

LESSON 32

Paul's Voyage to Rome

Objective : To have courage to face perils and trials . Even though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death fear no evil. The ever present god will help you.

Bible Portion : Acts - Chapter 27, 28

Memory Verse : Rom 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Introduction :

From Caesarea, Paul was sent to Rome under guard because he had appealed to Caesar. During the voyage he faced many a calamity even to extent of shipwreck. We will study it in detail.

The distance Paul travelled by the sea from Caesarea to Rome was about 2870 miles. It took him total seven months including the three months stay in Malta Island. From the account given in Acts 27 of Paul's voyage we get a clear picture of the ancient voyages. In this account we find about 40 naval terms or words related to navigation. The voyage began before the winter in 60 AD

Paul Sails For Rome

Paul and other prisoners were sent under the centurion named Julius Luke and Aristarchus with Paul. To assist him, Paul being an exceptional prisoner was granted certain special privileges like this. Julius was so kind to Paul that he allowed him to receive entertainments and helps from his friends (27:3). They reached Sidon the north. The next important place they reached was “Myra” in Lycia. During this voyage of about 500 miles, Paul got one more chance to recall to memory his early fields in places like Cyprus, Pamphylia and Cilicia as well as the Churches planted there.

ABORD ALEXANDRIAN SHIP

Paul and his fellow passengers continued their sail from the city of Myra in an Alexandrian ship which was shipping corn from Egypt to Rome. Next city they were to touch was fair Havens in the island of Crete. Crete is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea. Later we find that there were Churches in the island which was 150 miles long and 30 miles wide and that they were under the care of Titus (Titus 1:5). From Myra they had already sailed 350 miles now.... Much time had been lost and sailing had already become dangerous because of storm.

Here Paul warned them, “men I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and will bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also”. This was Gods counsel spoken through Paul. But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and the owner of the ship. For Paul in their sight, was only a prisoner. During this voyage, Paul spoke 4 times to his fellow sailor. Though he was merely a prisoner, he behaved in the ship as a servant of God.

THE STORMCALLED NORTHEASTER’ (Euroclydon):

The calculation of the navigators was to start from Fair havens and arrive at another port city in Crete called Phoenix and spend the winter there. When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought things would go well. But before very long contrary to their calculations, a wind hurricane force called Northeaster swept down from the island.

They gave up all hope of being saved. The Ship was not engine -driven but driven (sail boat) and went out of control. As they passed to the lee of a small island called Clauda, they were hardly able to make the life boat secure. But again the ship was out of control. This is a clear picture of anyone going on his own whimsical way rejecting God's counsel. They began to throw the cargo overboard. They even threw the ships tackle. Since they let the ship be driven by the wind, they were lost in the sea not knowing where they reached or where to go next.

PAUL ADDRESSES THEM (Acts 27:21-27)

There were 276 people on board. The men on board had not eaten anything for a long time because of fear. Then Paul stood up before and said : Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Where did this prisoner get courage from in order to preach to the others? He had one thing which the others lacked '**trust in God**'. While aboard that uncontrolled ship, he was fully aware of the presence of the Lord whose he was and whom he served. Though the light of Sun, Moon, and Stars was lost, God spoke to Paul even in that darkened night. Gods people are the memorials of God's wonders in the world (Psa 71:7). Perhaps by now, they realized the worthlessness of the words of the Pilot and ship owner (Acts27:l 1, 21). Those who follow the advice of men shall be ashamed. But those will be honored who proclaim and believe God's word.

FROM CLAUDA TO MALTA:

The voyage from Clauda to Malta of about 500 miles was the most difficult one. Pauls words were the only source of encouragement. Then sailors had some hope that in a fortnight, they would be ashore. Then the sailors attempted to escape from the ship. Paul found out his deception. Mans selfishness and wickedness are revealed at any time even at times of calamity. If the sailors had escaped all the passengers would have perished in the depth of the sea. Only a child of God truly cares for and works for the deliverance and welfare of others.

