***Paul's Appeal for Prayer Support - No. 4
Romans 15:30-33
RO192-01***

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**Paul's Plan to Visit Rome**

**Paul's Circumstances Taking Him to Rome**

Romans 15:30-33. Our subject is Paul's Appeal for Prayer Support - Segment Number 4. We have learned thus far in this segment that the apostle Paul has asked the Christians in Rome to pray for his safety while he is in Jerusalem. Paul's Jerusalem relief fund committee has arrived in Jerusalem and delivered the famine relief money, which has been collected from various Gentile churches to the leaders of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Paul exposes himself on this occasion to the wrath of the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem who hate him by participating in a Jewish ritual in the temple. A riot ensues, and Paul is falsely accused by these unbelieving Jews on various counts. Paul is taken into protective custody then, by the Roman soldiers, and transferred by night to the seacoast town of Caesarea on the Mediterranean Sea for safekeeping. In Caesarea, Paul pleads his case before the Roman governor, Felix. Felix is not convinced by the Jews that Paul is guilty of any crime. But Felix keeps Paul in jail for 2 years, hoping to get a bribe in order to release him.

Felix is replaced at the end of the 2 years by Porcius Festus as governor, and Festus reviews Paul's case. He, too, finds Paul not guilty of any of the charges leveled against him, but he keeps Paul in prison in order to placate the Jews. At that point, Paul decides that things are not going anywhere, and he exercises his right as a Roman citizen to appeal his case directly to Caesar. And that's what he does. He requests that his case be transferred to Rome to be tried before Nero.

While he is awaiting removal from Caesarea, King Agrippa of the area of Judea and his sister Bernice visit Governor Festus and they are asked by Festus to hear Paul's case. Paul's defense before Agrippa is held amid great pomp and ceremony in the Royal Court. Agrippa is well versed in Old Testament Scripture, and he knows all about Jesus Christ, whom Paul proclaims to be the Messiah Savior of Israel. Agrippa also finds no cause for executing Paul as the Jews desired. So, preparations are made for Paul to be sent to Rome to stand trial before Caesar and travel arrangements are made.

In Acts 27, we have the story begun of the journey to Rome. And again, a splendid part of the Word of God preserved by Dr. Luke for us to give us an insight into what kind of a life was involved in serving God very seriously, very devotedly, under all kinds of hardship, as was characterized by the apostle Paul. This man whom we have floating out in our mind sometimes as some kind of an angelic creature, and we forget the realities of life with which he dealt. He knew what it was to face death on more occasions than any of us ever will. He knew what it was to face an angry mob, to face all kinds of hardships, to face disasters at sea, disasters on land. He knew what it was to be hated for Jesus Christ.

So, in Acts 27, we have the beginning of Paul's journey to Rome. Acts 27:1, "And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan [or imperial] cohort named Julius." He is put in the charge of an officer who is a centurion, which is a man who is in charge of 100 men, and Paul is accompanied by Luke. You will notice that in verse 1 it says, "when it was decided that we should sail," Luke is now including himself. He has arrived on the scene, and along with him comes an assistant who actually stayed with Paul the whole 2 years he was in prison in Rome, Aristarchus, a Macedonian believer. So, they put Paul under the authority of this Roman officer.

Acts 27:2 says, "and embarking in an Adramyttium ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica."

**Paul's Journey to Rome**

Here is the picture of the territory. Paul has been moved from Jerusalem up to the seacoast town of Caesarea. They embark on a ship here and they go along the coast and land at Sidon.

[Continuing in Acts 27:3] "And the next day [It took them one day to make that little run up the coast, The next day] we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care." Paul had some friends there in Sidon and this centurion officer was sympathetic to Paul and therefore permitted him to get off the ship chained to a soldier, but the freedom to go and visit Christian friends while they were in port there at Sidon. And then they put out to sea again. Acts 27:4, "And from there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary." It is very hard to sail from west to east in the Mediterranean because the prevailing winds are from east to west. So, you're bucking the winds all the way. So, the procedure was to head north and get into the shelter above the island of Cyprus, which is what they did, and then with difficulty to go along the coast here to a landing point at which they came, which was Myra.

