

Week of September 10 - 16

Paul Tried before King Agrippa (Acts 26:1-32)

Paul, in the custody of the Roman government, pleaded his case before King Agrippa and Governor Festus of Judaea. King Agrippa told Paul to go ahead and tell his story. Paul stretched out his hand and told the king that he was more than happy to speak for himself since the Jews have accused him of blasphemy. He also told the king that he knew Agrippa was an expert on Jewish laws and customs.

He started by recounted his early life and how he was a Pharisee, a member of a strict Jewish sect, as a younger man. Because of this, he said he persecuted the followers of Jesus Christ and had them imprisoned and even executed. He even persecuted people whom he considered blasphemers in other cities.

Paul told the story of when he and his companions were on the way to Damascus to seek out followers of Jesus and were affected by a light that was brighter than the sun. This light was so bright that all of them fell to the ground. He told how he heard a voice asking why Paul, then named Saul, was persecuting Him.

When Paul asked who was speaking, the voice claimed to be that of Jesus. Paul told King Agrippa that the voice told him to get up and go minister to the Gentiles, which Paul immediately did with the same passion with which he had persecuted the followers of Jesus.

Because of this, Paul told the king that the Jews grabbed him in the temple and tried to kill him. Still, this did not discourage him from preaching about Jesus Christ.

Festus interrupted and told Paul that he was foolish. Paul disagreed and reminded him that the king knew these things of which Paul was speaking. But King Agrippa was so impressed he told Paul that he almost made a convert out of him. Then King Agrippa, his sister Bernice, and the governor sat privately with Paul for a while. The king told Festus that Paul could have been set free, had he not appealed to Caesar.

Paul Sails for Rome (Acts 27:1-12)

Now Paul is taken prisoner and is being transferred to Rome, where he was going to face trial before Caesar. Arrangements were finally made to start the trip to Rome by ship with Paul and several other prisoners aboard.

The next day when they docked at Sidon, Julius, a member of the imperial guard and under whose custody Paul and the prisoners were placed, was kind to Paul and let him go ashore to visit with friends and receive their hospitality. Putting to sea from there, they encountered headwinds that made it difficult to keep the ship on course, so they sailed north of Cyprus between the island and the mainland and passed along the coast of the provinces of Cilicia and Pamphylia, landing at Myra, in the area of Lycia. There the officer found an Egyptian ship from Alexandria, bound for Italy, and put everyone aboard.

They had several days of rough sailing and finally neared Cnidus, but the winds had become too strong, so they ran across to Crete, passing the port of Salome. Beating into the wind with great difficulty and moving slowly along the southern coast, they arrived at Fair Havens, near

the city of Lasea, where they stayed for several days. The weather was becoming dangerous for long voyages by then because it was late in the year.

Just then, a light wind began blowing from the south, and it looked like a perfect day for the trip, so they pulled up anchor and sailed along close to shore. But shortly afterward, the weather changed abruptly, and a heavy wind of typhoon strength (a "northeaster," they called it) caught the ship and blew it out to sea. They tried at first to face back to shore but couldn't, so they gave up and let the ship run before the gale. We finally sailed behind a small island named Claudia, where with great difficulty, we hoisted aboard the lifeboat that was being towed behind us and then banded the ship with ropes to strengthen the hull. The sailors were afraid of being driven across to the quicksands of the African coast, so they lowered the topsails and were driven before the wind. The next day as the seas grew higher, the crew began throwing the cargo overboard. The following day they threw out the tackle and anything else they could find. The terrible storm raged unabated many days until, at last, all hope was gone.

Paul then told them that last night an angel of the God to whom he belonged and whom he served stood beside me and said, "Don't be afraid, Paul-for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God has granted your request and will save the lives of all those sailing with you." So, take courage! I believe God! It will be just as He said! But we will be shipwrecked on an island."

About midnight on the fourteenth night of the storm, as they were being driven to and fro on the Adriatic Sea, the sailors suspected land was near. They sounded and found 120 feet of water below them. A little later, they sounded again and found only 90 feet. At this rate, they knew they would soon be driven ashore; and fearing rocks along the coast, they threw out four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. Some of the sailors planned to abandon the ship and lowered the emergency boat as though they were going to put out anchors from the prow. But Paul said to the soldiers and commanding officer, "You will all die unless everyone stays aboard." So, the soldiers cut the ropes and let the boat fall off.

