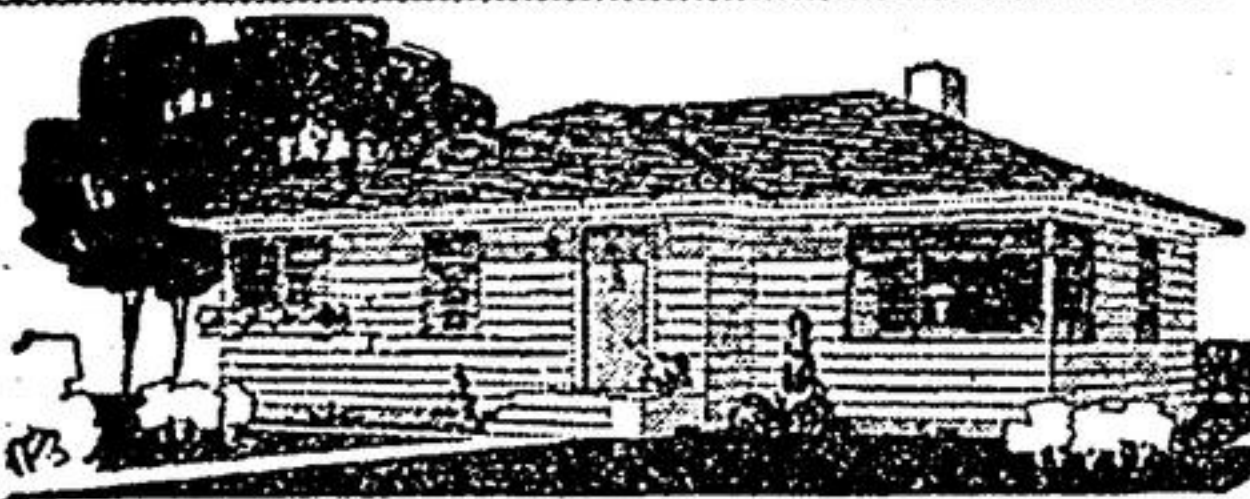


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# The Sunday School Lesson

## THE CONTINUING MISSION OF THE CHURCH

(Lesson for June 24)

Acts 27 and 28  
Golden Text—Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.—Matt. 28:19, 20

### THE LESSON AS A WHOLE

#### Approach to the Lesson

Last week we looked at the Apostle Paul as he presented his case before King Herod Agrippa II, whose judgment was that the apostle was guilty of no misdemeanor, but could have been set at liberty had he not made his appeal to Caesar. In face of that appeal they were bound to send him to Rome. Today's lesson finds him in the capital of the Roman Empire, but between Caesarea and Rome there was a journey which proved to be exciting, to say the least.

No less than 3 vessels were pressed into service to transport Paul and other prisoners to Rome. First was a coastal vessel, which made slow progress from port to port along the Phoenician and Sicilian coasts as far as Myra, near where the shore of Asia turns north. Here a vessel was found which sailed the open waters. It was one of the Alexandrian grain fleet which carried grain from Alexandria in Egypt to Rome. In this vessel they sailed to the south of Crete and arrived at a place called The Fair Havens. Being delayed here because of the weather, the Day of Atone-ment passed and the treacherous season for sailing arrived.

It was quite evident that they would not make Rome by winter, and the Apostle Paul, doubtless by some enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, as well as through his experience of sailing, advised that they winter where they were, rather than risk the open sea again. The master and the owner of the ship, however, did not agree on Fair Havens as a winter resort, and secured the centurion's consent to make a dash for Phenice, farther west on the south coast of Crete. A soft south wind, which seemed to promise the fulfillment of their purpose, soon and suddenly gave way to the well-known enemy of seamen, a wind known as the Euroclydon. It was a real nor'easter. For two weeks they were driven and tossed by wind and wave, with no abatement of the storm, till at last they were able to run the ship aground, not knowing where they were. The land turned out to be the little island of Melita (Malta), very much nearer their destination, but they paid for the distance with the complete loss of the ship and its cargo. Here the party wintered, and when shipping opened again in the spring they secured passage on another of the Alexandrian grain fleet and headed north for Rome. They touched Syracuse, on the east coast of Sicily, and Rhegium on the toe of Italy, before disembarking at Puteoli, about halfway up the coast to Rome. At Puteoli they remained for a week, and from here word of Paul's arrival was carried to the Christians in Rome, with the result that at two points on the last journey to the capital city delegations of Roman Christians met him and escorted him the rest of the way, so although a prisoner, he reached Rome joyful in spirit, thankful for the faithfulness and friendship of fellow believers.

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### Verse by Verse

Acts 28:16—"The centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him." The "captain of the guard" was probably the commander of the corps of officer-couriers, to whom the centurion was responsible. Paul's status as a Roman citizen who had appealed charges laid by his opponents to the emperor secured for him more favorable treatment.

Verses 17-22 tell of Paul's preliminary conference with the leading Jews of Rome, preparatory to a fuller presentation of the Gospel.

Verse 23—"There came many to whom he expounded . . . the Kingdom of God . . . concerning Jesus, both out of the law and the prophets." Notice the connection between "the Kingdom of God" and "Jesus." Paul follows his usual method, expounding the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures, and showing how they are fulfilled in Jesus. This was our Lord's own method with His disciples (Luke 24:41).