So Acts 27:5 says, "And when we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia;" here on the map you see, here's Cilicia, and here is the province of Pamphylia. They're sailing along here now. They're facing these easterly winds. They're tacking their way back and forth through this little channel, which gives them some protection as they're headed for this port. And finally, they land at Myra in the province of Lycia. And there's the little port of Myra.

Now at this point, the ship on which they're sailing is going to continue on up here to this little dot that you see, which is the home port, Adramyttium, of the ship. This ship is not going on to Italy; it is simply making its way around because it is almost past the sailing season. Once you get to the beginning of November, the Mediterranean becomes so hazardous that it simply, in those days, could not be sailed at all. They are now near the middle of October, the end of September, the middle of October, so they are getting very close to the end of the sailing season. So, this ship is very eager to make its way back up here to its home port where it will winter. The centurion now has to get another ship to go on to Rome.

Acts 27:6, "And there the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it." Now, the ship from Alexandria was a grain ship. The breadbasket of the Roman Empire was Egypt. And there were these many of these very large ships, grain ships, which actually could carry as many as 600 passengers as well, which were transporting food to the Roman Empire. That's the kind of a ship that Paul finds there in the port at Myra, and he makes a deal with the captain to take his crew of soldiers and prisoners. His crew and 276 people in all end up on the ship. Acts 27:7 says, "And when we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, [They came along here working their way above Rhodes; and here's Cnidus.] since the wind did not permit us to go farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone." So, they came down here, headed south and came under the shelter of Crete to try to find in this area called the Fair Havens, a little secure place out of the prevailing winds. [continuing in Acts 27:8.] "and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a certain place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea." And, they put into port here at Lasea.

At Fair Havens on Crete, God the Holy Spirit communicates a message to Paul. In those days, God spoke directly to His servants; and here He gives a message to Paul. Whether in a vision or some other means we're not told, but Paul gets a direct message and he knows when God is speaking to him. What the Holy Spirit tells him is that they should not leave the Port of Lasea, but they should stay there for the winter. And he warns the officer, the Romans officer, the centurion, that if they leave that port, God has revealed to him that they will lose the ship and the valuable cargo. So, now a decision has to be made.

Acts 27:9, "And when considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, [Referring to the Day of Atonement festival, and that was near the middle of October. They were getting very close to the deadline of the early part of November when there couldn't be any safe sailing anymore. Since the fast was already over,] Paul began to admonish them, [Acts 27:10] and said to them, 'Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be attended with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.'" Paul says, 'If you do this, there will be a great loss and a great threat to life.' [Continuing in Acts 27:11.] "But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain [who was probably the owner] of the ship than by what was being said by Paul." A great mistake was here being made. The Centurion ignores Paul's advice and instead he consults with the owner and the pilot of the ship and they make a decision contrary to Paul.

What Paul is actually telling them was how to do this God's way. And here again, they came up not appreciating the fact that this man was a communicator from God. They were proceeding to do what seemed very reasonable and understanding and they could comprehend that this was good judgment from their point of view.

Acts 27:12, "And because the harbor was not suitable for wintering..." And these men knew that they had to winter, but this was not a very nice place to winter. They didn't have a lot going on. Lasea was one of those places where they rolled up the sidewalks at night. I mean, there was nothing going on. So, they said, 'Phoenix, that's the place to spend the winter. That's where all the casinos are. That's where all the fun and games are. I mean, we got something to do at Phoenix.' So, they said 'it's a short run up the coast here of Crete, on the southern coast. We can make that... if get the right wind.' So they decide to gamble!

[Acts 27:12] "And because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phenice, [right here,] a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there."

**The Storm At Sea**

[Acts 27:13] "And when a moderate south wind came up, [They got a wind from the south, which is what they needed. They said, 'Aha! We can move up along the coast, we can get to Phenice. It seems so reasonable.' They had the wind. All they had to do was sail before up that coast. They had a moderate wind came up.] supposing that they had gained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore." They're headed for Phoenix.

