the spirit and fully aware that his arrival in Jerusalem would set the stage for dramatic and sore persecutions. Paul determined to by-pass Ephesus, probably because he knew that to go there would mean he would spend a considerable amount of time with the dear ones there. But he did want to communicate with the leaders of the Ephesus church, so from Miletus he sent word to the elders to come to him. Miletus was probably 25 or 30 miles distant from Ephesus. Here he gave them the loving and solemn address that we have on record for our lesson today. He wanted them to remember the earnest labors that he had given in their behalf. Persuaded that this would be his final personal contact with them, he issued serious warnings and exhortations for diligence and steadfastness. The tender love and earnest care that he showed for these brethren is worthy of our utmost effort to duplicate. He quotes from the words of Jesus, which words we do not have record of in the gospels. But we know that the

commandments of the Lord and Saviour blend with the truth that Paul quoted from Him: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This is the true spirit and mind of Christ. To depart from this kind of attitude and disposition is to be void of the real life of Christ regardless of how highly we may profess His name.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. Paul had been with them serving the Lord with what?
2. What had Paul testified to the Jews and to the Greeks in Ephesus?
3. What did the Holy Ghost witness to Paul?
4. How did Paul feel about the hardships that his journey to Jerusalem would bring to him?
5. What counted as number one with Paul?
6. In what way did he reckon himself to be pure from the blood of all men?
7. What charge did he give to those whom the Holy Ghost had made overseers?
8. What did he say would happen after his departing?
9. What did he commend them to?
10. What words from the Lord Jesus did he charge them to remember?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

To be a minister of the gospel and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ brings the greatest joy and pleasure as well as the greatest sorrow and adversity. It is not just labor and pain and travail, but it is rich experiences of God's blessings and workings within, a treasure that does not fade in its sweetness and richness as the years come and go. The love and closeness that one enjoys with others who share the blessedness of Christ proves to be a special source of joy and spiritual wealth. How wonderful that one can have a vocation that he can enjoy and see such precious fruit and accomplishment! The course that we want to finish in this short life is one of service to the Master and His cause. It is the earnest desire of the true believer to finish that course faithfully to the end. There will be those who we will be with and be in close communion in the spirit, whose faces we will see no more in this world. We can recall many who once were close to us in the congregations of the saints and the work of the Lord who are now passed beyond the veil of mortal sight. What a treasure their blessed memory is to us! When the wolves begin to rise and men begin to speak perverse things, drawing away

people after them, we can recall these faithful ministers and saints who showed us the true way. We know that no real holy person who is led by the Spirit of God seeks to draw people unto himself. We are commended unto God and to the word of His grace. By this we are built up and able to be partakers of the inheritance of the sanctified. We recall their humility and faith, void of covetousness and love of gain. They labored willingly, and their hard working hands add to the testimony of their faith and integrity. They proved by their works that it is more blessed to give than to receive. What a happy way to live and the only way to be ready to die!

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In Paul's farewell to the elders of Ephesus, he gave them advice that would be of great help as they experienced things that he had previously encountered. His service to God had been such that he could meet adversity and not be moved. This even included the eventual loss of his life. No doubt they were grieved at the possibility of losing someone from the church with the stability that Paul had, but every bit of his council to them was derived from experience, and when incorporated into their lives, would bring forth the same sound living.

We too have the privilege of having access to the Word of God which will build us up so that we can have an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. Perhaps you wonder if you would have the fortitude to face a martyr's death with victory. If you will serve the Lord with all humility of mind, and if it is in God's will to allow that to befall you, He will build you up to the point that you will not count your life dear unto yourself at that day.

It is recorded that when an ancient father, Basil, was assailed by the threatenings, and allured by the promises of a Roman emperor, to abandon the truth of the Gospel, that he replied, "Alas, these speeches are fit to catch little children who look after such things; we are otherwise taught by Scriptures, and are ready to suffer a thousand deaths rather than forsake Christ." "Know ye not who we are that command it?" said the praetor. "We submit to no one, when they command such things as these." "Know ye not that we have honors to bestow?" continued the praetor. "They," said the confessor, "are changeable like yourselves." The praetor threatened confiscation, torment, banishment, death. "As for confiscation, I have nothing to lose—as for banishment, heaven only is

my country—as for torment, this body will soon give way—and as for death, that will only set me at liberty.” “Thou art mad!” said the praetor. “I wish I may ever be so mad,” said the servant of God. His undaunted attachment to the cause of God affected the minds of those who had brought him before their tribunal; and the emperor, instead of persisting in his intimidations, offered a present, which the venerable Christian refused.

—Wayne Murphey



**January 15, 1989**

**PAUL CONTINUES TOWARD 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 Judaea 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.

16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

**Memory Verse:** . . . Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. I Peter 3:15

**Central Thought:** Although different ones along the way tried to persuade Paul not to go up to Jerusalem because of the dangers that awaited him there, he was determined to go on unafraid with faith and trust in Christ to help him even if it meant his death.

**Word Definitions:** *Girdle:* A belt worn to hold the garments close to the body. *Carriages:* Baggage and supplies.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul had gotten away from the tearful brethren at Ephesus and continued on his journey with the destination to be Jerusalem. They followed the coastal waters of Asia from Miletus to Coos, and then unto Rhodes, and to Patara. Finding a ship bound for the eastern coast of the Great Sea, they took passage thereon, and after passing by Cyprus to their left, they sailed on and landed at Tyre, which was on the sea coast of the land of Israel. Finding some disciples of the Lord there, they tarried with them seven days. It was here that Paul met his first warning from the brethren to not go up to Jerusalem. As they departed we have another touching scene of the love of God and warm affection that bound these early Christians together. All of the Christians, even their wives and children, went with them to the seashore where they knelt and prayed. Here we see little children having contact and

being familiar with the work of the Lord. This is very important in a child's life to be touched with the influence of men of God. Going on down to Ptolemais, they stayed with the brethren one day. Then they departed on to Caesarea where they were welcomed by Philip and his family. This man, one of the seven deacons in chapter 6 and who preached in Samaria and to the Ethiopian in chapter 8, had settled in Caesarea, and had four young daughters who were active in the service of the Lord. When one is able to influence his or her family for the Lord, it is a good sign of God's blessing. We have already met Agabus in chapter 11 when he prophesied of the world-wide famine. Here he foretold of the trouble that Paul would have in Jerusalem. How touching were the words that Paul answered the saints' entreaty that he not go! It was hard for him to go against their words. But, being fully persuaded of God's will, he took his departure from them and went on.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. By what is seen in our lesson today, what kind of relationship did Paul have with all of the believers in Christ?
2. Would Paul have been wise to have followed the counsel of the brethren and not to have gone on to Jerusalem?
3. Why did the saints not want Paul to go to Jerusalem?
4. What did the four young daughters who prophesied indicate about their father, Philip?
5. What did the prophet Agabus foretell about Paul's stay at Jerusalem?
6. What did Paul make clear to the brethren when they tried to influence him not to go?
7. What was their reaction to Paul when they saw they could not persuade him?
8. Is conflict and disagreement between people always a sign of carnality?
9. How was it shown that their disapproval of Paul's going to Jerusalem was purely of love and concern?
10. Did Paul handle the matter graciously?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

There are times in our life for Christ when we must steadfastly follow His leadings regardless of what other Christians say. And there are times when we need to discredit our own personal feelings and give good heed to the counsel of

others. Sometimes our decisions and the course that we take is critical and full of treacherous consequences. Not only were the saints solicitous of Paul's safety, but the Holy Spirit was impressing earnestly concerning the awful things that were ahead in that city where our Lord had met His death. Can we not see the love and care of the Lord in these things? Oh, how He tenderly cares for us and feels for us in the hard places and sorrows that we meet on life's way! There are those times when God works in strange and unusual manners to provide comfort, help, and safe passage for us through the dark seasons of life here below. There will be a friend, or brother, or associate who will minister to our souls in those times of need. Think of the pressure upon Paul's heart! He was faced with opposition in his dearly beloved brethren concerning the move that he was making. He really hated to go against their advice, especially when it seemed that the Lord was prompting it. But he knew that he was going to be responsible for his own actions and course, and he did not have ill will toward the brethren for what they did and said about it. How sweet it was when all the conflict ceased with a loving resignation of letting the will of the Lord be done! A few years ago there was a brother who went to Africa to minister. Upon his return he became ill and passed away. Later another brother felt inspired to go to Africa. He met the disapproval of other brethren about his going. He went ahead and made his trip and the Lord blessed him. We are all human and the Lord takes that into account, but over it all we must look to God to prosper what we do or it will all be in vain.

—Leslie Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In reading our lesson we notice how the Lord fully prepared Paul for what he was to meet in Jerusalem. Luke, who wrote this account, must have marvelled at the leadings of the Lord. God even let others know what Paul was to meet. They warned him with tears, but he already knew through the Holy Spirit, even years before, that "bonds and afflictions" waited for him "in every city." (Acts 20:23). He had consecrated to "die . . . for the name of Jesus Christ." What could cause a person to be willing to face sufferings with such fortitude and courage? It would have to be that he was fully persuaded that God was able to take care of him and in the end would take him to be with Him in glory. He did not doubt for one moment his eternal destiny and his faith was strong in God's wisdom

to guide his life. How precious it is to get to that place! It brings such peace and rest to the soul. There would not be any room for worrying or fretting. This kind of implicit faith in God is for all of us.

