

Empowered

The Amazing Church of Jesus Christ

Week 12

Paul's Journey to Rome

Acts 27:1 – 28:31

Teacher Notes

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*Bible versions used throughout the Empowered teacher notes are
NASB, ESV, NLT, and CEB.*

✧ Introduction to Week Twelve

ILLUSTRATION: Charles Templeton came to Christ in 1936; nine years later he helped form Youth For Christ with several others. He joined Billy Graham as an evangelist and together they held crusades throughout Europe. Charles Templeton was considered a more powerful speaker than Billy Graham; and he witnessed many come to Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Tragically in 1957 Templeton announced that he had lost his faith and no longer believed in Jesus Christ. He also stated that he could not accept that the Bible was the true Word of God. It is said that in his last years he stated-- *"Everything good I know, everything decent I know, everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus. He had the highest moral standard, the least duplicity, the greatest compassion, of any human being in history. In my view, he is the most important human being who has ever existed ...I . . . miss . . . him!"*

Billy Graham endured his co-laborer's crisis of faith and pressed on, preaching to 2.2 billion people. He had four hundred and seventeen crusades on six continents. It is estimated that 3.2 million people committed their lives to the Savior through his crusades.

Endurance is the power to stay the course, even in difficult situations.

- As we reflect upon Paul's life, it is evident that he was a man of great endurance.
 - ~ Travel and Persecution:
 - * He traveled over 17,285 miles.
 - * While traveling he wrote ten of the thirteen Pauline epistles.
 - * He was stoned at Lystra and left for dead outside the city.
 - * Times without number, he received thirty-nine lashes from synagogue authorities.
 - * He was stripped, beaten with wooden rods, and imprisoned in Philippi.
 - ~ Prison:
 - * Imprisoned in Jerusalem.
 - * Imprisoned in Caesarea for two years.
 - * Spent two years in house arrest in Rome.
 - * Was again imprisoned in Rome before he was executed.
 - * Paul may have spent as much as 25% of his time as a missionary in prison.
 - ~ Shipwrecked:
 - * Three times.
 - * He spent an entire night, as well as a day, in the sea.
- As we begin in Study One, we will read about Paul's fourth shipwreck.

Study One:

Acts 27:1-12 Bound for Rome

TEACHING TIP: Chapter 27 is considered a masterpiece in ancient shipwreck literature, as it details the great storm on the Mediterranean and the panic and hopelessness on board.

Why would Luke devote such a long section (forty-four verses) to the description of a voyage and shipwreck? Regarding this, F.F. Bruce said, *“Perhaps Paul’s Master would have us know what His servant was like when he shared the changes and dangers of life with his fellow men and that the work of service and ministry must not be estimated merely by sermons and writings.”*

- In Acts 25:11 Paul had demanded a hearing in Rome following his arrest by the Jews in Jerusalem. He then spent two years in a Roman prison in Caesarea.
- Paul knew the importance of Rome; it was the last stop in the Lord’s journey for him.
- ✠ Acts 19:21 *“Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’”*
- ✠ Acts 23:11 *“But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, ‘Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.’”*
- The centurion Julius oversaw all of the arrangements to ensure Paul arrived safely in Rome.
 - ~ He was a member of the Imperial Regiment, thus revered and a man of integrity.
 - ~ As a centurion he would have commanded 100 soldiers.
- Paul left Caesarea as a prisoner, but he was accompanied by Luke as his doctor and Aristarchus as his attendant.
- They boarded a small trading vessel and sailed with little effort to Sidon, which was about seventy miles away. They arrived safely.
- Julius graciously allowed Paul to visit some of the believers there. Scripture says that Paul received care there.
 - ~ He had been imprisoned for two years; undoubtedly, he would have been physically weak.
- Once they left Sidon, the winds changed and became contrary. The voyage from Sidon to Myra was slow and very difficult; so, Julius found a much larger ship for the trek to Rome.
- They boarded a cargo ship that had arrived from Alexandria, Egypt and was headed to Rome where it would deliver its shipment of wheat.
 - ~ Lucian, a second century writer, described one of the

TEACHING TIP: Egypt was the breadbasket of Italy supplying at least a third of the wheat necessary to feed the population of Rome, which was about a million people.