But lo and behold, a violent hurricane like storm comes up after they have set sail. Now they're in deep water; they're here in the channel. They're here out with the open sea joining them, and they're getting this northeaster that has come down upon them with enormous violence. Acts 27:14, "But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo; [Which means a nor'easter.] Acts 27:15 "and when the ship was caught in it, and could not face the wind, we gave way to it, and let ourselves be driven along." Here comes this wind from the Northeast and they're trying to go this way up and it's just against them in every way. It's a violent storm, and finally, they cannot control the ship and they find themselves blown out to the open sea. Now, they are in desperation, in hopes of being able to stay afloat.

[Acts 27:16] "And running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda." There it is right there, Clauda. They get this close to Phoenix. They get under the shelter of the island there at Clauda. They're "scarcely able to get the ship's boat under control." But now they have a moment of respite. They have the ship a little bit under control, and the first thing they do is pull in the lifeboat. In those days, your lifeboat was trailed behind you on a rope. This thing by now is full of water. It is a drag on their attempt to control the direction of the ship. So, now when they have a moment, a breather, they haul the lifeboat and put it on deck.

[Acts 27:17] "And after they hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; [Then they ran ropes under the ship so to literally tie this box together, to keep the beams from coming apart under the violence of these hurricane winds.] and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor, [That word may also mean they let down the sail, that is, they just took all the sail off.] and so let themselves be driven along." They just had to let themselves be driven by the wind. They were totally out of control.

[Acts 27:18] "The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo; [Over goes the grain. Continuing with Acts 27:19] and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. [They began tearing down anything that they could possibly throw overboard to lighten the ship. Acts 27:20] And since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned." Since they could not see the stars or the sun, they had no way of navigating. They were completely lost. What was happening, unbeknownst to them, was that they were being driven out here to sea. They were afraid of shallows along here, that they could be driven aground. And what eventually happened is they're being driven back and forth toward the island of Malta. Yes, the same place you've been hearing about in the news where President Gorbachev held their conference recently.

They now had no idea of where in the world they were in this whole area, which was called the Adriatic Sea. They were driven violently by this nor'easter hurricane.

Acts 27:21, "And when they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, 'Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete, and incurred this damage and loss.'" Now, the apostle Paul wasn't trying to be smart-alecky here and say, I told you so. But he is, I think, trying to reinforce 'I'm not just making this stuff up. I know what I'm talking about. I have a communication with the God up there who controls this storm and He controls every breath we take. You're going to take a breath or you're not going to take a breath on what He decides. And you're going to face that that's the progression from here out into eternity. Now your lungs are going to stay filled air or they're going to get filled with water; He's going to decide. Now, you should have listened to me; you're going to lose the ship, you're going to lose the cargo. You're going to have a great damage and great loss. But again, I want you to listen to me now. God has again spoken to me.'

[Acts 27:22] "And yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship." Now, the centurion officer takes this seriously. He believes Paul. He accepts the fact that Paul is able to do what he claims to do; he does speak for God. And he has made it clear that there will be no lives lost; everybody is going to be saved. If you've ever been in a storm at sea, in a hurricane storm, this is very hard to believe. And in a little wooden ship driven without any controls, and now no power source but sails that you can't use. Yet, Paul says, 'Everybody lives, all 276 of us, nobody dies, but the ship is going to go down.'

Acts 27:23, "For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, [Acts 27:24] saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; [So, Paul is reassured you're going to get your day in court before Caesar.] and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.' [Not only you will be saved Paul, but all 275 other passengers are going to safely get ashore with you. Acts 27:25,] Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God, that it will turn out exactly as I have been told."

And that was the issue: believing God or not believing God. That's the whole issue of the Christian life: believing the doctrines you know or not believing them; not believing them when it's easy to believe in them, but believe them when you're in the pinch and you need to know them and you need to believe them.

Acts 27:26, "But we must run aground on a certain island."

Acts 27:27, it has now been 2 weeks. This is the 14th night since they cast off from Lasea and now they've been driven night after night for 2 solid weeks, wildly across the territory of the Adriatic Sea, as it was called in this area here. And actually, this is a distance from here to here of 600 miles. So, they've been in this wind driven for 600 miles wildly across the waters with the wind screaming and the waves sloshing over the decks.