As the darkness gave way to the early morning light, Paul begged everyone to eat. "You haven't touched food for two weeks," he said. "Please eat something now for your own good! For not a hair of your heads shall perish!" Then he took some hardtack and gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. Suddenly everyone felt better and began eating, all 276 onboard. After eating, the crew lightened the ship further by throwing all the wheat overboard. When it was day, they didn't recognize the coastline, but noticed a bay with a beach and wondered whether they could get between the rocks and be driven up onto the beach. They finally decided to try. Cutting off the anchors and leaving them in the sea, they lowered the rudders, raised the foresail, and headed ashore. But the ship hit a sandbar and ran aground. The bow of the ship stuck fast, while the stern was exposed to the violence of the waves and began to break apart. The soldiers advised their commanding officer to let them kill the prisoners, or they would swim ashore and escape. But Julius wanted to spare Paul, so he told them no. Then he ordered all who could swim to jump overboard and make for land, and the rest to try for it on planks and debris from the broken ship. So, everyone escaped safely ashore!

The Stopover at Malta (Acts 28:1-16)

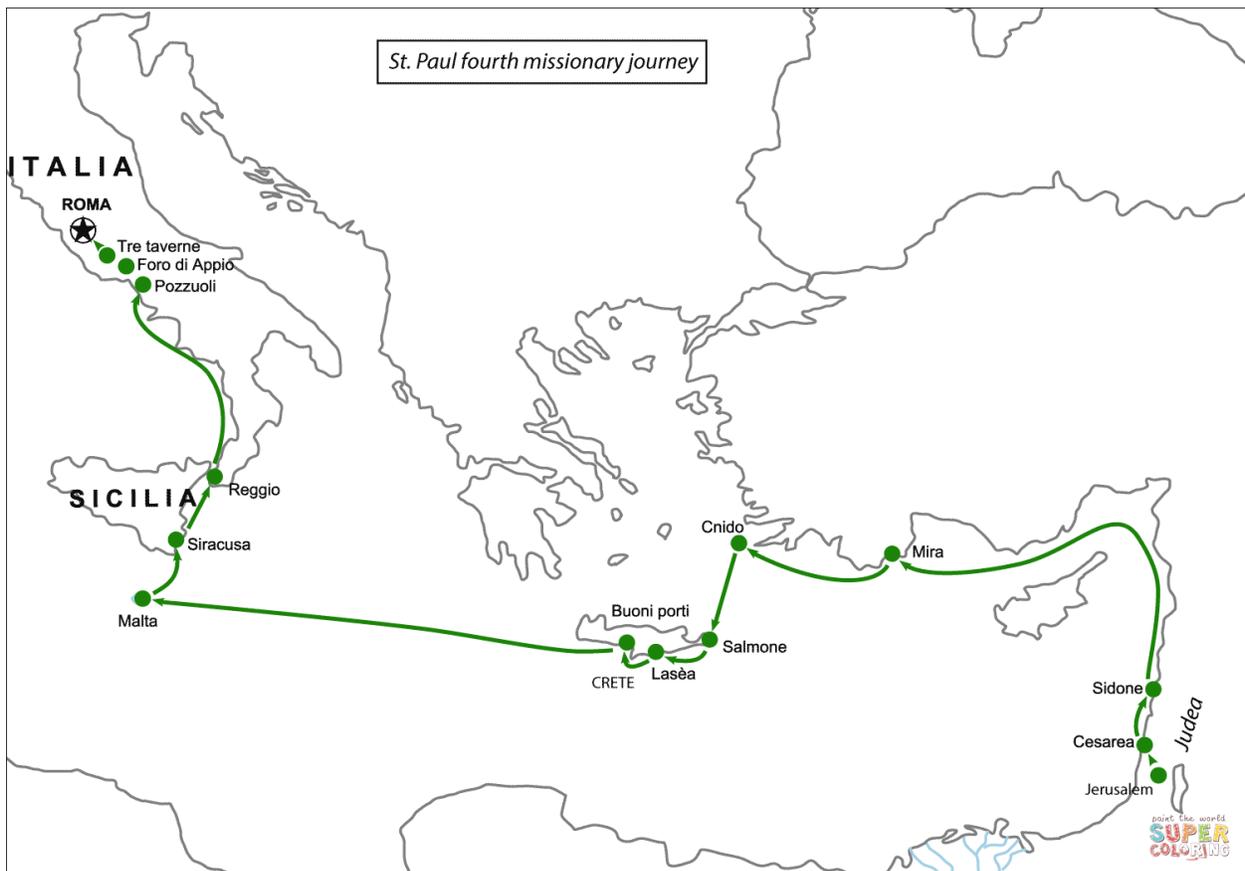
This chapter talks about the way the Maltese people treated Paul and the others following their shipwreck. One way they showed their kindness to them was by building a fire along the shore to help keep them warm. Suddenly, out of the ashes, a viper jumped out and latched onto Paul's hand. The people said that he was a murderer because even though he managed to survive the shipwreck, he was still going to die from the snakebite. But when they saw that Paul was unharmed, they quickly changed their minds and said he must be a god or else he would not have survived the snake attack.

