

# Bible Stories

## THE FINAL JOURNEY

2 Timothy 4:7-8

November 18, 2023

Paul had no false hopes that he would be well received at Jerusalem. He had encountered much resistance over the years by those leaders who thought that the work of preaching the gospel should be in keeping with their own opinions. They had argued that arbitrary measures of control were necessary to make sure Paul was kept in line – especially when it came to Jewish customs and traditions. So, imagine his surprise when the Apostles welcomed him with genuine warmth.

He must have been encouraged when James and the other elders received the Gentiles offerings with gratitude. Perhaps he even breathed a sigh of relief when they praised God as he reported all that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. This was the opportunity for all the church leaders to acknowledge openly that God had worked through Paul and to confess their own jealousy and prejudice.

**Instead, they said to Paul:** *"Great job and all, but we have a problem.... Thousands of Jews have believed, all of whom are zealous for the law. They know that you teach Jews and Gentiles alike to turn away from Moses by telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. They will certainly hear that you have come, so do what we tell you. There are 4 men with us who have made a vow. Join these men in their purification rites, and pay their expenses, then everybody will know that you live in obedience to the law and there is no truth in these reports about you."*

**It would seem that Paul did have something to worry about after all.**

- Ellen White (AA 403.1 and 404.1) - *Instead of uniting in an effort to do justice to the one who had been injured, they gave him counsel which showed that they still cherished a feeling that Paul should be held largely responsible for the existing prejudice. They did not stand nobly in his defense, endeavoring to show the disaffected ones where they were wrong, but sought to effect a compromise by counseling him to pursue a course which in their opinion would remove all cause for doubt..... The Spirit of God did not prompt this instruction; it was the fruit of cowardice - they wanted to avoid conflict and potential persecution by the Jewish religious leaders.*
- Ellen White (AA 405.1-2) - *Paul realized that so long as many of the leading members of the church at Jerusalem should continue to cherish prejudice against him, they would work constantly to counteract his influence. He felt that if by any reasonable concession he could win them to the truth he would remove a great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places. But he was not authorized of God to concede as much as they asked..... Instead of accomplishing the desired object, his efforts for conciliation only precipitated the crisis, hastened his predicted sufferings, and resulted in separating him from his brethren, depriving the church of one of its strongest pillars, and bringing sorrow to Christian hearts in every land. {AA 405.1}*

The next day, Paul took the 4 men, went to the Temple and purified himself and them. When the days of purification were over, they went back to the Temple. Some Jews from Asia saw Paul in the Temple and, per their usual M.O., caused a riot. The entire city was in a turmoil. Paul was seized and dragged from the Temple. While the mob was trying to kill Paul, news of the riot reached, Lysias, the Roman commander. He and his men raced to the scene. When the mob saw the Romans, they stopped beating Paul. Paul was arrested, put in chains and taken to jail. Paul asked to be allowed to speak to the crowd and after he concluded his remarks, the crowd shouted, *"Rid the earth of him! He is not fit to live!"*

**Lysias gave orders that Paul be flogged and questioned to find out why the people were rioting.**

**Paul:** *Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?*

**Terrified, Lysias released Paul and ordered the Sanhedrin to assemble, but they caused such a racket that Lysias was afraid they would kill Paul, so Paul was taken back to the barracks.**

- Acts 23:11 - *The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."*

**40 Jewish men formed a conspiracy to have Paul killed, but the plot was discovered by Paul's nephew, who informed Lysias. He ordered Paul be taken by armed guard to Governor Felix in Caesarea**

**Because Felix wanted to remain on good terms with the Jews, he left Paul in prison for 2 years – until Festus became Governor of Judea.**

**Festus also wanted to stay on the good side of the Jewish leadership, so he asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial:**

**Paul:** *I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. If I am guilty of doing anything deserving death – fine – but if the charges against me are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!*

**Festus consulted with King Agrippa regarding Paul -** *"The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. I have found that he is not deserving of death, but because he has appealed to the Emperor, I have decided to send him to Rome. The problem is I don't have anything to write to the Emperor about him, so I have brought him to you. I'm hoping that after you conduct an investigation, I may have something to write, because it is unreasonable to send a prisoner to Rome without specifying the charges against him."*