PAUL AGAIN ENCOURAGES:

Among these desperate passengers, Paul was the only man with courage. This time, he encouraged them not only by words but by his own example. He took a bread gave thanks to God and ate it before all others (Act 27:33-38). Then others were also encouraged to eat. It is the life experience of God's people especially the courage shown in the adverse circumstances that leads others to the Lord.

ASHORE ON MALTA:

It happened just as Paul had predicted (Acts 27:26). They reached a merging point at sea where two waters joint. By the strong battering waves, the ship wrecked. The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners. Nevertheless, the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. Thus all men on board survived as God had told Paul (Act 27:22, 44). The goodness which God shows to the wicked world is on account of His Son and His people on earth. This ship wreck was the fourth one in Paul's life (2Cori 11:25). All the passengers in the ship swam to the land and reached an island which was later found to be Malta.

Malta is a small island in the Mediterranean sea which is 17 miles long and 8 miles wide. In this island void of rivers, lakes and trees only a thin population was found in Paul's day although 5 Lakhs people live there today, there is a cave in this island believed to have been occupied by Paul. He lived there for three months time. The Islanders were known as barbarians. The Greeks called the non-Greeks barbarians. They however, showed unusual kindness to these victims (Acts 28:1- 2). They built a fire and welcomed all of them as it was raining and cold. Paul while gathering a pile of wood and putting in to the fire a viper fastened itself on his hand. The islanders saw this and said to each other. "This man must be a murderer". But Paul shook the snake off in to the fire and suffered no ill effects. When the people waited for a long time and saw this and said to each others, unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a God. From this ,, we can understand the fact that the basic truths of morality and religion are latent in all people universally.

The chief official of the island Publius welcomed Paul and his party to his home and entertained them three days. The healing of his father from fever and dysentery drew all the sick people of the island to Paul. They were all healed and a good ministry was performed there. They honored Paul in many ways. When they were ready to sail, they furnished them with the supplies they needed.

ARRIVAL AT ROME (Acts 28: 11-16):

After three months at Malta, they set sail to Rome in another Egyptian ship which was wintering there. This is the third ship on this voyage. Past eighty miles they reached Syracuse in Sicily, Again it took a voyage of ninety miles Rhegium, on the south end of Italy. Sailing further about 180 miles, they arrived at Puteoli, they were to travel 120 miles by land to reach to Rome. There were believers at Puteoli, where he spent one week. Meanwhile, the brothers in Rome had learned about Paul's arrival. They travelled as far as the Forum of Appius and the three Taverns to meet Paul. At the sight of these brothers, Paul thanked God from his heart forgetting all his sufferings.

He was encouraged by these brothers. During the rest of the journey of 30 miles, Paul travelled without the least thought that he was a prisoner. Paul arrived at Rome as a prisoner, contrary to his earlier expectation that he could take the Gospel to Rome as he did to other places with freedom. Pleased the Lord that he should reach Rome as prisoner (Acts 19:21, Rom 15:22-29).

When Paul got to Rome he was allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard him (Acts 28:16). There were a large number of Jews in Rome. They had a separate Jewish colony on the trans-Tiber area. Inevitably they had many synagogues also there. As soon as Paul got to Rome, he made an occasion to explain the Gospel to the Jews there as well as to learn their reaction. He had two meetings with them (Acts 28: 11-22, 23-28). In the second meeting he could take the Gospel home to them, in that day long meeting, Paul explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus, from the Old Testament. What was their response?. They had disagreed among themselves and began to leave. The Jews who were given the gospel first rejected it. So Paul closed the meeting with a warning that God's salvation was going to be sent to the Gentiles.

Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles concludes his records by giving a brief account of Paul's two years prison life in Rome and the way he worked there, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about Jesus Christ.... For the rest of the story, we have to depend on Paul's writings from Rome.
