

CHAPTER 11

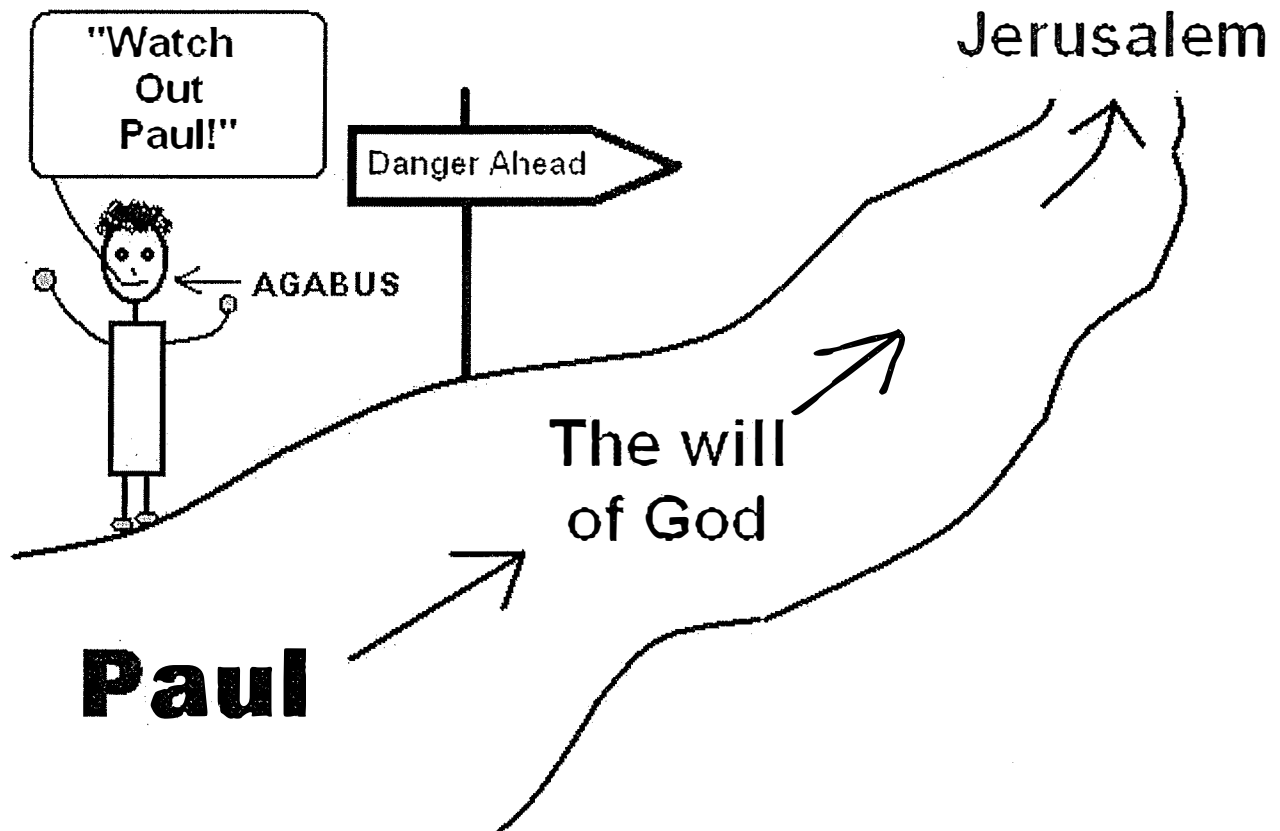
"Fear Not, Paul"

(Acts 21-26)

Have you ever been traveling down a road and seen a sign which said, "DANGER AHEAD!?" Some workmen may be using explosives, or perhaps there is a dangerous curve in the road up ahead. This kind of sign might make us wonder if we should keep going or if we should turn back. Such a sign might also make us fearful. But this sign is really our friend, because it warns us and helps us to know what is ahead. If there were no sign which said, "DANGER AHEAD," then we could really get into trouble.

The Apostle Paul was traveling down a road which we will call "the will of God." It was God's will for him to go to Jerusalem and then later to Rome. Often this road was a difficult one, but Paul knew it was the right road. One day as Paul was going down this road he saw a sign which said, "DANGER AHEAD!"