That in itself is an impressive sight. Those of you who have been on naval vessels, it is awesome to be in high seas, and see the whole prow of the ship go underwater, and then it comes back up and everything flies off. And you're just glad you're not standing up there when it does, because it literally goes down, and everything is underwater as that thing comes screaming back up again. A violent storm, and this is just a little quirk of a boat.

Acts 27:27, "But when the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching some land. [Acts 27:28] And they took soundings, and they found it to be twenty fathoms; [120 feet deep. They went a little further, a little farther.] and a little farther on they took another sounding and found it to be fifteen fathoms. [90 feet deep. The waters are getting shallower. They are indeed approaching a coastline. Acts 27:29,] And fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak." So, they put 4 anchors out of the stern to hold the ship against the wind so it would not be blown further toward whatever that landfall was that they had come upon.

Acts 27:30, "And as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship, and had let down the ship's boat [the lifeboat,] into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow." The sailors had been talking beneath decks. They had decided that they've got to get off the ship. They were not confident in what Paul was telling them, and they, under the pretense of needing to stretch out more anchors and secure the lines, said 'we have to put the lifeboat in the water,' intending to get as many of them in the lifeboat. Then they were going to head for land that they believe now was in front of them.

Paul is aware of what they're doing. He goes to the Roman officer, the centurion. [Acts 27:31] "Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, 'Unless these men remain on the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved.'" The centurion and the soldiers take Paul very seriously. Paul says, "If you let these guys get off with that lifeboat and leave, they're not going to make it, and you won't either. Do you see God's way and the sailors' way? It doesn't seem very reasonable, does it? It would seem that when you know that you have land before you, getting in the boat and heading toward it under some controlled conditions with the oars would be the thing to do. But God's way is God's way, and Paul says, 'Don't let them do it.'

The centurion immediately gives the order in Acts 27:32, "Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat, and let it fall away." He gave the order. They took out their swords. They slashed the ropes, and the lifeboat falls to the water. And it very quickly gets blown away. Now, nobody's going to get off the ship. That makes it for sure.

At this point in time, Paul decides to try to settle everybody's nerves and to have them do what they have not done for 2 weeks. It's time to have something to eat. Acts 27:33, "And until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, 'Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing. [Acts 27:34] Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation; for not a hair from the head of any of you shall perish.'" Isn't that a marvelous reassurance? You're not even going to lose one hair. You're going to be in the water. You're going to be in the waves, you going to be hanging on to things, you're going to be drifting toward shore, but you're going to get there securely. But you need your strength, it's time to start eating. [Acts 27:35,] "And having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all; and he broke it and began to eat."

This is one of those examples of why we do not jump into a meal like pigs, but we thank God for the food. Here Paul, under these stressful conditions, says, 'We're about to eat,' and he stops to thank God for the food that they have and that they're about to eat.

Well, this was what it took. Everybody relaxes. [Acts 27:36,] "And all of them were encouraged, and they themselves also took food. [Acts 27:37,] And all of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy-six persons. [Acts 27:38,] And when they had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea." Lighten - trying to get as much weight out as they could so the ship would ride high in the water.

**The Shipwreck**

Then the dawn arrives. They see the sandbar, and the captain attempts a maneuver at beaching the ship. [Acts 27:39,] "And when the day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a certain bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could. [Acts 27:40,] And casting off the anchors, [which had been holding the ship back,] they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders, and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach." They didn't even bother pulling the anchors in; they just cut the ropes, got rid of the anchors. Then, on those ships they used to have rudders on the side that were tied until they were ready for use, they released the rudders, put them back in the water in order to be able to guide the ship. They pulled up the sail up front to give them some direction to the wind, and they head for the beach.

