

90. Paul Began His Trip to Rome

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to present the message of the death and resurrection of Christ and learn to invite people to turn to Christ and receive Him as their Savior. We saw that our children will learn best as they observe us and see that we regularly invite people to receive Christ. We also saw that Festus, Agrippa and Bernice all agreed that Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. However, to try to cover their own sins they agreed that Paul should be sent to Caesar rather than set him free.

Acts 27:1-5 says, “And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to *one* named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment. So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave *him* liberty to go to his friends and receive care. When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under *the shelter* of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a *city* of Lycia.” Here, we see that the decision was made that Paul would travel to Italy by ship rather than traveling the roads that led to Rome. A centurion by the name of Julius was given the responsibility to guard Paul and some other prisoners and take them by ship to Rome.

One of the things we notice is the other Christians who traveled to Rome with Paul. In Acts 21:18, we read, “On the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.” Here, we see that Luke had been with Paul when he arrived at Jerusalem since the verse says “us” instead of “them”. We do not read where Luke was, from that time, until this first verse of Acts 27. Many people think that during this two-year period, Luke spent time interviewing people who had known Christ personally. Luke says, in Luke 1:1-4, “Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.” Here, we see that Luke received the information that he wrote in the book of Luke from eyewitnesses.

However, we see that Luke has now rejoined Paul as he started his trip toward Rome. We also see that Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, traveled with Paul to Rome. Acts 20:4 says, “And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.” Here, we see that Aristarchus was one of those who traveled with Paul to take the offering from the churches in Greece to the church in Jerusalem. It is probable that he had been in Caesarea while Paul was in prison for the two years in Caesarea in order to meet the needs that Paul had while he was in prison. Felix had said, in Acts 24:23, “So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.” In that time, prisoners needed friends to buy food and prepare their meals for them while they were in prison.

The ship made a stop in the city of Sidon which was about seventy miles north of Caesarea. Here, we see that Paul had gained the respect of Julius, the Roman centurion who was responsible for him, because Julius gave him the freedom to leave the ship so that he could visit his friends in that city and they could provide for his needs for the trip. This also shows that Julius had complete trust that Paul would return, because a soldier who let a prisoner escape was in very serious trouble. When the ship sailed from Sidon, the winds were blowing the wrong way for a sailing ship and so the ship sailed between the island of Cyprus and the mainland to protect them from the strong winds. They traveled past the regions of Cilicia and Pamphylia until they came to the city of Myra, which was in the Roman province of Lycia. There they had to change ships.

Acts 27:6-8 says, “There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board. When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under *the shelter of Crete* off Salmone. Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.” Many of the ships that stopped at the city of Lycia were ships that carried grain from Egypt to Italy for the Roman government. That was true of this ship. Acts 27:38 says, “So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea.” Here, we see that it was only when the sailors knew that the ship was going to be wrecked that they finally threw the wheat into the sea to lighten the ship.

As the ship left Lycia, we see that the ship traveled very slowly to the city of Cnidus. Cnidus was almost straight south of the city of Ephesus and the way they were traveling showed that they planned to cross the small piece of land near Corinth on their way to Italy. The reason that they traveled so slowly was due to a strong northwest wind. Instead of being able to travel in a straight line, they had to zigzag with the ship, because the wind was blowing against them. The winds got even stronger when they left Cnidus and they finally had to sail south and sail around the south side of the island of Crete so that the island would protect them from the strong winds from the northwest. They actually began to be protected by the island after they passed Salmone which was on the northeast coast of Crete, although it was difficult to get past that point.

Then, they sailed along the south side of the island of Crete. There were various cities and harbors on the south side of the island of Crete. Near the city of Lasea, there was a bay called Fair Havens. Acts 27:9-13 says, “Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, ‘Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.’ Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, *and winter there*. When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.”

Because they had such a difficult time fighting the wind, it was late enough into the fall that it was now becoming dangerous to sail. The fast on the Day of Atonement was already past so it was the very end of September or early October and sailing on the Mediterranean Sea was considered

dangerous after the middle of September. Paul knew that it was dangerous to sail and so he gave a warning to the centurion, the owner of the ship and the men sailing the ship. Paul said that if they sailed further, the trip would end with disaster and much loss. Paul said that this disaster would bring great injury and loss. In addition to the loss of the cargo and the ship, this loss could even include their own lives.

Paul knew the consequences of sailing a ship after it became dangerous to sail. Paul wrote, in 2 Corinthians 11:25, “Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep...” Three different times Paul had been on a ship when it was shipwrecked. One of those times, he had spent a night and a day in the water before he escaped. Paul also looked to the Lord for guidance and that was why he had given his warning.

However, the helmsman, as well as the owner of the ship, did not agree with Paul. The helmsman was the one who was in charge of steering the ship. Because of his knowledge of travel on the Mediterranean Sea, his opinion was respected. The owner of the ship also felt that they could safely travel a little further. The centurion was more influenced by these two men than he was by Paul. Since the ship was a grain ship that carried grain from Egypt to Italy for the Roman government, the centurion had the right to make the final decision, but he listened to the other two men.

The bay at Fair Havens was not an ideal place to spend the winter. A place called Phoenix was at the west end of the island of Crete. That place had a much better harbor. As a result, the helmsman, the owner and most of the rest of the crew thought that would be a much better place to spend the winter. That seaport was only about forty miles from Fair Havens so the helmsmen and owner thought that they could safely reach that city.

Then, the wind changed direction and began to blow softly from the south. A south wind is much safer in that area at that time of year. Since the ship was at a harbor on the south side of the island of Crete and they wanted to go to the west, the helmsman and owner thought that it was now safe for them to travel. A south wind would make it easy to stay close to the island of Crete as they traveled the forty miles. They thought that they could make the trip safely with a south wind.

Those who do not know Christ will usually depend on their own knowledge and wisdom instead of seeking the guidance of the Lord. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand why it is important to always seek the guidance of the Lord in every situation, because He knows all things and we are very limited in our knowledge as humans. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children the importance of being guided by the Lord moment-by-moment.