Others might try to turn us away from obeying God. Paul was deeply touched by the love, care and concern of his brethren in the Lord. It almost broke his heart for them to be so grieved for him to go to Jerusalem when God had revealed to them that he would be in trouble there and then would be given into the hands of the Gentiles. Paul would not let them move him from the course he was sure God had planned for him although he deeply appreciated their concern. We, too, must obey God and not those who mean well but would try to hinder us. Many have fallen through the persuasions of others.

—Marie Miles  
(Written in 1970)

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January 22, 1989

## **PAUL FALSELY ACCUSED AND 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.

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed

concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such things, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

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.

**Memory Verse:** We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. II Corinthians 4:8, 9.

**Central Thought:** Paul, in accordance with the counsel of the elders at Jerusalem, took part in a Jewish ceremony in an effort to appease the minds of the believing Jews, but was falsely accused by Jews who had troubled him in Asia and

was seized by the people, and rescued by the Roman captain and his soldiers.

**Word Definitions:** *"The multitude must needs come together"*: The Church leaders knew that the people would be gathering together, having heard Paul was there. *"Be at charges with them"*: Help the men who had taken the vows bear expense of the ceremony.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The elders of the Church at Jerusalem had some merit in their plan and counsel that they gave to Paul. They were glad to receive Paul and rejoiced and glorified God for what God had accomplished through Paul among the Gentiles. However, they were dealing with many of the Jews who had turned to Christ, who were still under the influence and domination of the old law system. These people had heard things about Paul, and as the way of reports so often go, the things that they heard were not entirely accurate. They had been informed that Paul was teaching all the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses and the law. Paul had not been doing that. He had principally taught the Gentiles the necessary gospel and teachings of Christ, not pressing upon them the traditions and customs of the Jews. Paul himself said in I Corinthians 9:19, 20, "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law." The minds of the people needed to be reassured and freed from their prejudice and fear. By taking part in the ceremony of releasing men from their special vows to God, the minds of the people would be eased in their indignation towards Paul. This would help to open the door of their minds to what he might say unto them. Now this kind of plan would have worked for the believing Jews, but (as our lesson discloses) it did not work for the contentious and blinded Jews who were already looking for an opportunity to find something to accuse Paul about. —Leslie C. Busbee

## QUESTIONS:

1. How did the brethren receive Paul at Jerusalem?
2. Why did the elders see that Paul's appearance in Jerusalem was going to be to them a problem?
3. What did they think Paul's participation in the Jewish ceremony would accomplish?

4. What Jews were the ones who caused the uproar?
5. Why did they think that Paul had polluted the temple?
6. Had they really seen Paul bring Trophimus, an Ephesian, into the temple?
7. What effect did this accusation have upon the city?
8. What were they about to do to Paul?
9. Who rescued Paul?
10. Why was the certainty of the tumult not clear to the captain?

## **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

Whatever we do to avoid trouble and offset the tendencies of the opposers of the truth to find fault, there is still bound to be some kind of tribulation for us if we are really following the Lord. The way of a true Christian is so opposite to the ways of the flesh and the carnal minded people around us that there will be conflicts that will bring about hardships and danger. It is all right and sometimes wise to avoid clashes of opinion and arguments and contentions, but we must continually arm ourselves with the steadfast decision to cleave to the Lord and be prepared for the contradiction of sinners. Many times these conflicts are short-lived, and, fortunately for the godly, quickly forgotten by those who cause trouble. But then there are those serious battles and oppositions which bring much pain, hardship, and sometimes physical harm or death. There will be seasons when there will be no opposition, and God will grant that we might live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. We can be thankful for those times and enjoy our liberty and peace. But it has not always been thus and neither will it always be thus. There are Christians at this present time in the world who profess the name of Christ at the peril of their lives. We never know when a change in government or governmental policy might affect us in a very difficult manner, but this is where the faith and hope of the true believer in Christ really pays off. We are not to fear them who destroy the body, but have no power over the soul. God will recompense every sorrow or affliction that we suffer for His sake. Everything that we suffer as a Christian, whether bodily, material or emotional distress, the Lord will certainly see that it is atoned for and a recompense granted. Death may work in us, but spiritual life will be the fruit of our labors if we will cling to Jesus and be faithful to Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Have you ever had the unfortunate experience or given much thought to what it takes to appease someone with a bad spirit? When you concede a point to such a one, don't expect it to be the last requirement, but the first. A bad spirit will not be satisfied until you are in the same condition as they, and even then you had better brace yourself for some rough sailing.

The disciples at Jerusalem were feeling the pressure of Jewish customs. When Paul went down into this hotbed of zealots, they knew he would be the cynosure of the town and trouble would be imminent. The disciples formed a plan in their human wisdom, to avoid trouble, but they had underestimated the harshness of a bad spirit. Although Paul was doing what any "good" Jew would do, the Jews still found fault, shut the temple doors on him and began to vent their prejudices. What can we learn from this? Human reasoning is not the answer in preventing conflicts with harsh attitudes. Furthermore, there is the possibility that it can backfire on a person as it did on Paul and the elders. It was inevitable that Paul would have been arrested in Jerusalem, but perhaps a stigma could have been averted if the elders had earnestly sought God in the matter.

This isn't the first time Paul had experienced abuse. The Greeks, who were idol worshippers, banded together at Ephesus and mistreated him. It should cause us to pause and consider that carnality can be exhibited by a misguided religious zeal the same as by an outright sinner. —Wayne Murphey



## RESCUED

A young man was walking as quickly as he could through a dense forest in Africa. He had made a plantation and built a house in a little valley, and was hurrying to get back to his young bride. They had not long been married and she was alone, except for the native servants. The path was narrow and winding, and though he knew it by heart in daylight, he knew also the dangers of the darkness. And the swift tropical night came while he was still a long way from home.

Soon he heard behind him quick breathing and the tread of the stealthily padded feet of some wild animal. He was being followed by a panther, the most fierce of all the beasts of the forest.

How he longed for his rifle, or the electric pocket lamp which he had left at home! He knew the danger of running, so he walked steadily on and prayed more earnestly than he had ever prayed in his life.

Every moment the young man expected the beast to spring upon his neck and inflict upon him a terrible death.

Then the trees of the forest seemed thinner and at last the young man came to the ravine before his home. All was in darkness. Risking all, he shouted in English and in the native language, "Show a light, quick! A light, a light! Show a light!"

His young wife heard, and throwing back the bamboo shutter, she snatched the lamp from the table and held it out from the porch. The native boys also heard and lighted torches. Then they ran shouting in the direction of their master's voice, and he was saved.

Life is a dark road to many, and there are fierce enemies always on the watch for souls. Satan himself goes about like a "roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

The devil pulled a quick calamity on Paul. Just as the panther followed the man, the Jews followed Paul. Had he not been forewarned, he might have been greatly confused, but God had prepared him for being falsely accused and abused by the mob. As he prayed, God sent a rescue team. God will never fail to hear and answer our cry. Jesus not only turns back the foe, but He also makes the way bright, for He truly is "the light of the world." He will make His will plain. It is wonderful how God gave Paul such courage.

—Marie Miles



**January 29, 1989**

**PAUL'S DEFENCE BEFORE THE MOB**

**Part 1**

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

**2** (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

**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.

**5** As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

**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.

**9** And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

**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.

**11** And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

**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.

**14** And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

**Memory Verse:** Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. Luke 21:14, 15.

**Central Thought:** Being given a chance to speak to the mob who had nearly killed him, Paul, in his defence, rehearsed to the people what he was before he believed in Christ and how that he came to believe and follow Him.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

When the tidings came to the chief captain of the Roman soldiers that all Jerusalem was in an uproar, he immediately took soldiers and centurions and rescued Paul from the murderous designs of the people. The chief captain tried to find out what Paul had done and who he was, but he could get no understanding from the confused mob. As Paul was being led into the castle, he asked to speak unto the chief captain. The chief captain asked Paul if he was that Egyptian which before those days had made an uproar and had led out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers (or assassins in the Greek). During the history of the Roman occupation there were numbers of uprisings. The man that the captain here referred to, according to Josephus, had pretended to be a prophet and had led an attack against Jerusalem, but had been stopped and defeated at the Mount of Olives by Felix, the Roman governor and a large body of Roman troops. The leader of this mob escaped and the captain was wondering if Paul might be that man. This was probably the reason why he asked Paul if he could speak Greek. Paul assured the captain that he was a Jew, and a citizen of an important city. He begged permission to speak to the people, and the captain gave him this liberty. Paul stood on the stairs and beckoned with his hand unto the people. The people quieted down and there was a great silence. Paul began to speak to them in the Hebrew tongue, and this caused there to be a greater silence. In our lesson today we have the first part of Paul's defence to them. Some of this we have already had before in our studies, but here we hear Paul speak of being brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a well-known doctor of the

law, who had counselled the Jews at an earlier date to be careful how they treated the Christians. We also have a little better description of Ananias, who had visited Paul in Damascus when he had first turned to the Lord Jesus. Notice the things that were said of him, and what he told Paul to do. Verse 16 is used by many to make it seem that baptism washes away sins, but careful study of the real meaning shows a different thought. Ananias was telling Paul to not tarry and languish in regret and remorse for his past error of fighting against Christ. He was to arise and be baptized. He was to wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord. The Greek text puts it, "Wash thyself from thy sins, having invoked the name of Him (the Lord)."