- ~ Roman grain ships as being one hundred eighty feet long and forty-five feet wide.
- ~ It could carry twelve hundred tons of grain.
- There were two hundred and seventy-six people aboard this ship.
- The ship sailed very slowly as it was heading into the wind. Paul stated two times that it was with great difficulty that they arrived in Fair Havens. They were now even more off schedule.
- Considerable time passed—to the point that it had become dangerous for the ship to continue on because the strong winds made navigation close to impossible.
- In Acts 27:9-10, Paul admonished the authorities to not continue their trip. He clearly laid out the dangers:
 - (1) Damage to the ship itself.
 - (2) Great loss—the cargo, the ship itself, and the lives onboard.
- Even though Paul was experienced in ships, this was a Roman ship in government service and the centurion was more persuaded by the opinions of the pilot and the captain of the ship who noted that the current harbor was not suitable for wintering such a large ship. The decision was made to proceed ahead. (Acts 27:12)
 - ~ Fair Havens was small. They were not prepared to feed and house two hundred and seventy-six people through the long winter, plus the harbor was not well-protected.
 - ~ The plan was to reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, and winter there. The distance was about forty miles. The next day they found the weather was favorable, so the decision was made to make the short trip. The harbor there was much better in which to winter.

Study Two:

Acts 27:13-26 Dangers, Toils, and Snares

- Soon after they left port, a violent storm from the east northeast swept down. (Acts 27:14-20)
 - ~ These storms could quickly become a Category 1 hurricane with seventy-five mile an hour winds, bringing with it rain and cold temperatures.
- The ship was caught up in the storm and was forced to be pushed in the direction of the wind. (Not in their planned direction.)
 - ~ Activities on the ship became frantic with the goal to keep the ship from going under.

TEACHING TIP: Put yourself on the boat with Paul, the crew, and the other passengers. The pilot had lost control of the ship. There was fear that the supporting cables undergirding the ship would run aground and be damaged. The anchor had been let down, not to hold the ship but to be driven along by the storm. The crew jettisoned the cargo, then the ship's tackle. Both day and night were dark because neither the sun nor stars appeared. Would you think—all is hopeless?

- Luke shared the mood on the ship—
- ✚ Acts 27:20b “... and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.”
- Paul stood (amidst the panic) and exhorted the people to keep up their courage. He confidently told them that no one would die, but the ship would be lost.
- On what basis did he make these claims? He had had a direct visit from an angel of the God to whom he belonged and whom he served. This angel stood before Paul and said—
- ✚ Acts 27:24 “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.”
 - ~ This was the third time Jesus had spoken to Paul in a vision. Go to Acts 18:9 and Acts 23:11.
- Paul believed God. He believed that events would turn out exactly as he had been told.

TEACHING TIP: Paul’s confidence in this storm was based on his confidence in Jesus. This brings to mind Mark 4 when the disciples’ faced a stormy sea and anxiety held sway, but Jesus reminded them that He was on board! Paul knew that He was with them in this storm.

Study Three:

Acts 27:27-44

Shipwreck

- ✚ Acts 27:28 “They took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found it to be fifteen fathoms.”
 - On the fourteenth night the soundings showed that they were approaching land. (Acts 27:28)
 - Paul encouraged the people to eat, noting that they had gone without eating. They all ate bread. (Acts 27:33-38)
 - ~ Since leaving Fair Havens the passengers and crew had eaten little or nothing.
 - ~ After eating they lightened the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.
 - The next morning, they spotted a bay. They cut away the anchors and headed for the beach—in doing so, they ran aground on a reef causing the bow to break up. (Acts 27:39-44)
 - Some swam to shore, while others hung on to planks from the ship.
 - They had run the ship aground at Malta. All two hundred and seventy-six people arrived safely upon the shore, just as Paul said would happen.
 - In a span of two weeks the storm had carried them over six hundred miles west of Fair Havens.
- ⇒ **The Holy Spirit gave Paul the power to endure with hope during a raging storm.**

TEACHING TIP: Soundings involved using a weight attached to a length of rope to measure the water’s depth.

