

Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

January 5, 2014

52. Paul Before Agrippa Expressing the Hope He had

Acts 25:23-26:32

Last year has quickly rolled by on us. A New Year 2014 has already dawned on us. The sermon series we started in January 2013 is still on it on going. What a journey and what a year it has been with all we have learned about the work and the growth of the Church! We still have about six weeks to complete this series in this New Year. I am therefore seizing this opportunity to wish you a Happy and prosperous New Year as well as a joyful spiritual growth experience in building your testimony since we are at point where we are learning that your defense as a Christian depends on the strong Christian testimony that you build. This phenomenon of using your Christian testimony as your defense has continuously exhibited itself in the life of Paul during our study of the work and growth of the Church. After returning to Jerusalem from his third missionary journey Paul was arrested, falsely accused and thrown into jail; but God promised to be with him and to make it possible for him to appear before several and important as well as prominent audiences that would ultimately culminate with Caesar in Rome so as have the opportunity to testify for Jesus Christ. And so far Paul has used his testimony as he appeared before the crowd, the commander, the High priest and the Sanhedrin, Felix the Roman Governor at Caesarea, Festus who replaced Felix the Governor and today we shall focus on his trial before King Agrippa. At each stage Paul used his testimony as a defense and God used it to vindicate him.

Thus our text for today reads, “The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high-ranking military officers and the prominent men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. 24 Festus said: “King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. 25 I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. 26 But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. 27 For I think it is unreasonable to send a prisoner on to Rome without specifying the charges against him.” 26:1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: 2 “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, 3 and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently. 4 “The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. 5 They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. 6 And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. 7 This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. 8 Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? 9 “I, too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to, oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force

them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities. 12 “On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. 14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ 15 “Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. 16 ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’ 19 “So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. 20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. 21 That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. 22 But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— 23 that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.” 24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.” 25 “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. 26 The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.” 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” 29 Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.” 30 The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. 31 After they left the room, they began saying to one another, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.” 32 Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar” (Acts 25:23 - 26:32).

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude this sermon on today please allow me to summarize it as follows. The work and growth of the church involves:

- Being born again or accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior; and becoming part of the household of God as a believer.
- Every believer knowing that the Holy Spirit resides in them.
- Every believer allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work of the church through them.
- Engaging in a pilgrim’s journey requiring determination to walk by faith and not by sight to fulfill your purpose.
- Building and sharing your testimony to persuade your audience to believe in Jesus Christ.
- Believing God’s promise to be with you wherever He takes you to testify of His Name
- Using the status of your citizenship of heaven as well as common sense and wisdom in sharing your testimony
- Faithfully using your God given gifts to minister to others with gratitude wherever God sends you, knowing that He has your back.
- This is what the work and growth of the church is all about. And let the church say, “Amen!”

To become part of the household of God as a believer, and be saved, have peace and happiness; and do the work of the church to cause healthy church growth, you must first know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior and then allow the Holy Spirit to empower you. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to do the work of the Church to cause its continual growth. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

January 12, 2014

53. Paul Sails for Rome

Acts 27:1-12

As we consider Paul's journey to Rome for his defense before Caesar, I want us to focus on our pilgrim's journey that will usher us into the presence of God to give an account of ourselves and what we have done, whether good or bad. In this pilgrim's journey you will find favors along the way but at the same time you will encounter storms. God will send you counsel through men of God too. Please listen to such counsel rather than depending on the so-called "experts". Paul had a transforming encounter with Jesus on the way to Damascus where he was going to persecute Christians. That encounter changed his life to become purposeful, with a vision and a mission of ministering as an apostle to the Gentile. We too need such a transforming encounter with Jesus to prepare us for the ministry and purpose God has for us. Having completed three missionary journeys, Paul returned to Jerusalem but was quickly arrested, falsely accused and thrown into jail; but God promised to be with him and to make it possible for him to appear before several important and prominent audiences that ultimately would end with Caesar in Rome so as to testify for Jesus Christ. Paul's testimony became his defense at every stage. And so far we have seen that Paul has testified before the crowd, the commander, the High priest and the Sanhedrin, Felix the Roman Governor at Caesarea, Festus who replaced Felix the Governor and King Agrippa. At each stage Paul used his testimony as a defense and God used it to vindicate him. Festus the Governor in conjunction with King Agrippa granted Paul's appeal to appear before Caesar in Rome because he was found not to be guilty of anything deserving death or imprisonment.