A wealthy man from Malta named Publius was also kind to Paul and the others. During their stay, Publius' father was feverish. Paul went to see him and healed him. He also healed several others from various diseases while preaching the Gospel. When Paul and the others left the island, people gave them all the supplies they needed for the trip because of their gratitude.

Paul Arrives in Rome (Acts 28:17-31)

After spending three months in Malta, Paul finally made it to Rome. He gave an emotional speech to a crowd of Jews that he had called together. Much of his speech focused on their need to listen to him with their hearts so they could be healed and converted. He also told them that he believed the Messiah had already come in the form of Jesus Christ, and salvation was for the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Paul lived for the next two years in a house and welcomed all who visited him, telling them about the Kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and no one tried to stop him.



Summary of Philippians

Paul wrote the letter from prison, probably from Rome about AD 60. When he wrote Philippians, He was likely in his own rented house, where for two years he was free to share the Gospel with all who came to him.

He wrote the letter to thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent him upon learning of his imprisonment at Rome. He also reports on his own circumstances to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances, to exhort them to humility and unity, to commend Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippian church, and to warn the Philippians against the Judaizers.

Thanksgiving and Prayer and Paul's Desire to Advance the Gospel (Philippians 1:1-30)

Paul introduces himself and Timothy as authors of this letter to the believers in Philippi. He expresses his gratitude for how thankful he is for the Philippian Christians. He says he wants to reassure them about his current imprisonment for the Gospel, telling them that his imprisonment has "helped to spread the gospel."

Paul explains that his imprisonment has also caused others to boldly proclaim the Gospel, although some are doing it for a selfish reason. However, he says that he is still glad that the Gospel is being spread and "that Christ is proclaimed in every way."

Paul then appears to suggest he is potentially facing death. He imagines the benefits of death versus life, ultimately saying that it would be best for those living that he be able to live so he could continue to do God's work. Paul then instructs them to "live their lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit."

Paul says it is a privilege to be able to suffer for Christ.

The Example of Christ (Philippians 2:1-30)

Paul continues to give his audience instructions on how to live, saying, "Let each of you look not to your own interests, but the interests of others."

He tells them to have the same mindset as Jesus when it comes to the relationships that they have with everyone they encounter. Their attitude should be the kind that was shown by Jesus Christ, who, though he was God, did not demand and cling to his rights as God, but laid aside his mighty power and glory, taking the disguise of a slave and becoming like men. He humbled himself even further, going so far as actually to die a criminal's death on a cross. Yet it was because of this that God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name which is above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Then Paul gives instructions on how to behave in, saying, "so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world."

He notes that he intends to send Timothy to get a report from the church regarding how they are doing. Paul says that Epaphroditus, who had been sent to Paul by the believers in Philippi, should go back to Philippi to be with the church.