But, you already know that they're not going to make it, don't you? Because God has already told them this ship is going down and sure enough, Acts 27:41, they hit a reef. "But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the force of the waves." They come to a place where there are two strong currents, and currents are powerful forces. Those of you that have ever been scuba diving in currents know what powerful forces currents are, even at considerable depths. They hit a place where there was a reef that was coming that was being struck by currents from two different directions. The prow of the ship, the front of the ship, stuck fast on the reef. The back end of the ship got hit with these varying currents from one side to the other. So, the ship was wigwagging and the front could not move. And pretty soon, the ship begins to break into pieces because of the force of the currents striking it from both sides. The result was the ship comes to pieces.

Now, the soldiers, of course, who were in charge, and the centurion, (Because this ship was carrying prisoners, the ship was considered under the authority of the Roman soldier and the soldiers with him.) were responsible that no prisoner should escape. Everybody has to be brought to Rome. When they saw this happening, they were afraid that some of these prisoners are going to make it to this island and they're going to escape. So, they proceeded to kill the prisoners so that none of them could swim away and escape.

Acts 27:43, "but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land." The Centurion was not about to let Paul be killed. So, he belays the order. He belays the intension of the soldiers; he says, 'We're not going to kill anybody, we're going to accept this man's direction from his God, that we will all reach the shore safely.' So, he orders those who could swim to abandon ship first and then Acts 27:44: "and the rest should follow, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And thus it happened that they all were brought safely to land." Boy, what an exciting adventure that is!

Now, when you read in Paul's letters and he says, 'The 3 times I was shipwrecked,' you say, oh, that must have been fun. And when you read through a passage like this, which is one reason that Dr. Luke recorded it, you understand what a hair raising experience this was. This is worse than going through the Santa Elena Canyon rock pile on rubber rafts. I mean, this was hair-raising, especially at the end there where you have to miss that whirlpool, just as you shoot out between the last of the 2 rocks. By the way, we're going to do that here in a couple, 3 weeks. So, those of you who are going to join us, be sure you get aboard.

This was hair-raising and everybody now is onshore, a bunch of soaked rats sitting there, bedraggled as they could be, after a 600-mile wild "Mr. Toad's Ride" across the Mediterranean to land, finally on what they discovered was the island of Malta. The soldier says, 'Oh, this is the place where the President and Gorbachev are going to meet!' It was the very same place. And when the President landed there, it was just as violent as when they landed there. That is characteristic of Malta. It has at a certain season of the year, the same kind of terrible, constant, stormy weather. So, it's still the same.

Now, in Acts 28, the story ends. Finally, Paul gets to Rome. The shipwreck survivors find they've been blown 600 miles from Crete to the island of Malta, off of Italy. Acts 28:1, "And when they had been brought safely through, then we found out that the island was called Malta. [First thing everybody wants to do is get warm; so they build a fire. Fortunately, the natives on Malta were friendly. Acts 28:2,] and the natives showed us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and received us all."

Paul pitches in to help to gather wood to throw on the fire. When he does, here comes another mark of divine authority. Acts 28:3, "But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hands." Snakes like to go toward warm places. Snakes are cold blooded creatures. They do not have a controlled body temperature. They take on the temperature of what is around them. So, they go for heat. When the fire was built, the viper, a deadly, poisonous snake, went for the warmth of the fire.

Many years ago, we used to camp at Lake Murray Camp Number 3. The place was full of Copperheads; we just call it Camp Copperhead. Every time we get to campfire, we build a fire and these suckers would come crawling out of the forest toward the fire. It surprised us the first night. So, the second night I put some outriders to watch for the snakes and I made a big deal. I'm never expecting to see another snake. But sure enough, we built that fire, and pretty soon, the perimeter guards are saying, 'here comes one.' Well, it was great fun to catch them and throw them in the fire. It added to our campfire program. But I don't know, we must have killed about 8 of those things before we were through that campground. We have never been back there. The snakes, for some reason, love that campground and kept showing up every time we built a fire. That's what happened here: they go for the fire, Paul picks up some sticks, throws them to the fire, this thing pops up from the edge of the warmth of the fire, he doesn't see it, and it snaps onto his hands.

