

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2018: *The Book of Acts*

Lesson 13 “Journey to Rome”

Read for this week’s study

Acts 27, 28; Romans 1:18–20.

Memory Text

“ ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar’ ” (Acts 27:24, ESV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Sailing to Rome
- III. The Shipwreck
- IV. In Malta
- V. Paul in Rome, Finally
- VI. The Victory of the Gospel
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Romans 15:24. Why do you think Paul was so interested in Spain? What role might Spain have in the larger plan of God for the First-Century church? It was Paul’s imprisonment that got him to Rome. Was that imprisonment part of God’s plan or an obstacle to God’s plan? (Sabbath afternoon)?
2. Read Acts 27:1-8. Who are the four main characters in this story? Read Acts 27:9-12. While in Fair Havens, how did Paul intervene in the story, and how was his intervention received? Did the centurion’s decision make sense? What is the role of reason in spiritual decision making? Read Acts 27:13-20. Was God acting in this storm? How did the storm play into the relationship between Paul and Julius? Read Acts 27:21-26. Who is the fifth character in the story? What was Paul’s second intervention in the story? If no one listened to Paul before, why did they listen now? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Acts 27:27-44. What lessons for today can you find in this story? What does it tell us about the power of Paul’s witness that in order to keep Paul alive the soldiers were forbidden to kill any of the prisoners? (Monday’s lesson)
4. Read Acts 28:1-10. What happened to Paul on the Island of Malta, and how was God able to use him? What is the role of miracles in God’s plan? Who is the sixth character in the story? What was the islanders’ picture of God? How does that compare with the biblical one? (Tuesday’s lesson)

5. Read Acts 28:11-16. What does this passage tell us about Paul's relationships and also about Paul's living conditions and the Roman attitude toward his imprisonment? Read Acts 28:17-22. What did Paul do as soon as he settled down in Rome? What does verse 22 tell us about the general attitude of Jews toward Christian faith at this time? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Acts 28:24-31. What was Paul's point in quoting Isaiah in this context? Was Paul himself guilty of anti-Semitism? Is there room for an "in-house" critique? How do you account for the relative harshness of much prophetic speech, both inside and outside the Bible? (Thursday's lesson)
7. How does Luke portray Paul's faith in God throughout the whole journey to Rome? How does that kind of trust happen? (Friday's lesson)
8. Read Romans 1:14-15. Why did Paul feel himself obligated to preach the gospel to everybody? Are we under a similar obligation and what difference would that make in our everyday lives? (Friday's lesson)
9. Imagine being the soldier chained to Paul. What do you think he saw in the man to whom he was so closely tied? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Do you know of any other stories in the Bible where an individual was signally blessed by God with talents and influence, and he wasted it all? And yet God blessed him in the end. Solomon! I think he's the classic case. He was even blessed with wisdom. Do God's gifts and blessings keep us from misbehaving? If God gives us something generously, can we abuse the gift? When he gives us gifts, he does not control our use of them, and this becomes a little terrifying. Do you want to be that free? I've had people say, "I love your message of freedom, but I sometimes wish I were not that free. I'd be willing to give God back about one third of my freedom if that would get me into the kingdom." If God has paid such a price to keep us free, how can we give any of it back? But if we are this free, it means that God could bless you for 50 years with a magnificent life, and wisdom and insight, and influence, and you could win many, many people. But you're still free to blow it all, and waste it. And look at Solomon; he was given wisdom, and yet he made a fool of himself. Samson was given great strength, which of course increased his ability to indulge himself. And he did. You remember, he could carouse all night long, and still cart the gates off in the morning, and dump them on the hillside.

It was dangerous for Solomon to have so much wisdom. He became self-dependent. He forgot God. And when he wrote his final book, he said, "I wish I had remembered God when I was young. Remember your creator when you're young, and don't wait to remember him when you get as old and tired as I am." But in the end of his life, when Solomon had wasted everything, and he was a tired and foolish old king, and had ruined his son Rehoboam, look what followed. He came to his senses, and he remembered God. He said, "God, I'm sorry. Can I come back?"