The Warning Sign



At the close of Paul's third missionary journey, Paul arrived in the city of Caesarea. While he was there a most unusual thing happened. A prophet named _____ (Acts 21:10) came up to him and grabbed Paul's girdle or belt. Agabus used this belt to tie up his own hands

and feet. He then gave Paul the great warning sign. He said, "When you get to Jerusalem, the Jews are going to do the same thing to the man who owns this belt. They are going to bind you up and capture the person who owns this belt!" (a paraphrase, see Acts 21:11). Who owned this belt? _____ In other words, he was saying, "Paul, there is danger ahead in Jerusalem. The Jews are going to get you and capture you!"

When Paul's friends heard this, did they want him to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:12)? _____
 Was Paul willing to keep going down the road even though there was trouble ahead (Acts 21:13)? _____ Were Paul's friends able to talk him out of it (Acts 21:14)? _____

How could Paul be so brave? Why wasn't he afraid? Where did he get such courage to enter Jerusalem, even though he knew that his life would be in great danger?

Sometimes we are afraid because we do not know what to expect. We are not sure what is going to happen to us. Suppose you had to go into the hospital to have some teeth pulled or to have your tonsils removed. Would you want the doctor and nurses to tell you what to expect and to explain what they are going to do to you, or would you rather have it all be a big surprise?

Most people want to know what to expect. Paul knew what to expect, and this is one reason he was not afraid. Did Paul expect to live an easy life or did he expect to suffer (Acts 9:16)? _____ God told Paul that he would suffer, and Paul knew this right from the beginning of his Christian life. He knew what to expect. Paul did not know everything that would happen to him in Jerusalem (see Acts 20:22), but he did know he would be captured and afflicted (see Acts 20:23).

We do not know what is down the road (Proverbs 27:1), but God knows! God is never taken by surprise! Suppose you are a passenger on a large ship. You might not know where you are and you might not be sure where the ship is headed, but THE CAPTAIN DOES! He knows where he is going and he knows what he is doing, and because of this, you do not have to be afraid. Christ is our Captain!

The Prophecy of Agabus Comes True

Paul arrived in the city of Jerusalem and went into the temple. One day the Jews laid their hands on him (Acts 21:27) and took him out of the T_____ (Acts 21:30). They even wanted to K_____ him (Acts 21:31). The warning which Agabus had given was coming true. Paul was in trouble. Should he start being afraid now?

The Jews began beating Paul (Acts 21:32). They would have killed him, but before they could do this, the Romans captured Paul and protected him from the Jews (Acts 21:32-33). The Romans believed that a man had a right to a fair trial.

Paul's experience was very similar to what happened to Jesus years earlier in this same city. The Jews wanted to kill Paul. Did they want to kill Jesus also (Matthew 27:1)? _____ The Romans wanted to give Paul a fair trial and set him free if he were innocent. Is this what the Roman governor wanted to do with Christ (Luke 23:13-16)? _____ Concerning Paul, the Jews cried out, "AWAY WITH HIM" (Acts 21:36). Is this the same thing they had once said concerning Jesus (John 19:15)? _____

Paul knew what to expect. Jesus had once said, "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have _____ me, they will also persecute Y _____" (John 15:20). Paul was willing to suffer and to be treated just like Christ was!

Paul had the opportunity to speak to this crowd of Jews (see Acts 21:40). His message to them is found in Acts 22:1-21. In this message he shared with them his own personal testimony about how he was saved. Toward the end of his testimony he was interrupted by the crowd, and what did they say (Acts 22:22)?

- a. **"Paul, we are amazed at the way God has worked in your life. If Christ could save you in such a wonderful way, then we want Him to be our Saviour too!"**
- b. **"Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live!"**

What else did this wild crowd do (Acts 22:23)?

The Hunger Strike

In 1981 a group of prisoners in Ireland wanted the British government to consider them as "political prisoners" and not just as common criminals. In order to get the British government to meet their demands, many of them said, "We are not going to eat anything until we get what we want!" And so they went on a "hunger strike" and refused to eat. Many of them died of starvation.

