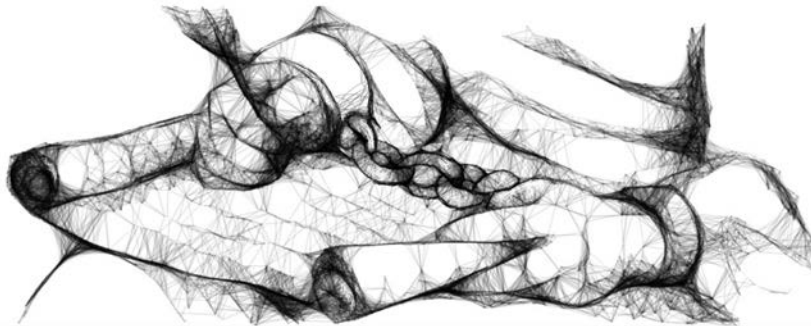


Paul's Trip to Rome



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Acts 27; Acts 28.

MEMORY VERSE: “ “Do not be afraid, Paul. You must go on trial [stand in court] in front of Caesar” ’ ” (Acts 27:24, NirV).

FOR A LONG TIME, PAUL wants to visit Rome. But his arrest in Jerusalem changes all his plans. The Romans leave Paul in prison for almost five years. Why is Paul in prison for so long? Because Paul does what the church leaders want. They want Paul to make the Jewish believers happy more than they want Paul to make God happy. So, Paul puts the Jews first. Later, the Romans arrest Paul. When we fail God, God may give us another chance. But God does not always stop bad things from happening to us when we do wrong.

As a prisoner, Paul travels by ship to Italy. But Jesus promises Paul that he will tell people in Rome about Him (Acts 23:11). Later, we learn that Paul hopes to go to Spain (Romans 15:24) after the Romans let him go free. But the Bible does not say Paul ever travels there. Then Paul is arrested again. This time Paul dies for his faith (2 Timothy 4:6–8), in A.D. 67, when Nero is king.

Paul arrives in Rome. He lives in his house prison while he waits to stand in court in front of the King of Rome. Paul wears chains when he talks about Jesus to his visitors (Acts 28:30, 31). No one stops Paul from preaching. During this time, Paul gets the chance to share the Good News about Jesus with important people who work for the King of Rome (Philippians 4:22).



Paul lives in his house prison while he waits to stand in court in front of the King of Rome. Paul wears chains when he talks about Jesus to his visitors.

PAUL SAILS TO ROME (Acts 27:9–12)

Paul is a prisoner in Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:27). Then Paul goes to Rome in Italy. The trip to Italy is long and hard (Acts 27:1–28:16). Luke travels with Paul. Another Christian named Aristarchus also goes with them (Acts 27:2). Another important person in the story is the Roman army leader named Julius. Julius is responsible for the other prisoners on that trip too (Acts 27:1).

Paul, Luke, Aristarchus, Julius, and the other prisoners leave for Rome in late summer. Wintertime was not a good time to travel on the Mediterranean Sea because of bad weather. Their trip is hard from the start. They stop traveling many times. Then they arrive at a safe place named Fair Havens on the island of Crete (Acts 27:8).

Read the story in Acts 27:9–12 about what happens in Fair Havens. What does Paul offer to do? How do the people in the story feel about the help that Paul offers them?

Paul warns the sailors to stay in Fair Havens. But the sailors do not pay attention to Paul's warning. They decide to keep going west for 40 more miles to a place named Phoenix. Here, they can stay the whole winter. But the weather changes quickly. The ship gets trapped in a very bad storm. The storm moves their ship south and then west, away from land. Soon the ship fills with water. The sailors start throwing wood boxes and other things into the sea. Heavy rain falls, and awful winds blow. The storm lasts many days. No one on the ship sees the sun or the stars during this time. The sailors do not know where land is when the storm ends. They are very tired and have no "hope of being saved" (Acts 27:20, NLV).

Read the story in Acts 27:21–26. What is the next thing that Paul wants to do to help?

Paul tells the sailors that God gave him a special message for them. Paul tells them to not give up or stop hoping. Yes, they will meet more danger, and they will lose more things. But no one will die.

Paul is a loyal servant of God. But he suffers so much. Why? What can we learn from Paul's experiences?



The ship gets trapped in a very bad storm. The sailors start throwing wood boxes and other things into the sea.

THE SHIP SINKS (Acts 27:30–44)

There are 276 people on the ship that Paul sails on (Acts 27:37). Paul tells everyone on the ship that no one will die. But there will be problems. The ship will sink (Acts 27:22). Then the ship sinks 14 days later, just as Paul warns. How does that happen? The ship is in an awful storm. It already is far away from land. The sailors think they are near land because they can hear the noise of waves crashing on shore (Acts 27:27). They are afraid the ship will hit rocks near the beach. So, they try to find out how deep the water is. They drop four anchors from the back of the ship to help slow down the ship. At the same time, they pray to their gods for daylight (Acts 27:28, 29).

Read the story in Acts 27:30–44. What lessons for us do you see in this story?