▲ **QUOTE:** Craig Lounsbrough, pastor and counselor said, *“I have both the violent turbulence of the storm and the quiet promises of God in the storm. And what I must work to remember is that something is not necessarily stronger simply because it is louder.”*

Study Four:

Acts 28:1-16 Thoroughly Safe at Malta

Background on Malta

- ~ It was a trading center and the harbor was well-known.
 - ~ The people did not speak Greek.
 - ~ It is believed that the people were of Phoenician descent and little affected by the Greco-Roman culture.
 - The natives showed these unexpected visitors extraordinary kindness, beginning with building fires to warm them. (Acts 28:2)
 - Paul assisted in their finding wood and laying a fire. While he was helping, a viper fastened itself on his hand. (Acts 28:3)
 - Based on the people’s culture and belief system, they determined that Paul had to be a criminal. (Acts 28:4)
 - When Paul shook the viper off into the fire and suffered no harm, they determined he must be a god! (Acts 28:5-6)
 - Publius was introduced in Acts 28:7.
 - ~ He was a leading man on the island.
 - ~ He was a courteous man welcoming the people and entertaining them for three days until they could make other provisions.
 - Publius’ father was sick with a recurrent fever and dysentery. Paul went to see his father, prayed over him, laid hands on him and healed him. (Acts 28:8)
 - Paul and those who had been on the ship spent three months on Malta. During this time, Paul healed and served others on the island.
- ⇒ **One can only imagine how many came to believe in Jesus Christ on that island and were converted.**
- Paul arrived as a prisoner and left as an honored dignitary.

TEACHING TIP: This was not the first time Paul had been considered a god. In Acts 14, while in Lystra, the people had thought he was a god then the powers that be turned on him and stoned him!

TEACHING TIP: Malta Fever was endemic around the Mediterranean. Maltese goats were recognized as the carriers of this disease, usually through dairy products.

TEACHING TIP: Today the bay is called St. Paul’s Bay.

- ▲ **QUOTE:** William Wilberforce, as he persevered and led the Clapham Sect, a group of committed Christians to end slave trade and bring civility to England through their sacrificial service, said, *“Our motto must be perseverance. And ultimately, I trust the Almighty will crown our efforts with success.”*

✚ **Hebrews 10:35-36** *“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward, for you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what was promised.”*

⇒ **The Holy Spirit gave Paul the power to endure during difficult service to others.**

- After three months, they were able to leave Malta on another Alexandrian ship. They made three stops before reaching the shores of Italy. (Acts 28:11-15)
 - ~ From there they walked one hundred and forty miles.
 - ~ Forty-three miles outside of Rome they were met by believers.
 - ~ In another ten miles they were greeted by more believers who ‘escorted’ the prisoner into Rome.
- Paul was allowed to rent quarters and stayed by himself—except for the soldier who guarded him.

Study Five:

Acts 28:17-31 Openness, Unhindered

- ▲ **QUOTE:** J.B. Philips— *“There is an apparent capriciousness and arbitrariness about the working of the Spirit of God who can singularly be exasperating to the tidy minded.”*
- Paul called the leading men of the Jews from all of the synagogues and defended himself, giving evidence of their false accusations. (Acts 28:17-20)
 - Those in attendance were unaware of Paul’s situation or the accusations against him. But they were very interested in what he had to share. (Acts 28:21-28)
 - ~ He testified about the kingdom of God.
 - ~ He tried to persuade them concerning Jesus—using both the Law and the words of the Prophets.
 - ~ He talked with them from morning until night.
 - ~ As had been his experience, some were persuaded, and others were not.
 - Paul had one last thought to share with those who did not agree with his message and were ready to leave him and his words behind them. He turned to the words of Isaiah—
- ✚ Acts 28:26-27 *“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; for the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes; otherwise they*

might see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them.”