And I'd be willing just to sweep floors." Does God take people back that way? Or does he take them completely back? How about the prodigal son? Did he come back as a servant, or did he come back fully reinstated? So God took Solomon back. How fully did he take him back? Well, Solomon said, "Can I do anything to help others not do what I've done?"

And God said, "Yes. You can write me a book." And Solomon said, "But only holy men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, write books in the Bible." And God said, "That's right. I want you to write a book." And Solomon says, "I can't understand this. Me? A holy man of God?"

"Yes. Please write Ecclesiastes for me."

Isn't it stunning that a man who wasted so much is listed among the holy men of God, who wrote yet another book in the Bible? Once again, I'm glad God is in charge, because when somebody disgraces himself in our church, from then on, he's a back pew man, isn't he? We don't let him up front very much. God puts them up front, and even asks them to write more of the Bible. Now, what about that? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Joshua, Judges, Ruth, recorded 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/11MMPOGIA66> (Pt 1 Joshua & Judges)

<http://pkp.cc/12MMPOGIA66> (Pt 2 Joshua & Judges)

<http://pkp.cc/13MMPOGIA66> (Pt 1 Ruth & 1 Samuel)

<http://pkp.cc/14MMPOGIA66> (Pt 2 Ruth & 1 Samuel)

Think of God giving Saul, who is on his way to persecute and destroy Christians, a commission like this, to enlighten everybody. It's incredible! Here is God in action. The first problem is, how do you get the attention of a man bent on the destruction of the saints? Well, you speak a language he can understand, which is not only Hebrew, but a little show of force.

And he floored Saul on the road to Damascus, and maybe for the first time in a long time, Saul was quiet, and he listened. And the Lord said, "You're having trouble with your conscience, aren't you?" And Saul said, "Indeed I am. Ever since I saw Stephen do what he did, and say 'Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.' I loved that and yet he was a heretic! How could a heretic behave like that? That has troubled me. Because I really honor that kind of thing. I'm confused. I read in Leviticus about love, and you shouldn't hate your brother in your heart. I love the things that Moses said, and Amos said, and Hosea said, and Micah said. But then I remember Sinai, and I remember Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Nadab and Abihu, and Lot's wife, and the flood, and all the rest; and I can't put this all together."

And Jesus expressed confidence in him, and said, “Well, retreat for a little while. It may take you a little time.” He put fourteen years into this thing before we hear much more about him. He did pay a visit to headquarters to check in with the brethren, though we read that in Galatians. And he never was fully in harmony, in all details, with headquarters, which cost him his life, in the end. But he must have been basically an honest student of the Old Testament. He just didn’t have it worked out right. The Lord appealed to his honesty and his humility and his integrity and his sensitivity to truth, and Saul was won by this.

And he knew all about Sinai, getting people’s attention, but he also knew about Elijah at the mouth of the cave, that the Lord much prefers to talk softly. And what I like is, Paul was prepared to accomplish what some of us take a lifetime to do. He graduated from Sinai to the mouth of the cave in about 30 seconds flat. You say, “Well, it’s going to take the church ten years, twenty years, thirty years, to move to the mouth of the cave.” If we’ve been honest in following God so far, we may still be pitched at Sinai, but there’s a quick elevator up to the mouth of the cave, if we’ve been preparing as Saul did. Because he was touched by the still, small voice who reasoned with his conscience. And then the Lord said, “And lest I overwhelm you, Saul, I’m not going to tell you anything more to do. I want you to go to Ananias, a fellow human being, and talk it over with him.”

What do you think of the method God used? It seems to me that on the Damascus Road we have a marvelous example of how God meets a person where he is, and if it takes a little show of force to get attention, and reverence, and respect, and a willingness to listen, he will do whatever needs to be done. But then if we’re ready, he quickly moves to reason with us with the still, small voice. And Saul got the message. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts*, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/59MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/60MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

And Paul says in Romans that there are Gentiles who know nothing about the Bible, who know nothing about God’s law and instructions. But they do by nature the things that the law requires, and they show that the law has been written on their hearts. And I love the paragraph that is familiar to us both, that says even among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly; those to whom the message was never brought by human instrumentality, but they’ve heard the voice of God speaking to them in nature. And they’ve done the things that the law requires, which is love. And they’re recognized as God’s children. Anybody on this planet who is sincerely and humbly willing to listen; God is not going to abandon that person, and leave him in the dark.