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What was there in hearing Paul speak in the Hebrew tongue that caused the people to give more silence?
2. What did Paul say his disposition toward the law was in his past life?
3. What kind of man did Paul say that Ananias was?
4. Why did Ananias tell Paul to not tarry, but to wash away his sins?
5. By what means can we wash away our sins today?
6. Name the real reason why Paul was hunted down and persecuted by the Jews so much.
7. Paul reveals the reason why he was made blind the day that he met Jesus. What was the reason?
8. What did Ananias say that the God of our fathers had chosen Paul (or Saul) for?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Paul's defence before the people that day came in the form of a testimony. Revelation 12:11 tells us that "they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." Paul had a testimony, or a word of witness concerning that which he had seen and heard. He stuck with that testimony. He used it time and time again. What God does for us in the way of saving, sanctifying, and blessing our souls comes out of us in our testimony. We must be ready always to give our testimony of the goodness of God to us. The Psalmist in Psalm 66:16 said, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." In Psalm 34:2 it says, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall

hear thereof, and be glad." Paul's testimony here was a vital part of his life and ministry. Businesses or firms who are eager to sell their product find that the greatest benefit to the sale of their product is found in the testimony of the ones who are happy and satisfied therewith. The more testimonies they can get, the greater will be the appeal of their product in the minds of people. Let us not overlook this important thought. Your testimony is of great value to you. Do not slight or overlook it. Use it often and keep it clear. If you have experienced the joy of finding Christ as the Saviour of your soul, be faithful to speak of it when you have a chance. You never know when a simple expression of joy and victory will carry great weight in some poor lost sinner's mind. As the Lord gives you an open door and the opportunity presents itself to speak of your wonderful Lord and Friend, speak it out earnestly and prayerfully. God will make it a blessing to those who hear it.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The courage, meekness, simplicity and great love manifested by Paul as he turned to face his persecutors and murderers, proves he was in close contact with God. He addressed them as brethren and fathers, because of the covenant and promises of God. It had not been very long before this that these same people had been beating him, bent on his death. Paul looked beyond all this and saw souls whom he loved headed for eternal damnation. Oh, if he could just help them to understand that Jesus loved them and died and arose again for their salvation! How can we apply this same principle to our own life? Can we look beyond an individual who mistreats us, and have a love and concern for the soul that will constrain us to forgive and manifest our love for such a one? Was not Jesus our example? Our cry should be, "Lord, increase my love for all mankind, and especially for those who persecute me." Is there not a Scripture that says, "Love covereth all sins"? (Proverbs 10:12). It is not that the sins are not there, but one who has God's love in his heart will look beyond the sins and see a soul who needs to understand how to get rid of sin. The children of God will not shun nor look down upon that person because of his sins, but will teach him of God's love for him. The saints love him and desire him to come to Jesus and find peace. Love—"charity suffereth long, and is kind." (I Cor. 13:4).

—Marie Miles

(Written in 1970)

**February 5, 1989**

**PAUL'S DEFENCE AT JERUSALEM**

**Part 2**

Acts 22:17 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.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

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.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

**Memory Verse:** Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:7

**Central Thought:** The mob listened to Paul's defence until he said that Christ told him to depart far hence unto the Gentiles. Their anger was then aroused to the extent that Paul was withdrawn into the castle where he was about to be scourged, only to be spared because it was discovered that he was a Roman citizen.

**Word Definitions:** *Trance:* The Greek word is ecstasy, which means a swoon or rapturous state of the mind or senses, being carried away beyond consciousness of surrounding. *Free born:* The word "free" is an added word by the translators and not part of the original Greek text. Paul was born a Roman, although he was also of Jewish descent.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul has been given license to speak to the mob of people who had just put forth a great effort to kill him. In our last Sunday's lesson we considered the first part of his defence which included his testimony of being changed from his old life to the ways of Jesus Christ. We pick up in today's lesson his testimony and defense from the time when he came to Jerusalem, three years after his conversion at Damascus. (Galatians 1:18). He was praying in the temple when he had a vision of Christ telling him to quickly leave Jerusalem, and that he was to be sent to minister to the Gentiles. His conjecture about being sent to the Gentiles raised the fury of the crowd to a high pitch. In their maddened frenzy they lost all sense of self-control and respect, yelling to the top of their voices that such as Paul was not fit to live on the earth. Actually, they were the worrisome and miserable souls who were not worthy to live. Their untempered anger even caused them to cast off their clothes and throw dust into the air. One great mark of the unregenerated is their uncontrolled passions and temperament. Paul was cool and composed through it all. Because the chief captain found out that Paul was a Roman citizen, he did not whip Paul as he had purposed to do. Instead, he loosed Paul from his bonds, and called for the chief priests and their council to come and meet Paul. In our next lesson we will see the outcome of that meeting.

—Leslie Busbee

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. What was Paul doing when he was in the trance?
2. What did the Lord tell him to do?
3. What did Paul call to remembrance about his past life with the Jews?
4. Why do you think that Paul mentioned this to the Lord?
5. Why did his last statement about Christ sending him to the Gentiles infuriate the Jews so?
6. How did the mob act and carry on?
7. What did the chief captain decide to do with Paul?
8. What caused him to change his mind about scourging Paul?
9. What caused the chief captain and the others to be afraid?
10. What did he decide to do then?

## **ADULT'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

God forces no one to serve Him. He will send His word, and light with which to see, He will put it within people's reach and make it freely available to them, but He will not force them to take it and abide by it. If the heart of man wants to rebel and refuse, that is his business and responsibility. Not everyone will be saved, and not everyone will appreciate the opportunity to be saved and avail themselves of it. It is not because they are not able, nor is it because it is beyond their reach; their will is involved. The heart of man is just naturally hard to humble or to be humbled. All evidence and persuasion employed is quenched so often by the hardness of the heart of man. Even the Lord Jesus proved this to be so. Many who saw and heard Him refused to go His way. Oh, they were impressed with His miracles and gracious works, but to humble one's self to go His way took more than awe and being carried away by what He did. One must have an open heart and mind and be willing to be taught of His real wisdom. The Jews were blinded by their pride and vanity. They could not see the hidden wisdom that Christ and His apostles held out to them. Their carnal minds clung to the outward form and ceremonies, and they were so indignant against anyone who threatened their domain. It can be so today, too. If people do not understand the real essence of the Word of God, they will fight it when it is presented to them. It is one thing to profess to know God and it is another thing to be willing to go His way. It means much for the wicked to forsake his way, and for the unrighteous man to forsake his thoughts. Very few are willing to do so. Those who do take the

Lord's way procure for themselves joy of life eternal and the displeasure of those who count themselves unworthy of it.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This crowd of religious Jews and the Apostle Paul is a study in the contrast of human nature and the saving grace of God. The riotous crowd aptly proves the quote from Matthew Henry which says, "When passion is on the throne, reason is out of doors." Can you imagine grown men yelling, ripping off their clothing and tossing dirt in the air? It sounds like the behavior of children who need to be thoroughly disciplined. When in the heat of emotion, we would do well to avoid hasty responses, but rather stop and think of how others will perceive us and our actions.

The Jews needed a good dose of the experience that Paul was preaching to them. Salvation will take the fight out of a person. When missionaries in Nanking gave New Testaments to the Japanese soldiers during World War II, one Japanese official came to the missionaries, saying: "Please don't give our men any more New Testaments, for when they read this book, it takes the fight out of them—they don't want to fight any more."

In I Cor. 13:11, Paul said, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Some people are able to mature with age and experience to the point that they are able to control their actions. With others, age seems to have little impact on their emotional maturity, but it is a miracle what salvation will do for a person. It will make the lion like a lamb. Peace and contentment reigns in a regenerated heart.

—Wayne Murphey



February 12, 1989

## THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL FRUSTRATED AND A PLOT TO KILL PAUL

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.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat

nothing until we have slain Paul.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

**Memory Verse:** Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Rom. 8:34.

**Central Thought:** Angered by the havoc that Paul caused in their council, a large group of the Jews made plans to kill Paul but the Lord stood by him and promised him deliverance and the opportunity to witness for Him at Rome.