Thus our text for today reads, "When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. 2 We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us. 3 The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs. 4 From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. 5 When we had sailed across the open sea

off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. 7 We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. 8 We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. 9 Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Day of Atonement. So Paul warned them, 10 “Men, 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.” 11 But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship. 12 Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. This was a harbor in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest” (Acts 27:1-12).

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude this sermon on today please allow me to summarize it as follows. The work and growth of the church involves:

- Being born again or accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and savior; and becoming part of the household of God as a believer.
- Every believer knowing that the Holy Spirit resides in them.
- Every believer allowing the Holy Spirit to do the work of the church through them.
- Engaging in a pilgrim’s journey requiring determination to walk by faith and not by sight to fulfill your purpose.
- Building and sharing your testimony to persuade your audience to believe in Jesus Christ.
- Believing God’s promise to be with you wherever He takes you to testify of His Name
- Using the status of your citizenship of heaven as well as common sense and wisdom in sharing your testimony
- Faithfully using your God given gifts to minister to others with gratitude wherever God sends you, knowing that He has your back.
- Receiving favor from God and remaining faithful to God by warning the world of the danger before it in the sea of sin. You must listen to godly men sounding the warning rather than relying on so-called “experts”.
- This is what the work and growth of the church is all about. And let the church say, “Amen!”

To become part of the household of God as a believer, and be saved, have peace and happiness; and do the work of the church to cause healthy church growth, you must first know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior and then allow the Holy Spirit to empower you. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God’s family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to do the work of the Church to cause its continual growth. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

January 19, 2014

54. The Storm

Acts 27:13-26

In this pilgrim's journey and your endeavor to do the work of the Church for its growth you will find favors along the way but at the same time you will encounter storms. Storms will come to test the genuineness of your faith for the purpose of building your testimony; others will come because you have failed to listen to godly counsel so that you can learn from the experience to perhaps always listen to godly counsel. Listening to godly counsels helps in building a testimony that reflects godly character as evidence of transformation through a renewed mind. The scriptures admonish believers to be transformed by the renewal of their minds rather than just conforming to the things of the world. Your transformation begins with an encounter with Jesus. Paul had his transforming encounter with Jesus on the way to Damascus where he was going to persecute Christians. From that point, Paul's testimony became his defense. When he was falsely accused, because of the unjust procedure, he made an appeal to Caesar. Festus the Governor of the region in conjunction with King Agrippa after hearing Paul's testimony in his defense granted his appeal to appear before Caesar in Rome because they could not find him guilty of anything deserving death or imprisonment. On the way to Rome, Paul offered a godly counsel to the crew on the ship he was on board with but the captain and the owner of the ship ignored him and went out on sea for the trip. Afterward, they encountered a terrible storm.

Thus our text for today reads, "When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. 14 Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island. 15 The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. 16 As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure, 17 so the men hoisted it aboard. Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along. 18 We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. 19 On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved. 21 After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. 22 But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. 23 Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me 24 and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' 25 So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. 26 Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island" (Acts 27:13-26).

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- Engaging in a pilgrim's journey requiring determination to walk by faith and not by sight to fulfill your purpose.
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- Using the status of your citizenship of heaven as well as common sense and wisdom in sharing your testimony
- Faithfully using your God given gifts to minister to others with gratitude wherever God sends you, knowing that He has your back.
- Open-mindedly receiving godly counsel. You must listen to godly men sounding the warning rather than relying on so-called "experts".
- This is what the work and growth of the church is all about. And let the church say, "Amen!"