- His last words to these Jews who refused to hear the truth were— *“Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen.”* (Acts 28:28)
- Paul remained under house arrest for two full years—yet the word of God was not under arrest! Rather, it thrived—unhindered—because the word of God can never be constrained.
- ✠ Acts 28:30-31 *“And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”*

TEACHING TIP: Imagine how this statement spurred the Jewish leaders on in their hatred of Paul.

TEACHING TIP: During this period Paul wrote Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. Paul recognized the ‘good’ of this confinement as he wrote to the Philippians – *“Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.”* (Philippians 1:12-14)

- ⇒ **Paul exhibited a ‘productive’ endurance—no pity party for him. He used his confinement to encourage others. His example created a ripple effect of contagious courage that continues today.**

✠ FINAL THOUGHTS

- ✠ **In storms, in difficult service to others, and in prison, Paul endured through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

ILLUSTRATION: The story of Darlene Deibler. In 1938 Darlene Deibler set sail with her husband of one year, Russell, for life as missionaries in Papua, New Guinea. After the Japanese Imperial Army attacked Pearl Harbor, they soon took over New Guinea. Russell and other male missionaries were rounded up and imprisoned. His last words to her were *“Remember one thing – God said He would never leave us nor forsake us.”* She never heard from him again.

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ILLUSTRATION: The story of Darlene Deibler (continued)

Soon after, Darlene was taken prisoner and would remain a prisoner for three years. There was a lack of basic needs—food rations of maggot-infested gruel were small and scarcely provided energy for the extreme hard labor she was subjected to. Rats were rampant. The officers brutally beat the people for minor infractions.

She was moved to the dreaded Kempeitai Prison for solitary confinement, and intense interrogation. While in solitary confinement she saw someone eat a banana. She then prayed for one but quickly asked God’s forgiveness knowing there was no way even God could get a banana to her in such a god-forsaken place. A few days later her prison cell was opened, and the guard dropped ninety-two bananas on the floor!

At one point she was to be executed, but as the sword was being raised, a car drove up and stopped her execution. Instead, she was whisked away and returned to her previous camp. The camp commander had come to Christ through her witness—he now saved her!

After three years of intense suffering the war was over, and she was able to return home to her parents a widow at twenty-seven. She remarried, went back to New Guinea and served there for another thirty years. Darlene died in 2004.

Darlene Deibler was one who truly knew and understood God’s call for His people to endure.

✦ **Let us be encouraged by God’s Word regarding endurance. He is the One who gives us the ability to persevere through the power of His Spirit. We cannot manufacture such endurance within ourselves, without Him.**

† **Romans 15:5** *“Now may the God who gives us perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus.*

† **Hebrews 12:1-2a** *“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith ...”*

✦ **Consider the ‘witnesses’ we have met through this study—people empowered by the Holy Spirit to endure all sorts of challenges for the sake of Jesus Christ and the furtherance of His gospel. Their endurance changed the world.**

(In alphabetical order)

- ✓ *Corrie Ten Boom*
- ✓ *Catherine and William Booth*
- ✓ *Amy Carmichael*
- ✓ *Darlene Deibler*

- ✓ *Jim and Elisabeth Elliot*
- ✓ *Billy Graham*
- ✓ *Adoniram Judson*
- ✓ *C. S. Lewis*
- ✓ *Charlotte Diggs Moon (Lottie Moon)*
- ✓ *Hudson Taylor*
- ✓ *A.W. Tozer*
- ✓ *Catherine Wolf*
- ✓ *John Wycliff*

- ✦ **May we now apply what we have learned in this study and answer Jesus' call empowered by the Holy Spirit— "*... but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*" (Acts 1:8)**
- ✦ **You are called (not just those we consider to be spiritual giants) to share your own Jesus story. The Lord will not only reveal His plan and path for your life but will *empower* you through His Holy Spirit to accomplish it!**