

In Step with Jesus 158

June 22, 2025

Key text: By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; 9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; 10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” (2 Corinthians 6: 8-10)

Introduction

Last week we read about Paul’s experience and ministry in the Island of Malta. After he had survived a shipwreck, Paul suffered a snakebite by the fireplace. The people of Malta concluded that he must be a murderer to have suffered such misfortune. They expected him to swell up or drop dead, but nothing happened to him. We learnt that God used that snakebite to call attention to his messenger. In the end, Paul was a blessing to the people of the island, healing the sick among them, and spreading the love of God. The Islanders were also a blessing to Paul and his companions. The bible records that when they were about to set sail to Rome, the people of Malta loaded their ship with everything they needed for the journey. Paul and his companions had lost everything they had in the shipwreck but God, the mighty restorer, used the people of Malta to replenish their supplies. As we journey through life, we often encounter losses, but there is no need to fear. If, laying aside all pride and self-importance, we trust in the LORD, we shall experience His bountiful restoration in ways that we least expect.

Today we will continue our reading of Acts chapter 28. We are at the end, but we will not rush, so we will not miss important lessons. We will read Acts verses 11- 17 today, which records the final phase of Paul’s journey to Rome. Let us see what more we can learn from the Holy Spirit.

Acts 28:11 - 17

11 After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead. 12 Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. 13 And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. 14 There we found brother and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so, we came to Rome. 15 And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. 16 And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.

Reflections

Having seen God's hands at work in the life of Paul and his companions, one cannot but conclude that God also directed the sailors of the Alexandria ship to winter in Malta. Thus, Paul and his companions were able to get another means of transport for their onward journey to Rome. Paul's journey from Malta to Rome was less turbulent than the journey from Caesarea to Malta. Again, we can see evidence of God's favor on Paul. Although he was travelling to Rome as a prisoner, he and his companions had the privilege of spending seven days with fellow believers at Puteoli. We can almost assume that Paul and his companions determined the pace and direction of the journey from Malta to Rome.

On their arrival in Rome, Paul and his companions received a warm welcome from the believers in Rome, and Paul could stay by himself in his own apartment, with the soldier who guarded him. In other words, Paul was not in a prison. That is God in action. Who we are in Christ is more important than the labels we bear on the flesh. Paul was a prisoner in the flesh but in Christ, he was a ruler. He was a joint heir with Jesus Christ, the head of all principalities and powers. Therefore, at every stage of his journey to Rome, and when it mattered most, God overruled in his favor.

Paul captured the essence of his life and journey in his letter to the Corinthians. His life, though full of paradoxical experiences, is a foreshadow of the life of all those who would follow Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 6: 4- 10 he writes " 4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; 6 By pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, 7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; 9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; 10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Like Paul's, the life experiences of every believer are a complex mixture of the sweet, the sour and the bitter. Yet, there is unspeakable joy, favor, power, and grace available to God's people. But, we cannot know the richness of God's grace unless we learn to trust and surrender all to Jesus Christ. Paul knew his Lord. He surrendered to Him and God used every circumstance of Paul's life for His glory and a blessing to humanity. Like Paul, let us give all our joys and sorrows to Jesus, and He will make all things beautiful in His time.