**Word Definitions:** "*I wist not*": I did not know. *Dissension*: Disagreement or controversy. *Conspiracy*: A swearing together to do something against someone; a plot.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In order to know more of the certainty of why Paul was being so violently accused of the Jews, the chief captain had loosed Paul from his bands and had commanded the chief priests and all their council to come forth. When they had gathered together, he brought Paul down and set him before them. Our lesson begins today with Paul earnestly beholding the council and stating that up to that time he had lived in all good conscience before God. The chief captain and his soldiers must have been watching the scene from a distance. For some reason, what Paul had said angered the high priest, causing him to issue the command for those standing near to smite Paul on the mouth. This angry command was far from conformity to the law of Moses that the high priest was supposed to follow. It was nothing less than his own carnal disposition that caused him to order Paul to be smitten. Our text does not specify for sure whether the command was carried out. The Jewish leaders' persecution against Paul arose not from religious scruples or sincerity before God. It was because of their envy and jealousy and hatred directed toward Christ and His followers because of the success that they were having in winning people to His cause. Paul was unaware that Ananias

was the high priest, for it has been a long while since he had been in Jerusalem. Paul's statement about him being called in question concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead, threw the council into turmoil. The uproar was so serious that the chief captain had Paul taken out of their midst. How wonderful that the Lord stood by Paul and assured him of His care! But, whatever happened to those men who bound themselves to not eat until they had killed Paul? In the remaining part of this chapter we read how that Paul's nephew learned of their plot, and information was relayed to the chief captain who arranged that very night for Paul to be safely escorted to Caesarea with a note of explanation to governor Felix. This just goes to show how vain, foolish, and inconsistent are the ways of men who oppose the ordinance of Almighty God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How did Paul look upon the council that was before him?
2. What was the first statement that he made?
3. Why should this have angered the high priest?
4. What did Paul say to him concerning his command to smite him?
5. How did Paul apologize for what he had answered the high priest?
6. How did Paul frustrate the council that day?
7. Why did he mention the resurrection of the dead as being the cause of him being called into question?
8. What was the division between the Pharisees and the Sadducees?
9. How did the Lord comfort and encourage Paul?
10. What kind of conspiracy did a group of the Jews make?
11. How was this conspiracy found out?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

The enemies of the Lord and the truth can be easily frustrated and defeated as we stand on "what thus saith the Lord." The basic truths of the Bible—the foundation stones of the Christian faith—are hidden from the wise and prudent of this world and revealed unto lowly and simple people. It is to be observed in any time of persecution or prosecution of the people of God that the wrath of man plays an important part in bringing about suffering and tribulation upon them. Were there not governmental laws governing prosecution and the punishment of offenders, the wrath of man would exact a

heavy toll on innocent people. It is blessed to know that we have someone who is watching over us and pleading for our help in heaven! Jesus knows all about what His children suffer in this wicked world. He went through the tribulation and anguish that He said would come upon His own. How sweet is His comfort and reassurance in the dark hours! He knows just when to speak comfort to our souls. He is now appearing in the presence of God for us. He is the Rock of Ages past, and our present comfort, strength, and hope for the years to come. His kingdom rules over all, and those who suffer for His sake can take consolation from that fact. He may let the enemy prosper for a season, but He sees that his day is coming. The wrath of man and the ugly spirit that controls the desolate hearts of the carnal minded may make it hard for the godly and the faithful in Christ Jesus, but it will not go on forever. The day of reckoning will come, and those who have been humble and meek, waiting on God with love and forgiveness for their oppressors, will rise in victory and everlasting triumph.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As we clearly observe the arrest and following proceedings, we gain an insight into God's workings through Paul in such a way that it is brought down to a human standpoint. There were miracles of deliverance in Paul's past, such as his release from prison by an earthquake, but we see a different type of working of the Lord. Just because we are allowed to endure some hard things and do not witness a miracle as we would prefer, is no sign that God has forsaken us. God works in sundry ways; sometime through natural circumstances.

It is folly to put our confidence in our ability or in man's talent, but God can work through these avenues. When Paul was on the threshold of a beating by the centurion, he quickly grasped the thought that since he was part Roman, he was protected by the law. Paul was just as willing to accept deliverance by this means as he was by an earthquake or any other miracle. When the high Priest commanded him to be smitten, he thought he was once again protected by the Jewish law, but instantly saw he was acting wrongly and humbly refrained from that position. He then perceived that some of the council were Sadducees and some Pharisees. He broke up the council by declaring that he was a Pharisee and that he was called into question because he believed in the resurrection of the dead. It is not recorded that this played a

part in his arrest although it is clear that this was a point of contention. (Acts 4:1-3). We cannot criticize Paul in the things which he did for we know that God was with him through it all. Paul plainly stated to the council, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." That is an important testimony.

What can we learn from these things? As Paul did, be fully dedicated to accept what God allows and follow closely the Holy Spirit in whatever way He chooses to lead.

—Wayne Murphey

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## **The Persistent Partner and A Cursing Woman**

For several months I was in a city which had a vast unchurched section. Fortunately I had a good partner with whom to labor in this needy field, and had already come to feel quite calm in approaching a person or home while working for the Lord.

All went well until one day we came to a place to which we afterwards referred as "the home of the cursing woman." At this place we were met at the door by a young woman who seemed pleasant enough until she knew we were Christian workers and that we would like to have her read our literature. She slammed the door and began to curse. I had never heard a woman use such language before. She said it was none of our business if she wanted to go to the hell the religious people raved about. While she was cursing inside the house, my friend knelt down and prayed a short prayer, slipping some tracts under the door as he started to leave. I was quite willing to leave some "tracts" myself, but preferred to have the toes of mine pointed toward the sidewalk.

As we started away my friend said, "Pretty tough place, don't you think?" I did not have to think. I fully agreed without taking time to reason. He said, "We shall go back there this same hour next week."

"You mean you shall," I broke in.

"I mean we shall," he replied.

That same hour of the same day of the next week we went back. The young woman opened the door and saw us. She

started her same line again. "I'll shoot you if it's the last thing I do, if you ever come back here again with that religious stuff," she declared, as she slammed the door with a mighty crash!

We knelt and prayed, then slipped some tracts under the door and left.

"How about going back again?" my friend asked as he went away.

"I hardly think it can get any worse," I answered, "and I should like to see if she will change her attitude."

About the same hour of the same day of the next week we were knocking at her door again. She opened the door and looked us over. I wondered as I tried to read her expression if she was more amused than angry, and sincerely hoped she might be. Then her curiosity got the better of her, and she said, "Well, I will swear to creation!"

She had no trouble convincing me. I expected her to start at any minute. But instead she asked:

"What kind of fellows are you, anyway?"

My friend told her in a remarkably nice manner that we were saved from sin by the grace of God, and that we would like so much to help her into the kingdom of God.

She told him that she had no disposition whatever to get religion, but that she was glad we had returned. She wanted to tell us that our coming to speak to her on such a subject had made her awfully nervous, and that was why she used such strong language on our previous visit. She then kindly requested that we stay away and not approach her on that subject again.

I knew no more than to suggest that if she would permit us to step inside and offer prayer maybe the Lord would fix up her nerves and she would be all right. It seemed to amuse her to think we would offer the same thing as a remedy that had made her sick.

"No," she replied, "I do not think that will help. At least your prayers have not helped my nerves so far." Then in a rather soft tone of voice she said, "I do not want to be unkind (and that was certainly news to us), but if you are really concerned about me, please don't talk to me any more about that, for I have felt simply dreadful the past two weeks."

We asked her if she would not at least accept and promise to read some of our literature. She said, "I will not promise to read it, but I will take it to keep you from poking it under the door."

As we went away I suggested that since she had asked us so kindly not to come back, it seemed a bit cruel to return. But my friend knew more about dealing with humanity than I did, and he said that, deep down in her heart, it would be a disappointment to her if we failed to return and help her into the kingdom of God.

Consequently the next week we made our fourth call at that home. The young woman opened the door and greeted us in a kindly manner. She said she was glad we came, for she had come to feel she would like to explain to us that she now wished she had not talked to us as she did the first time we came to the door. She said she had suffered a lot over the things she said to us, and she had now come to think that perhaps she would not suffer any more if she would tell us that she wished she had not acted in such a manner.

My friend told her that we gladly forgave her, but that the Lord had heard all she said, and that she should ask Him to forgive her. We then asked permission to step inside and pray. She said we might if we would make it short. We agreed. As we started to leave after prayer, I asked her if we might return and pray with her the next week. "It would be mighty kind of you," she answered.

We went away feeling that a hard battle had been almost won, and that victory was sure if we held on in faith for our subject.

Before we knocked on the door on our fifth visit, it swung open. The young woman greeted us by saying, "Come in. You are a bit late, are you not?" We told her it was about the usual time.

Then she began to tell us how very sorry she was for the way she had treated us, and in the best manner she knew she earnestly asked us to forgive her. We assured her it was all right so far as we were concerned, and urged her to pray. She was soon on her knees crying as if her heart would break, as she confessed her sins to the Lord and pleaded for mercy.

The light of heaven soon broke in on her soul, and she was truly made a new creature. With tears of gladness coursing down her cheeks, she expressed her joy in a loud tone of voice and in typical street language. One time she said, "Gee whiz, folks, I never dreamed religion was like this!"

