

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

MINISTRY NOTES

- A. Homer Kent, *The intervening weeks had stretched into months and then into years, and Paul had been confronted with one crisis after another, but he had divine assurance that Rome would yet be reached (23:11). The means were not what Paul could have foreseen nor what he might have chosen, but God was in control and the apostle was fully willing to leave the details in His hands.*
- B. Harry A. Ironside, *Toward the end of the nineteenth century a group of Scottish unbelievers decided to expose errors in the Bible. They designated one of their number to visit all the places Luke mentioned that Paul visited with a view to proving the record in Acts inaccurate. The man chosen was Sir William Ramsay who, after thorough study of the matter, concluded that Luke was accurate in every detail.*

PAUL AT SEA, ACTS 27:1-44

- A. The voyage to Italy (1-8)
1. Paul was placed on a ship for transport to Rome (1-2), *And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.*
 - a. Roman authorities finally put a plan in place to transport Paul to Rome.
 - 1) It appears that Luke (*we*) had been with Paul since he left Philippi on his third missionary journey.
 - 2) Luke did accompany Paul to Rome, according to Acts 28:16, *And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.*
 - b. Paul and other prisoners were placed under custody to a centurion names Julius.
 - 1) Julius was in charge of the Augustan Cohort, a battalion of 1,000 soldiers.
 - 2) It is believed that they were responsible for communication between the emperor and his provincial armies.
 - 3) This and other battalions had police and judicial responsibilities.
 - c. They were placed on a ship from Adramyttium.
 - 1) Adramyttium was just south of Troas and opposite the island of Lesbos.
 - 2) It was a coastal vessel which would follow the coastline of the province of Asia.
 - d. Paul was accompanied by Aristrachus who was from Thessalonica.
 - 1) Aristarchus must have ministered to Paul while in Caesarea.
 - 2) Paul mentioned him in Philemon 24 and Colossians 4:10, *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him.*
 2. The first stop was at Sidon (3), *The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for.*
 - a. Sidon was about 70 miles north of Caesarea.
 - b. His *friends*
 - 1) They were probably members of the church in Sidon, note Acts 11:19, *Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.*
 - 2) It is probable that their friendship was in Christ not that they had prior acquaintance.
 - c. Julius, the centurion, showed kindness to Paul, not only because he was a Roman citizen, but because of the man he was in Christ.

3. Paul was transferred to another ship at Myra (4-6), *And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board.*

- a. The course of a ship was determined by the winds and at this journey they were blowing from west to east.
 - 1) The ship had to tack along the coastline when going from east to west.
 - 2) Kenneth Gangel, *Twice Luke has used the word lee which does not mean left or right, north or south, but a position which offers shelter from a prevailing wind.*
- b. The ship went from Sidon, above Cyprus and to Myra in Lycia, along the coastline of Cilicia and Pamphylia.
- c. The centurion secured a larger ship from Alexandria to transport Paul from Myra to Italy.
 - 1) It was a grain ship and held at least 276 passengers.
 - 2) The ship has been described as 180 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 44 feet deep from the deck to the hold.
 - 3) Stanley Toussaint, *The grain ships would commonly sail north to Asia Minor and then make their way west across the Mediterranean using the islands for as much protection as they could obtain from them.*
 - 4) John Pohill, *Such ships seemed to have been privately owned and leased by the Roman government. Adequate supply of grain was absolutely essential to the stability of the empire and seems to have been closely regulated by the state.*

4. Sailing was difficult but the ship reached Fair Havens (7-8), *We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.*

- a. The ship traveled toward Cnidus on the southwest tip of Asia but was pushed toward Crete.
- b. They landed at the port of Fair Havens on the southern coast of Crete.
- c. Cretans were known for their laziness and depravity, Titus 1:12, *One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."*
- d. Paul later wrote Titus to have him appoint elders for the churches in Crete, Titus 1:5, *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.*

B. Paul shared safety concerns (9-12)

1. He warned them of imminent danger (9-10), *Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."*

- a. The captain waited for some time in Fair Havens for the weather to improve.
 - 1) *The Fast* refers to the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) which is in the fall, even as late as October.
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *People considered it dangerous to travel by sea between mid-September and mid-November, and the harbors closed for the winter from mid-November to mid-February.*
- b. Paul recommended that they remain in Fair Havens through winter.
 - 1) He had already been shipwrecked three times, 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 was adrift at sea;*
 - 2) Paul felt a voyage at that time would incur injury and loss of cargo, even the loss of everyone's lives.
 - 3) Based on Paul's speaking to *them* and saying *Sirs*, he must have been advising not only the centurion but the captain, as well.