The ship never touches the beach. On its way there, the ship hits a big hill of sand in the water and breaks apart.

Julius, the Roman army leader, is kind to Paul from the start of their trip to Rome. But Julius has no special reason to trust Paul. Before the ship leaves Fair Havens, Paul warns the crew that their ship will sink. Paul earns Julius's respect because he warns the crew that their ship will break apart before it happens (Acts 27:21–26).

Before the ship sinks, Paul tells the people on the ship to eat. If they do not eat, they will not be strong enough to swim to shore. There is a lesson for us in Paul's advice. God wants us to do our duty. "This story shows us how God and man must work together. God gives the sailors hope that He will keep them safe. But the people also must do their part to make sure they stay safe too."—David J. Williams, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), page 438, adapted.

Then morning comes. The sailors see land with a beach. They decide they will land the ship there. But the ship never touches the beach. On its way there, the ship hits a big hill of sand in the water and breaks apart. The soldiers plan to kill the prisoners so they cannot escape. But Julius stops their plan because of Paul. In the end, no one dies, just as God promises.

Julius tells his soldiers not to kill the prisoners because of Paul. What does that tell us about the power of Paul's witness for God?

PAUL TRAVELS TO MALTA (Acts 28:1–10)

As we learned, the ship was lost at sea for two weeks. The wind carried the ship about 475 miles away from Fair Havens in Crete. The people on the sinking ship swim to the beach. Then they learn they are on Malta. Malta is a small island in the middle of the Mediterranean. It is south of the island of Sicily. Now Paul and his group must wait three months for winter to end before continuing their trip (Acts 28:11).

Read the story in Acts 28:1–10. What happens in this story to Paul on the island of Malta? How is God able to use Paul to witness to other people about the truth?

The people on the island of Malta are very friendly and kind to Paul. Paul and his group are wet and cold when they arrive on the beach. So, the first thing the people on Malta do is light a fire to warm them up. The temperature on Malta at that time of year is less than 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Then a snake bites Paul. Everyone's attention is on Paul because of the snakebite. At first, the people on Malta believe the snake bites Paul because the gods are punishing Paul for something he did wrong. They think Paul must be a killer. They believe that Paul tried to escape from death by drowning. But the gods caught Paul before he drowned. Maybe the people on Malta also believe the goddess Dikē took Paul from the sea. In the Greek religion, the goddess Dikē controlled justice and revenge. But Paul does not die from the snakebite. So, the people on Malta think Paul must be a god. The same thing happened in Lystra several years ago (Acts 14:8–18). Luke does not write much about what happens on Malta. But clearly, Paul uses what happens there as a chance to tell the people on Malta about his God. One of those people is Publius.

Who is Publius? Maybe he is the Roman ruler of Malta. Or maybe he is a very rich and important man. He welcomes Paul and his group for three days until they can find another place to stay. Paul heals Publius's father. This miracle gives Paul the chance to work for God as a healer. Paul heals many people on Malta. Does anyone on Malta accept Jesus? Luke does not say. But this story about Paul shows that we need to care for people and their needs when we work for God. This work is also an important part of the Good News about Jesus (Acts 20:35; read also Titus 3:14).



At first, the people on Malta believe the snake bites Paul because the gods are punishing Paul for something he did wrong.

PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME, AT LAST (Acts 28:17–22)

Paul and his group stay three months on Malta. Then they are able to continue their trip (Acts 28:11). They arrive in Puteoli (Acts 28:13) in the Bay of Naples. From there, they travel to Rome by road (read Acts 28:11–16).

The news about Paul's arrival in Italy travels to Rome very fast. Some believers from Rome travel many miles south to welcome Paul. Paul never visited Rome before. But he has many friends in the city. Who are they? Family members, coworkers, Christians, and many other people who love Paul (Romans 16:3–16). For sure, the meeting between Paul and the believers touches all their hearts very deeply. After all, Paul could have died when the ship broke apart. Also, Paul wears chains. The love that Paul's friends show him touches his heart. Paul thanks God for their love. It gives Paul hope and courage to stand in court in Rome.

In his letter about Paul, Festus may have said Paul was not guilty of breaking any Roman law (Acts 25:26, 27; Acts 26:31, 32). That may explain why Paul is allowed to rent a house to live in (Acts 28:30) and does not go to a prison. But Paul is chained to a Roman soldier all the time. That is the Roman law for prisoners. Luke tells us that Paul is able to pay for his house. How does Paul have money for the rent? Clearly, Paul is able to continue working as a tentmaker and earn money too (Acts 18:3).



Some believers from Rome travel many miles south to welcome Paul. Paul wears chains. The love that Paul's friends show him touches his heart.

Read Acts 28:17–22. What does Paul do as soon as he moves into his house?

Paul cannot go visit the Jews in the city. So, Paul asks the local Jewish leaders to come to him. He tells them he is not guilty of the crimes that the Jews blame him for doing. He explains that the Romans arrested him because of what he believes about Jesus (Acts 23:6; Acts 24:15; Acts 26:6–8). Paul is not trying to make himself look good. He only wants the Jewish leaders to trust him so he can preach the Good News about Jesus to them. The Jews are surprised that no one from Jerusalem told them anything about Paul. So, they decide to listen to Paul's teachings about Jesus.