She urged us to come back the next Sunday and insisted that if we could talk to her husband he would get saved. We went, but he was not at home. She explained that he had gone to the pool hall, but she said, "I'll tell you it's working on him

— you bet your bottom dollar it is! I've been saying thanks at the table. I don't know how to pray, but I just say, 'Thank you, Lord, for the bread, and for the meat and beans,' but it's getting there just the same, you bet it is." We had prayer with her, and went away promising to return the next Sunday in the hope of meeting her husband.

The following Sunday we made our seventh visit to the home of the "cursing woman." Her husband was there. She greeted us by saying, "Come right in, fellows, he's here, and say, boy, he can't stand any more of this; he's ready to pray right now." He glanced at us and nodded when she presented us to him, and then slumped down on his knees by the side of the bed. He made all kinds of confessions, and begged humbly before the Lord for mercy. He was soon genuinely converted.

I kept in touch with them off and on for almost five years, and they were still living for God the last time I heard from them.

—J. W. Montgomery

(Available in tract form.)



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**February 19, 1989**

**PAUL'S DEFENCE AND TESTIMONY  
BEFORE GOVERNOR FELIX**

Acts 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.

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.

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.

20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,

21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

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.

23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

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.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

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

**Memory Verse:** The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? Psalm 118:6

**Central Thought:** In answer to the charges against him before Felix, the governor, Paul maintained that he was innocent. As he had opportunity, he reasoned with the governor concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

**Word Definitions:** "*He deferred them*": Felix, when he had obtained a better knowledge of Paul's charges, put off the Jews to investigate the matter further. *Orator*: An eloquent, capable speaker. *Heresy*: A Greek word meaning a party, sect, disunion; a departure from the recognized belief.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

When the chief captain had been informed of the conspiracy of the Jews to lay in wait for to slay Paul, he ordered Paul to be safely escorted under guard to Caesarea. There were two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred other light-armed guardsmen deployed to accomplish this at the third hour of the night, which according to our clock would have been about 9:00 o'clock p.m. With this delegated troop, the chief captain sent a letter addressed to Felix the governor, explaining why he was sending Paul to him. The soldiers took Paul as far as to Antipatris that night, and on the morrow returned to Jerusalem, while the horsemen accompanied Paul on to Caesarea. When Felix understood that Paul was of Cilicia, he promised to hear him when his accusers where come also. Paul was commanded to be kept in Herod's judgment hall where there was probably a guarded room where prisoners could be housed. After five days, Ananias, the high

priest, and the elders and a certain speaker whom they probably figured could help present their case better, all came to Caesarea. After the orator, Tertullus, had presented their case to Felix, Paul was permitted to speak. It is interesting to note that Paul pointed out that it was but twelve days since he had come to Jerusalem. He had been absent for a number of years. It was not possible for him to have excited an insurrection in that short space of time. Felix put the Jews off for the time being, promising to know more about the matter. Felix must have had two things in mind for keeping Paul: he wanted to please the Jews all he could, and keep on their good side, and then he hoped that he could bribe Paul and his associates. History records that Felix was a bad governor, but he did have a few things to his credit, especially in the favor of the Jews.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. How many days did Paul say had passed since he had come up to Jerusalem?
2. What did Paul say concerning the things the Jews were accusing him of?
3. How did Paul say that he worshiped the God of their fathers?
4. What did he say that he exercised himself always to have toward God?
5. What did Paul say that after many years he had come to bring to his nation?
6. What did Felix command the centurion to do with Paul?
7. What did Felix and his wife hear from Paul?
8. What did Paul reason to Felix about?
9. How did it affect Felix, and what did he do about it?
10. What did Felix hope to get from Paul?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The charges that God's children are accused of are so many times false and far-fetched. The accusations against Jesus could not be proven. Had Jesus been tried by an impartial judge and jury, He would have been acquitted, but it was God's plan that the dishonest men who sought His blood would have their way. God was having His way in Paul's life also. It was His plan that Paul go to Rome and testify of His grace in that city which was the center of the known world at that time. He was using the corrupt and dishonest means of

wicked men to fulfill His holy purpose. Paul was allowed to give his defence and to show that the charges against him were not true, but, nevertheless, God's will was that he remain in the custody of the court of Rome, so that His purpose would be worked out. In the mean time Paul was blessed to be able to witness to the wicked governor Felix and his Jewess wife, Drusilla. Notice the things that Paul reasoned with Felix about. These are the things that are important today, namely, righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. Although Felix trembled as he listened to Paul, it seems that he had no true repentant attitude about his life. He still was hoping that he could obtain financial gain from Paul; in this he was disappointed, for Paul was no rich man. He was just a poor minister who was preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations. He had riches that poor Felix knew nothing about. For two years he kept Paul, sending for him often and communing with him. He could have set Paul at liberty, but it was not the will of God. Paul was destined to preach the gospel at Rome, but it was to be a long hard route to get there, as we shall see in the coming lessons. —Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." If our conscience is not void of offense toward man, our Godly witness will be greatly hampered. How can you convincingly testify before some you know you have wronged? If you want to be used of God among men it is paramount to walk circumspectly before them at all times.

If our conscience is not void of offense toward God, woe be unto us when we stand before His judgment. We will be hesitant enough when we face death, but when He, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, looks into our soul, our regret will be complete.

The way to retain a clear conscience before God is to be careful to follow His teachings. The conscience must be brought under subjection to the Word of God and then we must continually allow our conscience to bring us into pure fellowship with God. When the conscience is properly directed then we can cultivate it with impunity. We are able to pray the prayer one little boy prayed when his father told him that the conscience is a small voice that warns against wrong. "O God, make the little voice loud."

If a clear conscience towards God is kept by obeying Him, it would follow logic to say that keeping a clear conscience toward man is accomplished by doing the biddings of man. Such is far from the truth. Think of the fix Paul would have been in if he had done what the Jews wanted him to do, just to avoid feeling their condemnation. William Penn, in London Tower, exclaimed: "My prison shall be my grave before I will budge a jot, for I owe my conscience to no mortal man." Our conscience is our personal possession and we should entrust it into the hands of no one but God. —Wayne Murphey

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**February 26, 1989**

### **PAUL APPEALS UNTO CAESAR**

Acts 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.

13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

**Memory Verse:** If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they. Ecc. 5:8.

**Central Thought:** Porcius Festus became governor in the stead of Felix, and, having been informed by the Jews against Paul, arranged to have a meeting with the Jews and Paul to hear the case. When he asked Paul about going to Jerusalem to be tried, Paul stated that he appealed to Caesar to be tried before his judgment seat.

**Word Definitions:** *Pomp*: The Greek word is fantasy which means a vain display or show. "*Judgment against him*": Condemnation to death—the Jews wanted Paul's death, not justice.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Porcius Festus had taken the place of Felix as governor. The Jews saw in this a hope and a new chance to influence the new leader against Paul. The hatred and contempt that the Jews had for Paul was becoming a raging passion. They were not interested in justice; they were only desirous of Paul's death. But God was not finished with Paul. There was a higher power watching over Paul, much higher than the puny

wrath of these corruptible men. As our memory verse states, there is a higher court that we are dealing with. Man is able to corrupt judges and courts of this world, but there is a higher court that man is not able to tamper with. It was the working of Almighty God that caused Festus to refuse to comply with the Jews' request to send for Paul and bring him to Jerusalem. They were wanting a chance to kill him along the way, but their plans were frustrated. Festus had probably gone up to Jerusalem to acquaint himself with the customs and laws of the Jews. It would have been a likely thing for him to have been favorable to the Jews in granting them to have Paul come, but God overruled their scheme. All the charges that the Jews were bringing against Paul could not be proven; he was an innocent man. When asked if he wanted to go to Jerusalem to be judged, Paul wisely appealed, as a Roman citizen had the right to do. He appealed to the next highest court, and that was the court of Caesar at Rome. King Agrippa and his wife Bernice came to visit Festus, and Festus decided to open up Paul's case to Agrippa. Agrippa, according to Adam Clarke, was the son of Herod Agrippa, who had tried to have Peter killed. He had no doubt heard much about the Christian faith, and was interested in hearing Paul. Our next lesson will cover Paul's testimony to him. —Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Why did the high priest want Paul brought to Jerusalem?
2. What did he have in his heart concerning Paul?
3. What did Festus decide to do in this matter?
4. What did the Jews do when they came down to Caesarea?
5. What were the three things that Paul denied any offence to?
6. Why did Festus ask Paul to go up to Jerusalem to be judged?
7. Why did Paul refuse to be judged at Jerusalem?
8. Who did he appeal to?
9. What court was Paul really appealing to?
10. Who came down to visit Festus and how did he feel about hearing Paul?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