[Acts 28:4,] "And when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one another, "Undoubtedly, this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." They decided that Paul was some kind of a vile murder and that the gods were doing him in, even though he had escaped death at sea.

Acts 28:5 says, "However, he shook the creature up into the fire [Paul did the same thing, that's why we do that. That's where we learn that, throw the snakes into the fire. He shook the creature off into the fire,] and suffered no harm." All these people are standing around watching. He gets the snake off, oh, yeah, sure. Now they're waiting to see him start puffing up. They're waiting to see his neurological system start being cramped so he can't breathe, so he can hardly talk. But nothing happens; more time than is needed for the poison to have taken place. Paul is still picking up sticks and building a bigger fire. So, they changed their mind about him.

Acts 28:6, "But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god." They made him instead into a god.

Well, there was a prominent resident on Malta, a man named Publius, who again very graciously extended hospitality to Paul. Here Paul, on the way to Rome, gets a chance to evangelize the island of Malta through its chief man. Acts 28:7, "Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, name Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days. [Acts 28:8] And it came about that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. [Acts 28:9,] And after this happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured. [Acts 28:10,] And they also honored us with many marks of respect; and when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all we needed."

Paul taught them the gospel. He taught them some basic doctrine in the time he had. People from everywhere came and he confirmed his authority as the man who spoke for the living creator God, who could control every disease that ever was. And he healed them.

Well, this was quite an impact. What an incident on Malta to have visitors like this. This made a bigger impact than Bush and Gorbachev did when they visited the place!

Acts 28:11, now they have been on Malta for 3 months. They have now crossed over the bad sailing season. It's probably early March, and the conditions are now favorable again to move on by sea to Italy. "And at the end of three months, we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, [Fortunately, there was a ship that had reached the island and it spent the winter there.] which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead." The Gemini, remember when we were studying about the signs of the Zodiac and their original biblical meanings? The Gemini brothers in the ancient world were viewed as the gods of the sea, the preservers of sailors, the gods of sailors. So, ships used to like to have the image on the prow. They would have these figures that they would carve out at the very front of the ship. And they had the 2 Gemini brothers because they were the patron saint of guarding sailors at sea. So, that's what it's referring to here. This ship had that figurehead on the front.

[Acts 28:12,] "And after we put in at Syracuse, we stayed there three days. [So, they leave Malta and go around Sicily and come in to Syracuse. It's now a short run. Acts 28:13,] And from there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium, [They moved from there and they come to Rhegium between the Italian boot and Sicily.] and a day later a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli." This was a run of about 200 miles. They had a south wind now, so they had exactly what they needed to full sail to go straight to Puteoli on the coast line of Italy itself. There at Puteoli Paul says, [Acts 28:14,] "There we found some brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days, and thus we came to Rome." They had a chance again, he found some Christians here, and they had a chance to stay there for seven days. Then they proceeded to Rome.

**Paul's Arrival in Rome**

[Acts 28:15,] "And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage." Here, the Christians in Rome got the word Paul has arrived. It had been 2 years since they had received a letter from him saying, I'm on my way. Finally, here he is. He arrives there at the Market of Appius. There it is right there. Then they go on to the area, the Three Inns, and then on into Rome. They came out to meet him. That is to greet him, as a reception committee of believers greeting this great man that they've heard so much about.

Acts 28:16 says, "And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him." Here was a great expression of the grace of God. Paul was permitted to live under house arrest and therefore he was free to have anybody he wanted. He was free to move about, always chained 24 hours a day to a soldier. That's why we say when he was writing Ephesians and he got to that sixth chapter about the Christian soldier's armor, he kept looking at this guy standing next to him, seeing the parts of the armor on the soldier who was his guard. And he used that as a frame of reference for illustrating what God has provided for us to make it in the angelic conflict.

Now in Acts 28:17 Paul contacts the Jewish leaders in Rome to explain to them the reason for his presence. "And it happened that after three days he called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they had come together, he began saying to them, 'Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people, or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. [Acts 28:18,] And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death. [Acts 28:19,] But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar; not that I had any accusation against my nation. [Acts 28:20,] For this reason therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel.'" This is his opening line to telling them about Christ, "the hope of Israel."

