

By Mrs. Bessie Wilbon

Sunday School Lesson

Paul in Rome Acts 28 + 11-23
May 29, 1983

INTRODUCTION

A golfer was once trying to explain to a non-golfer friend some of the finer points of the game. "On the third hole," he said, "is this little pond. It seems that everytime I play that hole my ball ends up in the pond." "When the ball goes into the pond, do you lose it?" asked the non-golfer. "Yes," replied the golfer. "I usually can't retrieve a ball that lands in the water." "That could be rather expensive couldn't it, losing a ball everytime you play that hole?" "Well, yes, I suppose so." "Do other golfers have the same problem you have on that hole?" "Oh, I'm sure most of them do." "Well, then, if that pond causes so much trouble and it is so expensive because everyone keeps losing balls in it, why don't they just fill in the pond and cover it with grass?"

We may smile at the naivete of this non-golfer, but he reflects a philosophy of life shared by many who feel that if all the risks and hazards could be removed from life, then everything would be perfect. But how limited such a view is, for the hazards challenge men, making them grow. At the same time the obstacles weed out weaklings and the half-hearted.

The life of the apostle Paul gives an excellent example of this. It was through the adversity of a long imprisonment and a dangerous voyage that he finally came to Rome and then in chains. Yet, because of these circumstances, he was able to witness to many Jews in Rome. It was also during this time that Paul wrote the marvelous letters that we call the prison epistles.

LESSON BACKGROUND

A period of two years or more elapsed from the events studied in last week's lesson to today's lesson. Paul had been rescued from a mob in the temple by the Roman commander. He was then taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea where he had hearings before Felix, Festus and Agrippa. Paul's appeal for a hearing before Caesar led to his being sent by ship to Rome. On the voyage the ship was caught in a severe storm and was wrecked on the island of Melita.

On To Rome: (Vv. 11-13). The shipwreck on the island of Melita was a disaster that turned into a rich blessing. The experience was remarkable because, though the ship was lost, the lives of all the passengers were spared. But another crisis arose when Paul was bitten by a viper. The natives, thinking this to be an act of a god bringing punishment, looked upon Paul as a desperate criminal. But when he was unharmed, their opinion changed and they took him to be a god. As a result of this experience and the healing of several, including the father of the chief official of the island, the shipwrecked party was given most cordial treatment. We can be sure that Paul used this three-month stay as an opportunity to preach to the natives.

Acts 28:16) And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier who kept him.

We are told that man proposes but God disposes. Man makes all kinds of elaborate plans, but God in His infinite wisdom often cancels these plans or drastically changes them.

God has often dealt with His faithful in a similar manner. Political disaster and blindness could have left John Milton a simpering cripple, but instead he gave us "Paradise Lost." John Bunyan could have wallowed in self-pity in jail, but instead he used the time to write "Pilgrims Progress." Again and again God has used poverty, or illness, or physical affliction, or personal disaster to bring out the best in us. The crucial issue is not that sorrows and disappointments come, but how we handle them when they do come. Paul's chains proved to be the key that opened many doors.

As Paul made his way to Rome, undoubtedly, he has mixed feelings. On the other hand he was getting to visit Rome, but not in the way he had hoped. This may very well have caused him to become despondent. Then many of the Christians at Rome did a wonderful thing. They went out to meet him along the way. This was no minor inconvenience, for they had to walk 30 or 40 miles from Rome to meet him. But what a tremendous impact it had on Paul! Luke tells us that when he saw them "he thanked God, and took courage."

People all about us are lonely, discouraged, friendless. We don't have to hunt far to find them. We don't have to be psychologists or theologians in order to help them. The important thing is that we are there and available.



Shelvy Jean Bratcher and Daryl Gregory Porter were joined together as man and wife recently at Johnson C. Smith University Chapel, located on Beatties Ford Road. The bride is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe Bratcher.

Mercy To Graduate 23

Twenty-three students will be graduated in commencement ceremonies Friday, June 3, from the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing.

The ceremony will be at 7 p.m. at the St. Patrick's School Auditorium, 1125 Buchanan St.

The commencement speaker will be Sister Therese Galligan, a religious Sister of Mercy, who is a nurse counselor to patients and families at Mercy Hospital.

Sister Therese, a 1957 graduate of the Mercy School of Nursing, has a bachelor's degree in nursing from Marillac College, St. Louis, Mo., and a master's degree in nursing from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In recent years, Sister Therese has been concerned with the dying patient and his family. She served a year as executive director of Mountain Area Hospice, Inc., Asheville, and she has been involved with both the North Carolina and the national Hospice organizations.

She is a sought-after speaker on topics involving death and dying and the emotional needs of families and patients.

Honors to be announced at the commencement ceremony will be those for outstanding student, highest class average, psychiatric nursing, medical-surgical nursing, matern-

ity nursing and bedside nursing.

City Offices Will Be Closed Monday

City government will be closed Monday, May 30, in observance of Memorial Day.

The Sanitation Division will operate on a revised schedule. During that week, backyard garbage collection will be provided on Tuesday-Thursday for locations regularly serviced on Monday-Thursday and on Wednesday-Friday for locations regularly serviced on Tuesday-Friday. There will be NO curbside trash collection during the holiday week.

The York Road Landfill will operate as usual Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The City's Animal Control Division will be closed May 30. Only emergency cases will be handled by calling 374-2919.

Recreation-Centers operated by the Charlotte Parks and Recreation Department will be closed. Revolution Golf Course will be open.

Buses operated by the Charlotte Transit System will operate on their Saturday schedule.

There will be no meeting of the Charlotte City Council on May 30.

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Between now and May 28, we will redeem national manufacturer's cents-off coupons up to 50¢ for double their value. Offer good on national manufacturer's cents-off coupons only (Food retailer coupons not accepted.) Customer must purchase coupon product in specified size. Expired coupons will not be honored. One coupon per customer per item. No coupons accepted for free merchandise. Offer does not apply to A&P or other store coupons. When manufacturer is mentioned or not. When the value of the coupon exceeds 50¢ or the retail value of the item, this offer is limited to the retail price.

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