To become part of the household of God as a believer, and be saved, have peace and happiness; and do the work of the church to cause healthy church growth, you must first know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior and then allow the Holy Spirit to empower you. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to do the work of the Church to cause its continual growth. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Evangelist R. D. Jacobs

THE BOOK OF ACTS: THE WORK AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

January 26, 2014

55. The Shipwreck

Acts 27:27-44

The definition of a **Storm** is – (n) A violent disturbance of the atmosphere with strong winds and usually rain, thunder, lighting or snow; a tumultuous reaction; an uproar of controversy. – (v) to move angrily or forcefully in a specified direction; suddenly attack and capture by means of force.

The definition of **Shipwrecked** is – the destruction of a ship at sea by sinking or breaking up in a storm or after running aground.

We find the Apostle Paul in the midst of a storm and being shipwrecked in Acts 27 as he is on his way to Caesar to present his case. (Acts 25:11-12) While in Lycia they found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and placed Paul on it. As the set out to sail they had hard sailing and had difficulty sailing against the wind. After much time had been lost, Paul warned them that he could see that this trip would be disastrous and bring great loss to the ship, cargo and their lives. The centurion decided to rather listen to the ship's owner and the ship's pilot. And, once a gentle south wind began to blow they set sail. (Acts 27:5-14)

The truth is that many of us also face storms and feel shipwrecked in our lives, whether it is financially, mentally, physically, or emotionally. It has been presented two reasons why we face storms: 1) To test the genuineness of our faith and to build your testimony and 2) Because we failed to listen to God and godly counsel. There are times that we fail to listen to God and godly counsel and we bring upon ourselves troubles and sorrows, but not all storms are because God is angry or punishing you. There are times that they come to build your testimony as a witness to Jesus Christ.

In the midst of this storm, Dr. Luke tells us that for 3 days they had been in this storm not seeing daylight/the sun nor moonlight or the stars. And after three days they all began to throw cargo over the ship, were not eating and were losing hope. (Acts 27:14-20) It was at this point that the word of the Lord came to Paul to take courage for not one would be lost but the ship would be destroyed. (Acts 27: 21-26) It would be on the 14th day at the midnight hour that the sailors sensed that they were approaching land. (Acts 27:27) The midnight was the darkest time but it also represented a new day. Like Paul, even at the darkest hour we must keep Faith in God.

Because they were drawing nearer to land and feared they would run aground, they dropped the anchors and prayed for day. (Acts 27:9) The group had never before Prayed - or asked for God's guidance or traveling mercy or journeying grace but now that hard times had hit they wanted to pray. It is not in bad times only that we should be praying. Our relationship and fellowship with God should be the same in good times or hard times.

Through this storm and shipwreck God is building Paul's Testimony and his Witness. Paul was a prisoner but all he had spoken so far was true and all noticed that. So when some on the boat wanted to use a lifeboat and try to reach land, Paul told them unless they stay with the ship they could not be saved. So they cut the boat down. (Acts 27:30-32) Your trust should not be in a "lifeboat" but in the word of God and the fact that no matter what the situation looks like God will keep His promise. That is why Paul told them to eat and be encouraged because God would keep His word and not one of them would lose a hair on their head. (Acts 27:33-38) The body needs food to survive and likewise the Spirit man needs the word of God to grow stronger in the midst of storms and shipwrecks. This is the Work of the church to encourage and minister to those who are going through storms as personal witnesses of God!

After 14 days, daylight came and God kept his word. The ship ran aground and was destroyed and all swam or used part of the boat to get safely to land! (Acts 27:41-44) God kept His word and Paul would appear before Caesar. God is with us through ever storm and shipwreck and he

understands our pains and sorrows in life. He promises to never leave us nor forsake us and He will be with us until the end of this age. We must only trust and believe Him in the darkest hours of life!

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