In the book of Acts we learn of a group of more than 40 men who said, "We are not going to eat or drink anything until we get what we want!" What did they want (Acts 23:12,21)?

_____ Should Paul start being afraid now?

These Jewish men had an evil plot to get rid of Paul once and for all (Acts 23:15). Something happened which foiled their plot. Who found out about their plot (Acts 23:16)?

_____ This young man told Paul, then he told the chief captain, and the Romans were able to protect Paul and get him out of the city of Jerusalem. God gave Paul a large number of bodyguards (see Acts 23:23):

How many soldiers were there? _____

How many horsemen were there? _____

How many spearmen were there? _____

We might wonder what happened to those men who took that oath and went on that hunger strike. We know that they never got what they wanted. Did they keep their oath? If they did, then the man they wanted to kill lived longer than all of them!

"Do You Want to Harm Me? Sorry, You Must Have Permission!"

What if you had more than 40 men who would rather die than see you alive? Would that frighten you?

Paul knew that no one could harm him without God's permission. He also knew that it was God's plan for him to go to the city of R_____ (Acts 23:11). If Paul were to die or be killed in Jerusalem, then how could he go to Rome? Even if five million people wanted Paul to die, it is what God wants that really counts!

Some people are afraid of lightning. When a storm comes, they are afraid that the lightning might strike them. Has lightning ever killed people? _____ Does this mean we should be afraid?

There is one thing we must never forget. Who is the One who controls the lightning and all the forces of nature (compare Psalm 148:8)? _____ If God is controlling it, then no lightning bolt can go anywhere without God's permission! The God who created me, who loves me, and who saved me is the same God who is in charge of the lightning!

Can Satan harm a person without God's permission (Job 1:11-12; 2:4-6)? _____ Satan can only go so far!

"Fear Not, Paul!"

Paul was told that there would be trouble down the road. God told him what to expect, but He also told Paul to "be of good C_____" (Acts 23:11). As believers, God also tells us what to expect as we walk down life's road. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have T_____ (trouble, difficulty, trials)" (John 16:33). But Jesus also said, "Be of good C_____, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). God is the WINNER, and those who belong to Him **cannot** lose!

God gives people a general understanding of what to expect down the road. When trouble and difficulty are ahead, God usually gives advance notice. Did God tell the children of Israel that they would be slaves in the land of Egypt long before it ever happened (Genesis 15:12-14)? _____ Did God tell the children of Israel that they would be conquered by the Babylonians and held as captives for 70 years (Jeremiah 25:8-11)? _____ God has also given us the book of Revelation so that men might know about the terrible time of trouble and tribulation that will come upon the world in the future.

What does the future hold for you? As you look around you discover that people face all kinds of difficulties and problems. Life's road is not always an easy one. There are school problems, family problems, job problems and health problems. There are also many problems in our state, our country, and our world which will affect you and your future. As you think about growing up and entering the high school years and even beyond that, what do you think lies ahead for you? (This question could be discussed in class.) What kinds of problems and difficulties might you face?

As we look ahead to these things, do we need to be afraid? Did Paul need to be afraid as he thought about what would happen to him in Jerusalem and later in Rome? What help does God give us as we travel down God's road so that we can be of good cheer?

As you look at the following verses, explain why Paul did not have to be afraid. Also explain why **you** do not have to be afraid (if you are a child of God). The first one is done for you:

1. Deuteronomy 20:1 Paul knew the Lord his God would be with him in Jerusalem. I must go forward down the road expecting problems, but knowing that my God will be with me.

2. Genesis 15:1 _____

3. Deuteronomy 3:22 _____

4. 1 Chronicles 28:20 _____

5. Psalm 27:1 _____

6. Psalm 46:1-2 _____

7. Psalm 91:2,5 _____

8. Psalm 112:7 _____

9. Psalm 118:6 _____

10. Isaiah 41:10 _____

11. Isaiah 41:13-14 _____

12. Matthew 10:29-31 _____

"Fear Not Paul !" "Fear Not, Believer!"

PROTECTING PINIONS