Paul was dealing with the governors and kings, not because he had done any offence toward them, but because God had ordained that there be those in higher authority to appeal to in times of dispute. The world had already had a

taste of tyranny and oppression. The Roman rule and government had brought peace and order to the world. Jesus was born in what history calls "the golden age of Augustus Caesar." Many of the laws of democracy that we have in the United States government today are similar to those in the Roman Empire. Although governments are often corrupted and infiltrated with wrong, yet we can thank God for the good that is in the governmental powers and authorities that we have. It would be a dark and dismal world indeed if there were no government, but we must remember that God's kingdom rules over all. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all." Psalm 103:19. From His throne in the heavens the Lord puts up men in authority, and puts them down. He that is higher than the highest regards everything that is taking place in our world today. He will let it go no farther than what He sees is best. He is letting man have his way now, but He reserves the power to overrule the jurisdiction of man at any time He so chooses. Paul was fully assured and conscious during all of his imprisonment and prosecution that the Most High, the living God in heaven, was over all. He was not worrying and afraid of what was coming. His faith reached farther than the fleeting human agent that he stood before. These men who seemed so great and authoritative shrunk to nothingness before his eye of faith. Let us who are maintaining our faith and trust in God through all the trials here below, keep in mind that the Highest is watching over us. —Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I believe Paul's speeches before Felix, Festus, Agrippa and others in the courts, to be more than simply a defense or an attempt to save his own skin. I believe he viewed it as an opportunity to testify of Christ. God had witnessed to Ananias when Paul was first saved that "... he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Acts 9:15. In our recent lessons we have found Paul accepting this challenge and using the opportunity as it was presented to him. This is the same zeal that should be a part of every Christian. Bro. Clifford Wilson, in expounding on this subject wrote, "There is a living active force contained within an experience of salvation that reaches out with zealous yearning to communicate to someone else the wonders of that marvelous experience. It is upon the working of this force that the gospel depends for its distribution to the

populace of the world. This is the urge that causes individuals to forsake all and go to herald the gospel to the heathen. It prompts folks to operate a business, or hold a job, or run a farm, or perform any other task as unto the Lord, with the motive of heart that a generous portion of the proceeds realized will be faithfully used for the furtherance of the gospel, as He directs."

The Jews showed a great amount of zeal in spreading their beliefs also. A quote by Robert Thompson sheds light on the fact that the Apostle Paul possessed the right kind of zeal, however. "All true zeal for God is a zeal also for love, mercy and goodness."

—Wayne Murphey

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March 5, 1989

### 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:

3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

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

20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

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.

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

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.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

**Memory Verse:** Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.

Ecclesiastes 8:12

**Central Thought:** After relating to Agrippa and those present of his conversion to Christ, Paul stated that he had endeavored since then to preach to show to all men the way to life everlasting. Both Festus and Agrippa were impressed with his defence, and counted him worthy of being set free had he not appealed unto Caesar.

**Word Definition:** "*Works meet for repentance*": Works worthy or suitable for repentance.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

King Agrippa had expressed a desire to Festus to hear Paul. The place of hearing was entered by these leaders along with the chief captains and principal men of the city, and at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. Festus presented Paul to them, with a desire for Agrippa's ruling concerning this man whom the Jews hated so intensely. Paul was permitted of Agrippa to speak for himself. He started by explaining his past life in the religion of the Pharisees, and how that he thought within himself to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus. He told how Jesus appeared to him

that day on the road to Damascus, and what Christ said to him. Christ had appeared to make him a minister and a witness for Him. He said that Christ sent him to turn people from the power of Satan unto God so that they might receive forgiveness of sins and the inheritance for the sanctified in Him. He related how that he had earnestly endeavored to carry out the commands of his Lord. He said that it was for these causes that the Jews caught him in the temple and tried to kill him, and not for any real wrong that he had done. Festus reacted to Paul's testimony with astonishment and wonder, feeling that all of this had affected Paul's mind and balance of reason. Agrippa was greatly impressed and expressed himself as being almost persuaded to be a Christian himself. Paul would have rejoiced if that wicked ruler would have been saved. These rulers knew that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or bonds, but because he had appealed unto Caesar, he must be sent to be tried at Rome.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What heavenly vision did Paul have that he was obedient to?
2. What did he endeavor to show to the Jews and Gentiles?
3. What did he witness both to small and great?
4. What did Festus think of Paul?
5. What did Paul answer to Festus' charge that he was mad?
6. What confidence did Paul express to have concerning Agrippa?
7. How did Agrippa respond to Paul's testimony?
8. What was Paul's expressed desire for all of those present?
9. What did Agrippa say concerning Paul's position?
10. Why did Agrippa not turn Paul loose?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is very plain in Paul's case, and it is very clear according to what we have experienced in our own hearts and lives, that God's providence is guiding the affairs of His own. Nothing happens or comes our way but what is for the best. We must believe this and rest in this with all of our hearts. When we consecrate our lives to the Lord and His will, we must rest assured that He will be faithful to direct everything that comes to us to work for our good and to His glory. We must not judge the happenings of our life in this world by what they might seem, whether good or ill. It may have seemed to

Paul and to those looking on that Paul was being wronged and misjudged by being kept in bonds when nothing could be proven against him. But to Paul's eye of faith, it was all the providential workings of His sovereign Lord, who from His seat of authority in the heavens was ruling and reigning over all. He knew that God had control. Nothing could happen to him but what God ordered and permitted it to be so. What a blessed consolation to be assured of this. When people ride over our heads and take advantage of us, we know that God has some good in it for us some way. If we have to suffer and be humiliated, we know that God is looking down, beholding the whole thing. If we are His little ones, His jewels, nothing can come on us to hurt us but what He has something good in it for us some way. The fancies of the flesh and the devices that men might imagine and plan on will fade, but the providential hand of God remains steady to guide and order our travels in this fleeting time world. —Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

King Agrippa's answer to the Apostle Paul is sadly synonymous with the lives of many. We can tremble at God's Word, (Acts 24:25) almost be persuaded and find no fault with Christ, (Luke 23:4) yet be lost. We can have a profession and even be baptized, (Acts 8:13, 17-21) live and worship among God's people, be zealous as the Jews were, make long prayers as the Pharisees did, take part in the ministry like Judas, give of our means like Ananias, or even wish to die righteous as Balaam did, and still come up short. The Epistle of James says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10.

Lot's wife had every advantage to make it to safety and avoid the destruction of Sodom. She had a pious husband, had heard the warning, was led out of the city, was apparently making a clean break, yet perished. In spite of the warning in her ears and the angel's guidance, her heart yet yearned for the things that were doomed to destruction.

Once a boat went over Niagra Falls with two men in it, leaving another clinging to a log, which lay against a fence just above the edge of the descending flood. The morning that rose upon the night of disaster revealed the imperilled man.

Thousands gathered upon the banks of the river, and every invention was tried to save him. Life boats were swept away until the day began to decline. At length a frail skiff was brought by ropes from each shore to his side. Hope shed its

light upon all faces, and shone on no feature so brightly as upon his who lifted his foot to step into the last means of rescue. With the footfall, the boat shot upward and backward into the boiling waters. Downward, to the abyss of destruction below, went the victim of pleasure. He was **almost** saved.

These thoughts should serve as a warning to us, yet we can rejoice that God has provided a plan of salvation that will bring such a deliverance from sin that we can live and die in confidence of an eternal home in heaven.—Wayne Murphey

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**March 12, 1989**

### **THROUGH THE STORMY SEA AND SHIPWRECK**

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.

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

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.

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

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

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

17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

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

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

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

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

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

**Memory Verse:** They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. Psalm 107:23, 24.

**Central Thought:** During the voyage to Rome a great storm overtook the ship that Paul was a passenger on. Although it looked for a time that all would be lost, the Lord visited Paul and assured him that all would be well although the ship would be destroyed.

**Word Definitions:** *Verses 15 and 16 in the Greek Diaglott read:* "And the ship, having been caught, and not being able

to bear up against the wind, having given up, we were driven. And having run under a certain island named Claudia we were scarcely able to become masters of the boat." The boat referred to here was the smaller vessel positioned on the deck of the ship to be used in landing. It appears that this boat must have washed overboard, and they had great difficulty in retrieving it and bringing it back up on deck. *Tackling*: Various furniture, equipment, and apparatus that they could spare. "*Under colour*": Under pretense. The shipmen were going to try to escape to the land that had been sighted. "*Two-hundred threescore and sixteen souls*": 276 people.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul was being sent to Rome to stand trial before Caesar as he had requested. The first vessel they sailed on left Caesarea bound to sail by the coasts of Asia. At Sidon they made a stop and Paul was given liberty to go ashore and refresh himself with his friends, the saints who lived there. Coming to Myra, on the southern coast of the Asian province of Lycia, they found a ship sailing from the Egyptian port of Alexandria bound for Rome. Paul and the other prisoners and their guard were put on board this vessel. On the island of Crete they made another stop at a port called Fair Havens. It was here that Paul issued his warning of danger that he felt would come if they continued on their voyage. The ones in charge ignored his words, and because the place was not very convenient to winter in, they decided to try to get to Phenice, farther on west of that same island. As they were trying to work their way toward their goal, sailing close by the island, the terrible storm overtook them and drove them far out to sea. For fourteen days they endured the storm. God, in answer to Paul's prayers, brought them at last to the island of Melita (now called Malta) and there they were cast, with all being spared from destruction.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. How did Paul feel about sailing from Fair Havens?
2. Why did the master and owner of the ship not want to stay at Fair Havens?
3. What caused them to suppose that they had obtained their purpose?
4. What was their situation after the sun and stars were not seen for many days?
5. What good news did Paul give to them?

