

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 13



PAUL'S TESTIMONY IN ROME

Scripture Text: Acts 28:11-31

When shipwreck forced Paul to spend three months on Melita, God helped him to fill those months with rich and fruitful service of miracles, healing, and, no doubt, soul saving.

The Romans had wanted to set Paul free, but when the Jews objected, Paul appealed to Caesar, not that he might accuse his nation, but that he might receive in Rome the justice denied him

before Caesar's judge. Now a prisoner in Rome, chained continually to a soldier, Paul was to accomplish some of his most outstanding achievements. There, as he sat in bonds, he wrote epistles to the Philippians, the Ephesians, the Colossians, and to his dear friend, Philemon.

For two years he abode in his own hired dwelling. Many people came to consult with him and hear him speak. As in other places, some believed, and others believed not. He was probably freed after his trial before Caesar until later persecution arose, and he was beheaded.

MEMORY VERSE: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

—*Romans 1:16*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Luke 14:25-35** Counting the cost.

Tue.—**1 Corinthians 10:1-13** Israel's example warns us.

Wed.—**2 Corinthians 4** Persecuted, but on to the goal.

Thu.—**2 Timothy 4:1-8** Paul's testimony.

Fri.—**Titus 2** Faithful, godly living.

Devotional Reading: Luke 12:27-48 Ready for Christ's return.

Sailing on to Rome

Acts 28:11-13 The Alexandrian ship on which the shipwrecked men took passage carried the sign of Castor and Pollux, "the twin sons of [the mythological] Jupiter and Leda, [who] were regarded as the tutelary divinities of sailors; hence their image was often used as a figurehead for ships" (Smith's Bible Dictionary). The voyage from Melita to Rome was a pleasant one. They arrived at Puteoli, close to Naples.

Fellowship With Saints

Acts 28:14-16 At Puteoli they stayed seven days with **brethren**. Taking up their walk along the main road to Rome, Paul and his companions met at Appii forum a group of Christians who came from Rome to meet them. Farther along the road, at the three taverns, they came to another group. The brotherly love and spiritual strength they brought so lifted Paul's spirit that **he thanked God, and took courage**.

Paul's heart, bowed under hardship, opposition, loneliness, and uncertainty, swelled with thankfulness and lifted with courage when the saints came to meet him. There is increase of power for each when saints meet and speak of God, His good dealings with them, and their faith and hopes in Him. By this fellowship, individuals grow in grace, and the church advances.

The privilege of stopping with the saints was more lenient treatment than prisoners usually receive. In addition, upon reaching Rome, while the other prisoners, who may have been real criminals, were kept in prison, Paul lived in a rented house guarded by a soldier. Julius, the centurion, had observed and listened to him and had

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 13

seen the power of God in his life. He was convinced that Paul was a good man. He knew that to Paul's action, a shipload of men owed their lives. He was very kind to Paul. It is possible that Paul's Savior was his Savior too.

Paul Speaks to the Jews

Acts 28:17-29 Hardships had not dulled Paul's zeal. Circumstances might change as they will, but Paul's eyes never wavered from the one goal of winning the lost to Christ. After only three days he **called the chief of the Jews together** and explained his case. He said it was **for the hope of Israel** that he was **bound with this chain**. That is, the Jesus he preached was the Messiah that Israel had long hoped would come. Yet when He came, they refused to believe He was the One and imprisoned Paul for preaching Him. The Jews wished to hear the teachings of **this sect so spoken against**. All day long at an arranged meeting, Paul taught them from their Scriptures. He taught the Kingdom of God which Jesus set up. He taught Jesus, His Sonship, His death for sin, and His rule in the hearts of men. As always, **some believed, and some believed not**. To the unbelieving, Paul applied Isaiah's prophecy (**Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:14-15**). As in many cities before, he told them God would send His salvation to the Gentiles who would hear.

Paul taught **out of the Law of Moses**. The tabernacle furniture and law ceremonies all were types of Christ and the Gospel. He taught **out of the prophets** who wrote God's promises of a Savior and salvation. Thus he taught the Gospel from the Old Testament. The Old Testament was given in a dispensation which is now a past part of God's dealings with men, but its Words are all true. We cannot neglect it without impoverishing the church.

Two Years of Preaching in Rome

Acts 28:30-31 In confidence and strength through God, Paul set up a teaching program in his prison house. For two years he **received all that came in unto him**. A stream of discouraged, bewildered, sinning, seeking men, women, and young people, came to hear of Christ and the Kingdom of God. They left with questions answered, burdens lifted, hearts made new in Christ. Perhaps among the changed ones were some of the soldiers who guarded Paul by turns.

Paul preached **the kingdom of God, and . . . things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ**. If a topic does not relate to these basic themes and enlighten concerning them, it is unworthy to the divine calling of the preacher. Paul expounded. He went deep into the Scriptures, brought up truths, laid them out before the listeners, and explained their meanings.

The kingdom was at that time a present, living fact. Some look to the future for Christ to set up His kingdom. He did set it up when He was here. He preached the kingdom. Men were pressing into it. He said the time was fulfilled (**Mark 1:14-15; Luke 8:1; Luke 9:2**). **The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached (Luke 16:16)**. Now is not a time for waiting, but for gathering as many as possible out of the world and into Christ's kingdom.

Paul's Later History

So ends the Book of Acts. What followed for Paul is not specifically documented, but from **1 Timothy** and **Titus** (written after his release) and **2 Timothy** (written during his second imprisonment), we can gather that he was released after his first trial and went preaching again. Then Rome was burned and Nero, the wicked emperor, falsely blamed the Christians. In the persecution that followed, Paul was again imprisoned, this time with no leniency. History and his letter to Timothy (**2 Timothy 4:6**) tells of his expected execution. He was beheaded. So sin did its uttermost and its worst. Yet without triumph. The blow of the axe only smote off the lock of the prison and let the spirit go free to its home and to its crown.

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 13

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
It is revised and posted here with written permission from
(c) Bible Paths Publications, PO Box 299, Keithville, LA 71047