Now it’s a great privilege to be the one who gets there with the good news, but sometimes somebody else gets there first. Think of missionaries who have been shipwrecked on the reef as

they're about to arrive on an island to somehow "turn those cannibals into Christians." And as they're drowning out there, here come these cannibals paddling their canoe. And they say farewell to each other; they know what's going to happen shortly. But instead, the cannibals put them in their canoe and take them to the beach and revive them. And finally when they're comfortable, the missionary says, "Now let us assemble these people and give them the truth." And he starts to preach to them about love.

His missionary wife nudges him and says, "Wait a minute. These people risked their lives to rescue us from the reef!"

The minister says, "But nobody's preached to them yet."

Well, remember Romans 2. "The Spirit of God in many and various ways has approached people." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God, #2, "What Went Wrong in God's Universe?"* recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

But by bringing truth, spoken to us in love, God does precipitate the necessity for decision making. And in a sense then, he does hasten the hardening of our hearts. But it's not his fault. He came only with light and truth, and invites us, please, to say yes. But we're free to say no. And isn't this the case here? Or anyone have a question about this? It comes up many times in the Bible. When we get to Romans, Paul really deals with this again. God wants them to understand. In fact, he's been deploring the fact that they don't. So Jesus says, "I come as light; I've come with truth. I'm going to give my life so you can understand. Because we're not willing that any of you be lost, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth and be saved. But many of you refuse to listen. You will not understand, and so I cannot help you." The fact that it comes up so often in the Bible, don't you think helps us understand the language that's used. Or does anyone have a question about that? If so, it's going to come up again. Maybe since the book is long tonight, let's save that for another time.

This picture of the adversary! We have the picture of God who deserves our reverence, that we might be willing to listen. Isn't "the fear of the Lord the beginning of listening and understanding; the beginning of wisdom?" Reverence for God, the righteous Holy One, is the beginning of listening. But they were not reverent, and so they were not willing to listen. Their eyes were dull. Their ears were deaf. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Isaiah*, recorded 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/33MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/34MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Where there is not only a belief in God's Word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God. {AG 137.5}

Amid the perplexities that will press upon the soul, there is only One who can help us out of all our difficulties, and relieve all our disquietude. We are to cast all our care upon Jesus, and bear in mind that He is present, and is directing us to commune with Him. We are to keep our minds stayed upon God; and in our weakness, He will be our strength; in our ignorance, He will be our wisdom; in our frailty, He will be our enduring might. {SD 27.2}

We may be assured that we need not go into the heavens to bring Jesus down to us, neither into the deep to bring Him up; for He is at our right hand, and His eye is ever upon us. We should ever seek to realize that the Lord is very near us, to be our counselor and guide. {SD 27.3}

The faith that works by love and purifies the soul produces the fruit of humility, patience, forbearance, long-suffering, peace, joy, and willing obedience. {HP 109.6}

Jesus does not call on us to follow Him, and then forsake us. If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." [John 14:6.] "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." [Psalm 72:12.] {GW 263.1}

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee." [Isaiah 26:3.] The arm of Omnipotence is outstretched to lead us onward and still onward. Go forward, the Lord says; I will send you help. It is for My name's glory that you ask; and you shall receive. Those who are watching for your failure shall yet see My word triumph gloriously. "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." [Matthew 21:22.] {GW 263.2}

Those who live amid the perils of the last days may realize that just as at the beginning of their experience the truth united them to the Saviour, so He who is the author and finisher of their faith will perfect the work He has begun for them. God is faithful, by whom we are called to fellowship with His Son. As men and women cooperate with God in doing the work He has given them, they go forward from strength to greater strength. {OHC 24.2}