6. What did Paul tell them to do?
7. How did Paul react to the message that God had sent to him?
8. What did Paul say concerning the shipmen who were trying to escape?
9. Why did Paul encourage the men to take food?
10. What did he encourage them with, and what did he do in the presence of them all?

## **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

Paul and all of those on board the ship to Rome were to see God's wonders in the deep. Life is likened unto a voyage, and there are many storms that we will encounter as we sail life's stormy deep. The perils and the dangers on the sea of life are all in the hands of the Creator. He will only permit what is best for us. When we are in His perfect will and are being led by His Spirit, we are assured that the Master of the sea will save us and take us safely to the desired haven of eternal rest with Him. There are havens to lodge in as we sail the voyage of life. There are times when the Lord wants us to be still and wait on Him. We do not always have to be doing something or going somewhere. Many times the place where the Lord wants us to tarry is not very commodious to be in, and we are tempted to shove off for a more convenient place. But if we get ahead of the Lord we are sure to run into trouble. However, in these troubles, the good Lord will not forsake us. He will hear our cries and come to our rescue and bring us through to safety, although there will be some losses. We should really strive to follow His leadings and counsel—it will save us loss and trouble. He has sailed those stormy seas and He knows the seasons and the way of life. We should always listen to the Pilot's voice. How many people have started out in life with high hopes of success, and happiness, and come to ruin and shipwreck. Oh, the shipwrecked lives and shattered dreams we see in the lives of those around us! It is always because someone has not listened to the voice of wisdom. We are often at our wits' end, but if we will call on the Lord and take His counsel, He will lead us and bring us to our desired haven. (Psalm 107:28-30).

—Leslie C. Busbee

## **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

Paul said in one place that he had learned in whatever state he was in, therewith to be content. Surrounding conditions need not have any noticeable affect upon an experience

of salvation. We are not saved by our environment, but by faith in the shed blood of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. Such realization makes us conscious of Him and His presence regardless of where we are or what conditions prevail. If the way becomes rough and stormy, the immediate danger causes us to flee to the safety of His protecting bosom. If all becomes calm and peaceful about us, our hearts go out in grateful praise and adoration to the Lover of our soul. There is a contentment, a fulfillment, an inner satisfaction of the soul that the Christian enjoys from the Lord which no other source can supply. The Scripture says, And ye are complete in Him. Without that intimate personal relationship with the Divine, man is not complete. Unsaved folks, many times, do not recognize what is lacking, but rejoice greatly when they find it. Demonstrating such an experience with the Lord before others is one very effective means of awakening them to their own need of a personal contact with the Saviour.

Regardless of the circumstances current about him, Paul went right ahead with his devotion and dedication to the Lord as usual. He acknowledged the Lord's guiding hand over them all and in the presence of all he offered the sincere gratitude of his heart for the temporal blessing they enjoyed. The Divine influence was so real and radiant about him and provided such confidence and assurance until the entire group realized its merit and were "all of good cheer." Hearts were touched by the power of the gospel radiating from a man's life.

—Clifford Wilson  
(Written in 1970)

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March 19, 1989

## PAUL MINISTERS ON THE ISLAND OF MELITA

Acts 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

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 Appi 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.

**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:** Paul found much work to do for Jesus on the island that he and all the others were cast on when the ship became wrecked on its shore.

**Word Definitions:** "*Barbarous people*": People of another tongue, foreigners. "*Bloody flux*": The Greek word is dysentery, which is a disease of the bowels. "*Whose sign was Castor and Pollux*". These were two Roman gods, and the ship had

their images or emblems on the head and the stern. "*We fetched a compass*": This means that they sailed along and around the coast of the island of Sicily to the coastal city of southern Italy, called Rhegium.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Knowing that they were nearing land, the sailors lightened the ship as much as they dared, and then, hoisting up the sail, and committing themselves to the sea, they made toward the shore. They wanted to thrust the ship into a creek, but ended up at a place where two bodies of water met. They ran the ship aground, and it began to fall to pieces because of the terrific force of the waves. The soldiers wanted to kill all of the prisoners, fearing that some might escape, but the centurion had confidence and respect for Paul, and he would not allow them to be killed. In the end all escaped safe to land, some by swimming, and some by hanging on to broken pieces of the ship. There were people watching the shipwreck from the land, natives of the island of Melita. They began to try to help the victims of the storm, kindling a fire to warm their soaked and aching bodies. Seeing a viper fasten onto Paul's hand, they figured that this man was a murderer, escaping the storm only to suffer vengeance by being bitten by the poison snake. But when Paul suffered no apparent harm, they changed their minds and judged him to be a god. Publius, the chief man of the island took Paul and his associates in. Much opportunity arose to minister to the people and their needs, and it is very probable that Paul preached the gospel to them also. After reaching the mainland of Italy, they continued by ship until they docked near Puteoli, from whence they went on foot toward Rome, after tarrying for seven days with certain brethren. Word, reached the brethren at Rome that Paul was coming, so they came to meet him as far as Appi forum and The three taverns. When Paul saw these brethren, he thanked God and took courage. When they arrived at Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to be put in prison, but Paul was allowed to dwell apart guarded by one soldier, probably in a rented house.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What did the people of the island do for the victims of the shipwreck?
2. What happened to Paul as he was gathering sticks for the fire?

3. Why did the serpent bite have no effect upon Paul?
4. What was the people's first impression of Paul when they saw him bitten by the viper?
5. What did they think of him when no harm came to him?
6. What kind of opportunities opened up for Paul when he was on the island?
7. How did the islanders treat them?
8. Who came to meet Paul from Rome?
9. What did their coming do for Paul?
10. What was Paul allowed to do at Rome?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

People who are at first barbarians to us are barbarians no more when the love of Christ begins to work in the hearts. God wants all the walls that are built up between people to come down, and bridges built to unite them. Some people build walls and some people build bridges. The walls begin to melt away when people begin to realize that we are all fellow creatures of the dust with all the same basic needs. Sickness and trouble was on the island of Melita just like any other place where there are people. Wherever mankind is, there are the problems and troubles that attend all other members of the human race. And there Christ is needed, and there Christ is found, being a stronghold of faith and hope in the lives of despairing humanity. And there are the dangers, too. The poison viper, the seeds of sickness and death, and the evil works of Satan—all these things lurk wherever humanity is found. Christ promised to be with us to the end of the world. He knows those who are His. Also, there will always be found those who will help us and stand with us in the cause of Christ. Paul probably had not expected to run into or find brethren at Puteoli. What a blessing it was for both Paul and them! They wanted him to tarry with them for seven days; and then as he reached Appi forum and the Three taverns, more brethren met him, coming all the way from Rome. No doubt Paul was heavy in spirit as he came toward that city which was the center of the known world and the place where he was to be judged, but when he saw the brethren and felt their warmth and heard their words of cheer, he took courage and offered praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. How wonderful it is when we are heavy-hearted and weighed down with fears and pressures, just to see one of the faithful saints come walking in! That is the way Christ planned for it to be.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The barbarians supposed Paul was a murderer and then they supposed him a god, of which he was neither. In viewing others we need to keep our emotions and suppositions in check. When a catastrophe befalls someone, it is easy to form a supposition, as Job's comforter's did, that God is punishing an individual for not being what he should be. Generally, harsh judgments are made by those who are distant from the situation. The barbarous people knew little of the Apostle Paul.

Upon his first visit to the Sistine Chapel, a tourist could see nothing admirable in Michelangelo's frescoes. Nor did he hesitate to "snarl his displeasure." However, he decided, quite wisely, that perchance the judgment of the race was right, and his wrong. He therefore kept returning to those works of art until the beauty they embodied was born anew in him.

Dwight Morrow, when asked the reason for his success in dealing with the people of Mexico, made the statement, "I never judge a person until I discover what he really is." Our relations with others and the work of God would prosper if we follow that simple rule.

Heroism, likewise, is generally carried on from afar. Familiarity would bring to us the reality that everyone is human. There is a saying, "Worship your heroes from afar; contact withers them." I like the thought expressed by one writer who said, "To live well in the quiet routine of life, to fill a little space because God wills it, to go on cheerfully with a petty round of little duties and little avocations; to smile for the joys of others when the heart is aching — who does this, his works will follow him. He is one of God's heroes."

If we would adhere to the scripture, ". . . in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Phil. 2:3, we would be more likely to avoid the error of improperly judging others or setting any particular one up to receive undue honor.

—Wayne Murphey

March, 26 1989

## PAUL'S WITNESS AT ROME

Acts 28:17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with thier 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:** I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. II Tim. 4:7, 8.