**Paul gave his testimony before King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice and the King's assessment was the same as Festus' – Paul had done nothing deserving death and should be set free ---- if only he had not appealed to Caesar.**

**Paul would be going to Rome after all. He was handed over to a centurion named, Julius, and they boarded a ship in Caesarea preparing to sail along the coast. When they landed at Myra in Lycia, Julius found an Alexandrian ship that way sailing for Italy. It was slow going and they moved along the coast with difficulty until they reached Fair Haven.**

**Travel to Rome would be nearly impossible now that winter was approaching, so Paul advised that it would be better to spend the winter in Fair Haven, "Men," he said, "I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also."**

**Instead of listening to Paul, Julius listened to the owner of the ship who insisted they sail to Phoenix, on the Island of Crete, and winter there.**

**When a gentle south wind began to blow, they were encouraged by the favorable weather. The sails were hoisted, but before long, hurricane force winds began to blow. The ship was in trouble.**

**The ship could not head into the wind, so they were driven along ahead of the wind.**

**As they passed in the lee of a small island, the sailors struggled to secure the life boat and then they passed ropes under the ship hoping to hold it together.**

**Fearing they would run aground on sandbars; they lowered the sea anchor.**

**The next day they began to throw cargo over board.**

**On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, they threw the ships tackle overboard.**

**For many days the storm continued and all hope of being saved vanished.**

**Paul finally addressed the men:** *"You should have taken my advice to remain in Fair Haven and spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar. God has given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we will run aground on some island."*

**After midnight on night 14, the sailors sensed that they were approaching land, so they took a sounding – 120 feet deep. A short time later they took another sounding – 90 feet deep. Fearing that the ship would hit the rocks and be destroyed, they dropped their 4 anchors and prayed for daylight.**

Some of the sailors tried to secretly leave the ship via the life boat, but Paul informed Julius, that unless everyone stayed on the ship no one would survive - the life boat ropes were cut.

Just before dawn, Paul addressed the men again, *"For the last fourteen days you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food -- you haven't eaten anything. Eat something - You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head."*

After eating as much as they could, they threw all the remaining grain into the sea.

When daylight finally arrived, they didn't recognize the land, but they saw a sandy beach and decided to run the ship aground. They cut the anchor ropes, but the ship hit a sandbar and the ship began to break apart. Julius ordered that all who could swim, jump overboard, while the rest would have to get on pieces of the ship. All 276 men on board reach the shore safely.

They discovered they were on the Island of Malta. The locals treated them well and built fires for them because it was still cold and raining. As Paul threw some wood on the fire, a viper jumped out and fastened itself to his hand. The islanders were superstitious and assumed that Paul must be a pretty terrible person for such a thing to happen to him. As they watched, Paul shook the viper into the fire and carried on about his business.

They expected that he would soon swell up and die, but after waiting for a long time, they changed their minds and decided he must be a god.

Publius, the chief official of the island, invited everyone over to his estate and entertained them for 3 days. His father was near death, so Paul went to see him. After praying, Paul laid his hands on the man and he was immediately healed. The rest of the sick on the island turned up and were healed as well.

3 months later Paul and his companions boarded another Alexandrian ship bound for Italy. A week later they arrived at the port of Puteoli.

When Paul finally arrived in Rome, he was allowed to live in his own house, with a single soldier to guard him.

- Acts 28:30-31 - *For two years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Luke's account ends here and does not include Paul's death. Paul was executed in 67 AD by order of Nero.

**What do we do with this story?**

Paul's life had been poured out in service to God and he had experienced great suffering and hardship along the way. However, he did not focus on the suffering, instead, expressed great joy in those who had been added to the kingdom:

- Philippians 1:4 - *In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.*
- 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 - *For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.*

**Why joy? What motivated Paul? He knew what he had been before meeting Jesus and he never forgot that great encounter on the road to Damascus.**

Paul's focus was Christ in all things. That relationship was the source of his peace and joy in all circumstances:

- Philippians 4:12-13 - *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

**That is why, at the end of his life, Paul could confidently say,**

- 2 Timothy 4:7-8 - *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day -- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*