[Acts 28:21,] "And they said to him, 'We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you. [Acts 28:22,] But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect [the Christians], it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere.'" The Jews in Rome say 'We haven't heard anything about what's been happening to you. We've received no communication from Judea, but we've heard about this sect of Christians who follow this Jesus of Nazareth as the supposed Messiah of Israel. Tell us about Him.'

So, Paul meets with a large number of Roman Jews in a day-long meeting where he tries to persuade them on the basis of Old Testament Scripture revelation about the coming Messiah that Jesus Christ has fulfilled all those promises. Acts 28:23, "And when they had set a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. [All day Bible classes. Acts 28:24,] And some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. [Acts 28:25,] And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, [Finally, the group breaks up. The unbelieving Jews say, 'That's it! This is nonsense. We will not accept this!' They proceed to leave.

Paul says. Let me leave you with this thought.] 'The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the Prophet to your father's, [Acts 28:26,] saying "GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; [Acts 28:27,] FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES; LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM."'"

Paul says, 'You're acting in the finest tradition of your parents and your forefathers who were all negative to the Word of God. They would not listen to the communicators of God. They constantly tried to silence them by killing them, by exiling them, by doing anything they could to keep from hearing the message. And you're doing the same thing. What was true of your parents is true of you. And you want to remember that!' This was Paul's way of saying, 'You have heard the truth. The truth is not a lie because you do not believe it; it is still true. But you should understand that you are you have demonstrated the incapacity to learn the truth.' This, in a way, was Paul's way of saying to them, 'I leave you with this thought: "You have rejected Christ the Savior, I give you this advice: "Don't die."'

Acts 28:28, "Let it be known to you therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen." Now Paul says, 'I fulfilled my duty. I have obeyed God. I've spoken to the Jews first. Now, I'm going to minister for as much time as I have in Rome, [Which proved to be 2 long years.] I'm going to minister to Gentiles.'

[Acts 28:29,] "And when he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves." That verse, verse 29, may not be recorded in some of your translations, because we have some question about whether that was inserted in the text. A lot of the oldest manuscripts do not have that verse. Nevertheless, what it says is probably true. There was a lot of dispute among themselves.

So, Acts 28:30 says, "And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all who came to him, [Acts 28:31,] preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered." So now, Paul is free to teach the Word of God. He's free to teach Church Age grace doctrines to those who come to him. And remember, that it is while he was here in this situation, that he wrote the great prison epistles for us. It was here that he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, a great major contribution to the New Testament Scriptures.

With this, the history book of the Christian church ends. The apostle Paul has received a positive answer to that first request. And this is what we began with. He said, 'I want to ask you for two things: please pray that I won't be killed in Jerusalem (please pray that God will protect me), please pray that all will go well in my dealings with the Jewish people.

Well, they had a lot of turmoil, a lot of upset, a lot of things he didn't expect, but he's gotten through shipwreck, conspiracies, ambushes, all kinds of corrupt government officials. God has taken this man safely to Rome. When God has a purpose for us, no one's going to stand in the way. There may be a lot of ups and downs. But He's going to carry us through.

The second prayer request was 'pray that the Christian Jews in Jerusalem will receive the offering from the Gentile churches for their famine needs with a good attitude and in Christian love. There was some problem with that, and Paul was afraid there might be some difficulty and we shall look at that next time.

**Benediction**

Our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the great example of the apostle Paul, this man who knew what it was to live a life for the Lord Jesus Christ. This man who is no different than any of us; all of us as Christians are called to live our lives for Thy purposes. All of us came into the Christian life with the list of good works already lined up for us to perform. We thank Thee for Ephesians 2:10, where Paul has reminded that Thou hast preordained our ministry for us. Paul could come to the end of his life eventually and say 'I have fought the fight; I have kept the faith. I have served my mission.' We pray that we shall learn from him that while we are in Thy hands, and while our lives are invested in Thy purposes, we are immortal and invincible. We pray, God, that we shall realize that we should live our lives today in order to prepare for our eternal tomorrow. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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