2. The centurion dismissed Paul's concerns (11-12), *But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.*

- a. The centurion chose to follow the desires of the pilot and ship owner.
- b. He made the decision on what would be done. T. Constable, *Grain ships of this kind were part of a fleet that was under the control of the Roman government even though private individuals owned the ships.*
- c. It was decided to continue to Phoenix on the western coast of Crete, about 40 miles west with a safer port.

C. The storm at sea (13-26)

1. The pilot set sail but strong winds drove the ship out of control (13-17), *Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along.*
 - a. They set sail for Phoenix when mild southerly breeze arose.
 - b. Before long, the winds changed direction and came off the coast of Crete, out of the northeast.
 - 1) That type of wind was called *Euroquilo*, or northeaster, similar to a hurricane.
 - 2) It drove the ship away from the coastline of Crete and out to sea.
 - 3) There was no way to control the direction of the ship due to the high winds and waves.
 - c. They were sheltered briefly by a small island called Cauda, 25 miles south of Crete.
 - 1) They secured the lifeboat that had been pulled behind the ship.
 - 2) They used supports to undergird the ship which means they probably used ropes to try to keep the beams from separating and leaking more water.
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *Another safety measure was to feed ropes over the bow and hold them up against the ship's hull from each side. Drawn up tight under the ship these ropes helped to reinforce the internal braces of the hull.*
 - d. Their next concern was the sandbars of Syrtis.
 - 1) These were off the coast of Libya of North Africa, near the city of Cyrene.
 - 2) It appears that the *gear* was the anchor which they hoped would keep them from hitting the sandbars.
 - e. They took more measures to secure the ship (18-19), *Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.*
 - 1) The ship took on so much water that the pilot decided to throw the cargo (wheat) overboard.
 - 2) Next, the ship's tackle was thrown overboard.
 - a) *tackle*, whatever equipment that could lighten the load.
 - b) *with their own hands*, possibly, the focus is on the desire of all onboard to do something that might help get them out of their terrible circumstances.
 - 3) Some food was left onboard according to verse 38.
2. The crew lost hope of deliverance from the storm (20), *When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.*
 - a. The intensity and length of the storm had brought the men to the place of abandoning all hope of deliverance.
 - b. They had to be wet, hungry and exhausted. Their circumstances were winning the battle.

D. Paul's reminder and encouragement (21-26)

1. He reminded them that they should not have set sail (21), *Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss.*
 - a. They were discouraged because they had been without food for some time.
 - b. His reminder was not to place blame but show that they now needed to listen to his good news.
 - c. Thomas Constable, *What he had predicted had taken place, and what he was about to predict would also.*

2. He encouraged them because he knew no lives would be lost (22-26), *Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on some island.*"

- a. Paul declared that there would be no loss of life, only loss of the ship.
 - 1) He knew it because that night an angel of God gave him assurance.
 - 2) The angel was from *God to whom I belong and whom I worship*.
 - a) Paul's God is a personal God. Paul belongs to Him.
 - b) Paul worships this personal God.
 - c) This personal God communicates directly and indirectly with Paul.
- b. Promises made by the God he worshiped.
 - 1) Paul must stand before Caesar, note Luke 23:11, *The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."*
 - 2) All those who were with him on the ship would be spared death.
 - 3) Kenneth Gangel gives an interesting insight, *Like Abraham interceding for Sodom, Paul likely pleaded with God to save the lives of his traveling companions. Now, presumably in response to his prayers for his traveling companions, he reports the angel's message: "God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you."*
- c. Paul encouraged the men to trust in Paul's faith that they would survive but would run aground on an island.
 - 1) They were to *take heart*, it means literally, *to have one's heart return*.
 - 2) The proper response to Paul's words of encouragement should be to believe and move forward in hope.
 - 3) Luke did not mention the response of the crew. They probably had a wait and see attitude.
 - 4) Kenneth Gangel stated, *Doubtless many gods had received repeated appeals during that two weeks; in a situation like this, the most calloused pagan can all of a sudden find words addressed to some kind of deity who might intervene in a time of obvious disaster. Only one God answered!*