**Central Thought:** Soon after his arrival in Rome, Paul arranged to have a meeting with the Jews and expounded to them the teachings of Christ concerning the true Kingdom of God, after which he continued, without being hindered, to preach and proclaim the glorious things of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Word Definitions:** "Waxed gross": Become hardened, insensible, calloused, stupefied. "*Hired house*": A rented house.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

We come now to the final lesson in this series on the Acts of the Apostles. Paul arrived in Rome, and was permitted to rent a dwelling and have liberty to receive visitors and to be ministered to by friends. He was guarded continually by a soldier, although the centurion knew that Paul would not seek to escape. In chapter 18:2 we found out that the ruler, Claudius Caesar, had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome. This command must not have lasted very long, or been revoked, for Jews had returned and were there for Paul to contact. The Jews seemed anxious to hear what Paul had to say, so on the day appointed they met with him and listened to him carefully. As the usual case was, some believed and some didn't. They were not the hotheaded kind as those at Jerusalem were, for they respected Paul's right to believe as he so desired, and departed with great wonder and reasoning among themselves. The fate of Paul is uncertain. Tradition has it that Nero acquitted him of the charges for a time, but called him back and accused him, along with other Christians, of setting fire to Rome. It is commonly believed that he was beheaded, sealing his faith in his Lord by his own blood. Several of the epistles that we have on record in the New Testament were written from Rome. One of his last letters was written to his beloved son in the gospel, Timothy, in which he testified that

he was ready to go and desirous to be in the presence of his Saviour. Praise the Lord for the witness of Paul and the truth that he brought forth to us concerning our Lord and His glorious kingdom of peace!

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. Who did Paul call together after he got to Rome?
2. For what reason did Paul say that he was bound with this chain?
3. What was the real hope that Israel and all mankind needed?
4. In what way did the gospel of Christ afford that hope?
5. What did Paul try to persuade the Jews concerning?
6. What did he expound and testify out of?
7. What was the reaction of the Jews to his teaching?
8. What was the Scripture that he gave them before they departed?
9. Who was the salvation of God being sent to?
10. What did Paul do from then on?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The man who once did persecute the saints of Christ the Lord,  
Became one of the greatest men the gospel could afford.  
Once blinded by his foolish pride and prejudice so vain,  
He found in Christ the only hope of everlasting gain.  
In seeking to promote the cause of truth in Christ, his Friend,  
The persecutions from the Jews seemed almost without end.  
They followed him where e'er he went and thirsted for his blood,  
But he for Christ His Lord endured the tribulation's flood.  
Unto the Gentiles far away he held his banner high,  
And ever sought to win the lost who for the truth did cry.  
Accused of crimes he did not do, he stood before great men;  
Upholding heaven's standard true, reproving them for sin.  
The wisdom from above did fill his heart, and soul, and mind;  
And to His loving Lord all things he ever kept resigned.  
He never flinched or sought to turn away from danger's path,  
Nor feared the threats and harm that fell from man's all-foolish wrath.

Bound for Jerusalem he went, unmoved by harm foretold;  
Determined to fulfill his course and to His Saviour hold.  
Arrested by the angry mob who sought in vain to kill,  
The Lord protected him and comfort did his bosom fill.  
At last appealing unto Rome for justice in his case,  
He started on a dang'rous voy'ge to that world-famous place.

Way out at sea the awful storm seemed bent Paul's life to end:  
But Christ right on that storm-tossed ship stood by him as a  
Friend.

Upon a certain island cast along with all the rest.

A viper fastened on his arm, his faith to put to test.  
He cast the serpent in the fire, the natives all were awed:

They thought he was a murderer, they thought he was a god.  
Then on to Rome to witness there of Jesus and His way.

The Apostle Paul filled out his time with service every day.  
For Him who died and saved his soul from death and endless  
hell.

Let us today be just as true the story old to tell!

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As we end this series on Paul's experiences, notice his exhortation to the Philippian Church. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." Phil. 3:17. We have studied Paul in his moments of triumph and times of abasement and recognize God's presence in all of them. Paul's life is not the pattern for us to follow, for Christ is our pattern, but Paul proved the way in which our lives can conform to the life of Christ.

Much good was wrought by Paul's imprisonment. Tertullian, one of the great church fathers, said that he and most of the converts who came out of paganism in his day, were won to Christ by observing how Christians lived and died. Reference is made to the fact, in Phil. 4:22, that Paul's life was the cause of some of those who guarded him and even those of Ceasar's household, being converted to Christianity.

Paul's life can be a great help in our Christian walk if we will keep vivid in our minds his example and his testimony. "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day. . . ." We would do well to mark his life so that we may receive the crown which is offered ". . . unto all them also that love his appearing." II Tim. 4:7, 8.

—Wayne Murphey

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## PAUL IN BONDS

In prison in Caesarea from June, 58 A. D. to the summer of 60. Acts 24:27. Festus succeeded Felix in 60 A. D., as we know from extra-Biblical sources. This is the crucial date from which much of the chronology of Paul's life is reckoned. If Festus succeeded Felix in 59 A. D., which some scholars think is possible, then most of the dates in this outline must be put one year earlier.

Defense before Festus, and before Agrippa. Acts 25 and 26.

Sails for Italy, summer of A. D. 60. Acts 27.

Shipwrecked at Melita, autumn of 60.

Winters in Melita, 60-61 A. D. Acts 28:1-11. (Note especially verse 11.)

Journeys to Rome, arriving there early in 61. Acts 28:11-29.

In Rome in his hired house two years, 61-63 A. D. Acts 28:30. Acts closes with the spring of 63, and was probably completed at that time.

Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon were written near the close of this first Roman imprisonment. See Phil. 2:23, 24; Philemon 22. The last three were sent at one time by Tychicus and Onesimus. Compare Col. 4:7-9; Eph. 6:21; Philemon 10, 11.

## PAUL'S LAST YEARS

References in Paul's Pastoral Epistles show that he was released (doubtless in 63 A. D.) and made further missionary tours.

He went to Ephesus, and to Macedonia, where he wrote I Timothy. (I Tim. 1:3.)

He visited Troas (II Tim. 4:13), Miletus (II Tim. 4:20), and doubtless Colosse. (Philemon 22).

He labored in Crete. (Titus 1:5).

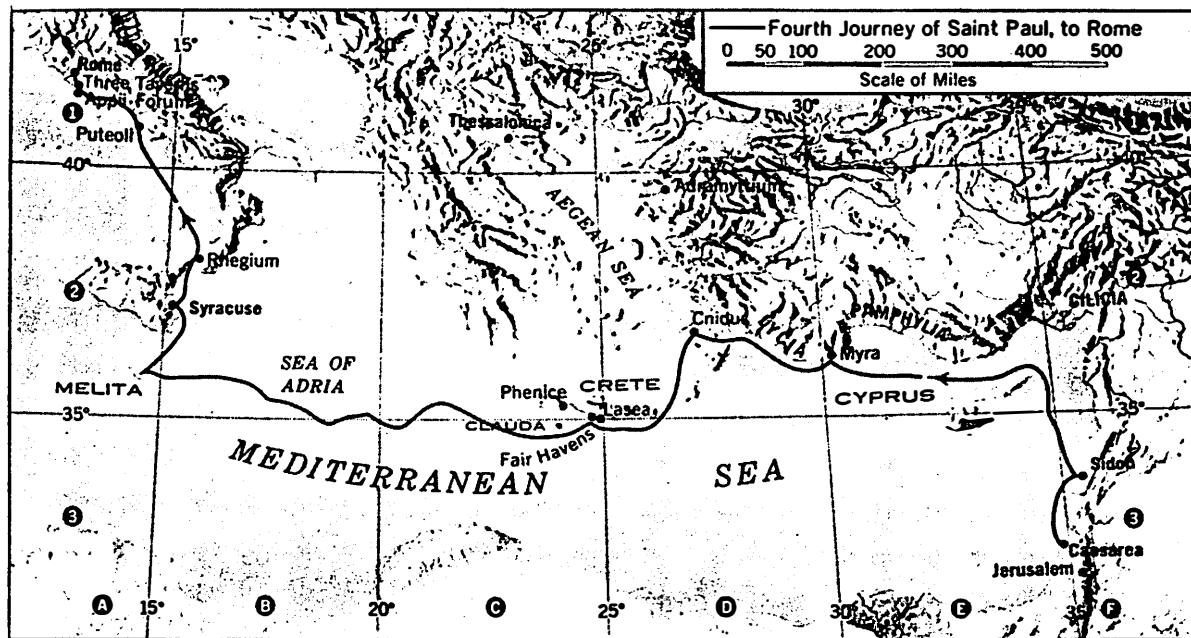
He visited Corinth (II Tim. 4:20), and wrote the book of Titus probably from there, or possibly from Nicopolis, where he expected to winter. (Titus 3:12).

Clement of Rome says Paul went "to the boundary of the west," doubtless meaning Spain. Compare Romans 15:24, 28.

Paul was again arrested, examined and imprisoned. (II Tim. 4:6, 16, 17).

While in prison he wrote II Timothy, his last letter.

He was martyred before the death of Nero, which occurred June 29, between 66 and 68 A. D.



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