Verse 24—"And some believed, and some believed not." The verb "believed" is in the imperfect tense. They were in the process of being persuaded, were tending toward faith. Others showed no inclination to believe.

Verse 25—"They departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Saisias . . ." The apostle reserved this final thrust until he clearly saw the impact of his testimony, and the assembly was on the point of breaking up. He attributes to the Holy Spirit the words spoken in vision to Isaiah (Isa. 6:9, 10).

Verse 26—"Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive." For our Lord's use of this Isaiah passage see Matthew 13:14, 15 and Luke 8:10. The construction here echoes the Hebrew and is emphatic. We may translate: "You will hear all right, but you will certainly not understand; you will see all right, but you will certainly not perceive." That is the tragedy of the "evil heart of unbelief."

Verse 27—"For the heart is waxed gross . . . eyes . . . are closed." The condition of the heart determines the operation of the ears and the eyes, and therefore the direction of the whole life. Too often the statement, "I can't see it," really means, "I won't see it."

Verse 28—"The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles." See 13:46 and 18:6. The pattern in Rome is the same as in Antioch and Corinth and elsewhere, although the setting is Paul's hired house rather than a synagogue. Thus unto the Gentiles. (Rom. 11:11).

Verse 29—"The Jews departed and had great reasoning among themselves." While the best manuscripts do not have this verse one can imagine the breaking up of the gathering to have been just as depicted here.

Verse 30—"And Paul dwelt in his own hired house, and received all that came." While Paul's movements were restricted, there seems to have been no restriction on the company he might have. Two years would exhaust the time allotted for his prosecutors to carry through their complaint before the emperor.

Verse 31—"Preaching the Kingdom of God . . . the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." We sense the note of triumph here. The last word in Acts is an adverb which tells the manner in which Paul carried on his unusual ministry—unhindered!

**The Heart of the Lesson**  
Paul entered Rome in circumstances very different from those which marked his entry into Antioch, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus, but he was still the same man. He was now an ambassador in bonds, but still an ambassador of Jesus Christ, with the same burning passion to make Christ known. He was still unashamed, unbowed; not the prisoner of Rome, but the prisoner of Jesus Christ. While no garlands nor chariots adorned his entry, it was more of a triumph than the flattering and pompous entries accorded victorious generals, for this was an incident in the triumphant progress of the Gospel.

In keeping with his usual procedure, he got in touch with the Jews as soon as possible. Since he could not go to them in one of their synagogues he had their chief representatives come to him in his own hired house, where he lived chained to his Roman guard. This first conference was really a preliminary one, in the course of which the apostle explained his presence in Rome, and arranged for a further gathering in his lodging. It was on this second occasion that he spent the entire day expounding the Kingdom of God, showing from the Scriptures of the Old Testament that this Kingdom centers in the person of Jesus, the Christ. What a pity the expositions and the disputations of that entire day had not been taken down on tape! But we have inklings from the brief resués of other sermons of his, and from his use of the Old Testament Scriptures in his Epistles, how he would present the great theme.

The pattern of Antioch, Corinth, and Ephesus was repeated in Rome. The unbelief of the Jews opened the door to the evangelization of the Gentiles, and for two years the apostle's

# Planning Board And the Home Owner

By F. H. Brennan  
(Article 4)

Have you ever wondered why every day thousands of suburbanites spend a sizeable portion of their income by driving their cars along heavily congested roads into the heart of Toronto, while within comfortable walking distance of their employment are residential areas where former residents have established schools, police protection, paved streets, and sewer facilities? The main reasons for the move to new suburbs is that the older sections of the city have declining property values, or all that is available are small lots, with high taxes.

We in Markham Township have a unique opportunity to learn from the mistakes of others. We should attempt, then, to discover some of the reasons why property values and tax assessment are low in "Cabbage Town", and are going up in Forest Hill. Then, if we must have urban development, let us by sound planning try to ensure that the values of any new neighbourhood units will be maintained through the years.

If we are to eliminate the child delinquent, then children must have safe play areas adjoining their homes. Public playgrounds and parks are not enough. Public areas restrict children in activities such as climbing, digging and throwing at targets. Children of pre-school age should have the opportunity to keep a pet. Also, they should be able to defend their snow forts, or play in the sandbox with Mother keeping a watchful eye at the kitchen window. Larger lots than are practical in the city should be the inflexible rule for this Township.

If lots larger than the average sub-divider would envisage are desirable for our children, then how about the parents? City life offers the taverns, the movies and the Casino. For the man seeking relaxation from the office or factory, how do these city inducements compare with fixing a bird feeding station, cutting the grass or discussing rabbits over the picket fence?

Happy, emotionally well-balanced people are generally those who enjoy the warm human relationship of "family life". Let it be our aim that every family in the Township shall have the opportunity to live in an environment conducive to lasting happiness. Only with public support and public demand can the Planning Board raise living standards throughout the Township.

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Luke's last words in this whole dramatic story are: "no man forbidding him" ("unhindered"); a prisoner, but unhindered; chained, but unhindered. Paul knew a freedom which broke through all outward circumstances.

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