E. Shipwreck (27-44)

1. After 14 days, the ship approached land (27-29), *When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.*
 - a. They approached land after 14 days adrift in the Adriatic Sea.
 - 1) The Adriatic Sea was the name for the central part of the Mediterranean Sea, between Crete and Malta.
 - 2) Actually, the winds had carried Paul's ship to the northwest toward their destination, Italy.
 - b. The sailors took soundings.
 - 1) The depth of the water was determined by placing a weight on the end of a line, throwing it overboard and measuring the length of the line to the sea floor.
 - 2) The first sounding was 20 fathoms (120 feet) and the second sounding was 15 fathoms (90 feet).
 - c. The sailors were afraid the ship might break up on the rocks so they let down 4 anchors.
 - 1) Supposedly, the anchors were let down from the stern so they could keep control of the ship, but they were planning to escape the ship and leave the passengers to fend for themselves.
 - 2) Prayers were made for daylight so they could see if land was near.
2. The sailors sought to leave the ship but Paul warned that all must stay onboard (30-32), *And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.*
 - a. Sailors sought to escape the ship by lowering the life boat into the sea.
 - b. Paul told the centurion and the soldiers that everyone must stay onboard to remain safe.
 - c. The soldiers cut the ropes to the life boat so it could not be used to escape the ship.
 - 1) Did they believe what Paul had said?
 - 2) Was Paul the only one left with courage to lead?
 - 3) Now, everyone had to depend on the God of Paul for deliverance.

3. Paul urged everyone to eat and all were encouraged (33-38), *As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.*
 - a. Paul urged everyone to take food since it had been 14 days since they had eaten.
 - 1) He mentioned that they had not eaten because they had been in *suspense*, it means to await with apprehension concerning impending danger or trouble.
 - 2) Since Paul promised they would live, they needed the strength that taking food would provide.
 - 3) It would take much physical effort to get ashore.
 - b. Paul led by example.
 - 1) He took bread, thanked God for it in their presence, and ate.
 - 2) They followed Paul's example and ate, all 276 persons on the ship.
 - 3) After eating enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea.
 - 4) They needed the ship as light as possible so it would ride high in the shallow water.
4. Land was sighted the next morning but the ship struck a reef and could not be moved (39-41), *Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf.*
 - a. Day brought sight of land but they did not recognize the place.
 - b. They saw a bay with a beach where they hoped to run the ship ashore.
 - c. They cut away the anchors, loosened the rope that tied the rudders and hoisted the foresail.
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *This type of ship had rudder-like paddles on the sides of the vessel that served to guide it. Evidently the sailors had locked these rudders in place when the ship was drifting, but now they put them into use again.*
 - 2) The foresail on the front of the ship would have increased maneuverability.
 - d. The ship headed toward the beach but struck a reef (sandbar), the front of the ship did not move and the rear was breaking up by the power of the surf.
5. The soldiers plan to kill the prisoners (42-44), *The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.*
 - a. The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners since they would have to pay with their lives if the prisoners escaped.
 - b. The centurion kept them from doing that in order to save Paul.
 - c. He gave orders concerning abandoning the ship.
 - 1) Those who could swim were to jump overboard and swim ashore.
 - 2) Those who could not swim were to make it to shore by hanging onto planks or pieces of the ship.
 - d. All made it safely ashore and Paul's predictions came to pass.
 - 1) The ship was destroyed (22).
 - 2) They ran aground on an island (26).
 - 3) No one perished (22).

CONCLUSION

- A. God is sovereign over all, including the wind and the sea.
- B. God keeps his promises, you can count on it.
- C. T. Constable, *This chapter shows to what lengths God will go to remain faithful to His promises.*