Read Acts 28:22. What does this verse tell us about people's anger against Christians at this time? How can we stay loyal to what we believe when others do not believe the same thing we do?

THE POWER OF THE GOOD NEWS (Acts 28:24–31)

The Jews in Rome come in large groups to listen to Paul preach the Good News about Jesus (Acts 28:23).

Read Acts 28:24–31. As these verses show us, why does Paul end his speech with the verses from Isaiah?

The verses Paul shares with the Jews are from Isaiah 6:9, 10. These verses show us what happens when people refuse to accept God's truth. Some Jews believe Paul's message about Jesus. Other Jews do not. Many Jews turn away from what Paul says. So, Paul talks with the non-Jews in Rome about the Good News (Acts 13:46, 47; Acts 18:6).

Paul waits two years before he stands in court in front of the King of Rome. While Paul waits in his house prison, he shares the Good News with everyone who visits him. The last chapter in Acts shows us the power the Good News has. Nothing can stop the Good News at all.

It is not clear why Luke ends the book of Acts with this story. We know Paul goes free. Paul goes on one more trip to share the Good News. Then he is arrested and goes to Rome as a prisoner again, where he is killed (2 Timothy 4:6–8). Why does Luke end his book before adding this extra story about Paul? Maybe because Luke's reason for writing the book of Acts is to show us how the Good News will go to all the people on earth, even to Rome. By the time the Romans let Paul go free, the Good News already went "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NLV). So, that may be the reason why Luke does not add this extra story about Paul.

"Paul is patient and cheerful during the time he is a prisoner in Rome. His courage and faith are a sermon. His spirit is not the spirit of the people on this earth. His spirit shows to everyone that God lives in him. Paul's example leads Christians to do everything they can to share the Good News with people everywhere. In these ways, Paul's chains help to change the lives of other people."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 464, adapted.

The book of Acts is not finished. Now it is our turn to add the last chapter. It is our turn to finish the work that Jesus gave His followers. When we do our part, "then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14, NLV).



"Paul's chains help to change the lives of other people."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 464, adapted.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Jesus gave the church a duty that is holy. Every church member should allow God to use him or her to share with everyone the news about His special treasures. What are these special treasures? They are His grace. [Grace is God’s gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin.] God’s special treasures are also the riches that come from Jesus. These riches cannot be fully understood by humans. Jesus wants so much for His people to show His Spirit and His love to everyone else on this earth. The people on this earth need Jesus’ love so much. They need to see it in God’s people. All heaven waits for men and women who will let God use them to show to other people the power of living a Christian life.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 600, adapted.

“God waits for the whole church to serve other people. When that happens, everyone in the church will work for God with the skills, gifts, and talents that God gives him or her. Church members must do the work God gives them at home or in far away places where God needs their work. When they do this work, then everyone on earth soon will be warned that Jesus is coming back with power and much glory.”—Page 111, adapted.



“The people on this earth need Jesus’ love so much. They need to see it in God’s people.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 600, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How does Luke show us Paul’s faith during the trip to Rome? How does Paul’s faith change other people?
- ② Paul has some very hard experiences in life. But he never gives up his faith or his work for God. In Rome, Paul is a prisoner, but he continues to preach anyway. How can Paul’s example help us when we want to give up sharing the Good News with someone?
- ③ Read Romans 1:14, 15. Why does Paul feel it is his duty to preach the Good News about Jesus to everyone? Do we have the same duty Paul has? Think about this quotation from Ellen G. White as you answer the question: “The most important work of every Christian should be to save souls. God has given us grace. He has given us light. He has shown us His beautiful and powerful truth. We must repay God for these gifts by sharing them with other people.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [special messages] for the Church*, volume 4, page 53, adapted.

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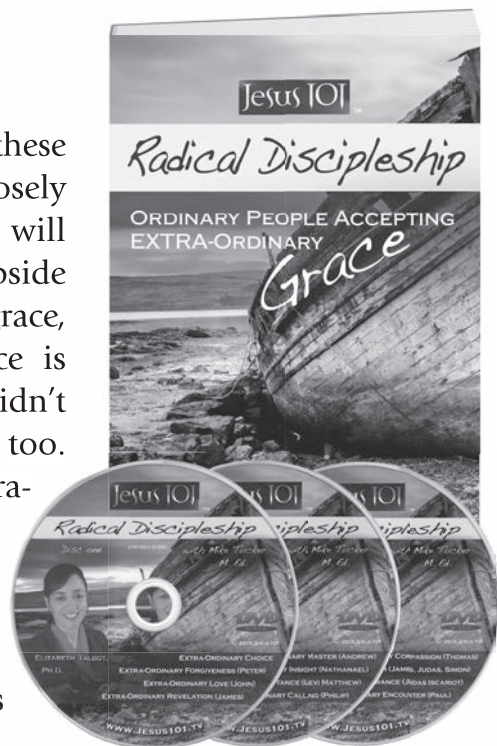
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