

## **Lamentations (Part One; 1989)**

### **Apostle Paul's Physical Hardships**

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**Given 01-Apr-89; Sermon #BS-LA01**

What I want to go into is something that I hope would give you some sort of a feeling of empathy for the apostle Paul and the things that he went through in order to preach the gospel. We are going to use as a base for this II Corinthians the 11th chapter, beginning in verse 26. Now Paul wrote this in defense of himself in the face of accusations that were coming from people in Corinth regarding his authority for being in the position of apostle and being in a position to be able to teach them; and be in a position to tell certain other ones in the church of Corinth that they ought to put so-and-so out of the church; and telling the people in Corinth that they need to be doing this and doing that and arranging their lives in a certain way. Anyway, they were challenging it and so he was comparing himself to false apostles. But we can go all the way back. Let us get the real flavor of it.

**II Corinthians 11:22-30** Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool [No, they are not, see.] —I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often [that is, the threat of death]. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.

What we have here, of course, is a catalog of the hardships that were endured by the apostle Paul in his travels. And certainly these things serve to underline his dedication to the ministry in serving Jesus Christ. I want to compare this to what you and I have before us, something that we committed ourselves to as much as we are able anyway.

**Luke 14:26-27** "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

**Luke 14:33** "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

Now we too are to be committed and dedicated to God. We need to ask ourselves the question, thinking about the luxury that we live in, the richness of our culture, the softness of the ease that most of us have, the lack of, at least, physical hardship. The minimal amount of, I would say, really dangerous persecution that we have to go through. And yet we find ourselves, well, all too frequently, giving in to the very smallest of temptations in order to avoid the pain of sacrifice.

We travel at great speed and comfort. If the apostle Paul could ever go 65 miles an hour in one of our gasoline buggies, I mean, it was just something that was beyond his thinking, and he never thought of it. If he ever thought about speed, it was probably, you know, blowing along before the wind at 10 knots or something. That was fast. And walking maybe 5 miles an hour, 6 miles an hour, he was really moving. So we have rapid transportation, we have rapid communication. And not only that, we are reasonably secure in doing the traveling that we do.

But I think if we are going to glean as much as we possibly can from this series of Bible studies, I think that we have to make a conscious effort to try to put ourselves back in his shoes, as it were, and kind of empathize with the things that he did. And I would like you, for a little while here, to try to visualize yourself as being a part of his travels. Try to get a vision of that as

though, not that you are a bystander like we can be here, looking back at it 1,900 and some years ago, and try to picture a little bit of what it must have been like for him to travel from one place to another.

Now, it is hard for an adult to do this, it is not hard for a child. You ever go to a movie in a movie house somewhere where there were a lot of children present? They are watching something like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. And if you listen carefully, you are going to find those children exclaiming things like: don't go in there! Why did they do that? Don't bite that apple! That kind of thing. It is because they are able to transport themselves to be a part of the action that is going on on the screen, because they have a very difficult time separating themselves from fantasy and reality, and the two become blended together. Now, when we become older, we have lived so long, we become sophisticated cosmopolitans. We look at things in a detached way and I am not saying that is entirely wrong. But I think that there are also times when we have to have an approach like a child and look at things, maybe, from those eyes and try to be a part of it. Because if we do, I think in something like this, we are going to be able to appreciate what he went through a great deal more and glean a great deal more from a study of the book of Acts.

We need to ask ourselves, do we really have the dedication and endurance to bear the cross that God has put on our shoulders? Paul did. He did it.

It is interesting that the apostle Paul, and Luke for that matter, give very few details of their travels. Luke gives more than Paul does. But even when Luke does it, he only tells you that we went from this place to that place. He does not tell you what the topography was like. The closest he comes to anything like that is there in the 27th chapter when he is describing, in pretty general terms, the hurricane or the gale force winds or whatever it was that tossed them about for three weeks. But that is about all. He does not tell you about the rivers they had to cross on foot, maybe in flood. He does not tell you about the mountain passes that they had to go through. He does not tell you very much about the times that they were in peril from robbers, about the inns that they slept in, about the trees that they slept under. He does not tell you what the weather was like most of the time when they were making these journeys from one place to another. He does not tell you whether it was hot, does not tell you whether it was cold, whether it was raining, whether it

was hailing, whether they ran into tornadoes, whether they had to go through swamps, whether there were mosquitoes and all kinds of other bugs, bedbugs, cockroaches—and a great deal of hunger. Because there were not Holiday Inns and Denny's and McDonald's and things like that just right along the way. So they had to face things that you and I do not have to.

There was a very interesting book that is at least used for some source material here. It was a book that was written by a man named Lionel Casson. It was entitled *Travel in the Ancient World*. And this man did it primarily as a study of the apostle Paul, but he did not just focus entirely upon him. But we are going to use some material from out of his book. And I am going to be quoting also from another book, another source that I do not know why, but that Casson did not use. It is a book called *The Golden Ass*. It was written sometime in the first quarter of the 2nd century. And it is kind of an interesting story. It is a novel and the story takes place between Corinth and Thessalonica. That is the area that it takes place in. But in the course of the story, the man gives a great deal of detail about what it was like to travel between those two areas. And that is fortunate for us because those are a couple of the areas that the apostle Paul was in. So it will give us a little bit of an idea about what the area was like.

Then, as today, how a person traveled was pretty much determined by how much money he had. The more money you had, why, you could go closer and closer to first class. Now first class in those days was to travel by buggy or cart if one was on land and if one was on the sea, of course, by boat. We will get to that a little bit later.

Now it is very doubtful that the apostle Paul had very much money. Back in II Corinthians 11, verses 8 through 9, the apostle Paul gives a little bit of an indication that he was not loaded with a great deal of money. He certainly did not have enough to support the work. It says,

**II Corinthians 11:8** I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you.

He had to take wages, he worked for a living, and his work was to preach the gospel. In addition to that, he was also what we would call a leather worker, a tanner. He was called a tentmaker in most of the English translations and

most of the tents were largely made out of leather that was tied together. So he was primarily a leather worker.

**II Corinthians 11:9** And when I was present with you and in need [again, an indication that he did not have unlimited supplies of money from his own resources], I was a burden to no one, for what was lacking to me, the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself.

He said in Philippians 4:14, that God supplied all of his needs according to Jesus Christ. So it was something that God had to supply to him. We also know from Acts 18:3 that he plied his trade as a tentmaker, a leather worker, all the while he had opportunity to do so. So he seems to have subsisted by working along the way and receiving gifts and tithes as part of his wage from God from the other churches.

What this dictated then was that the apostle Paul was not going to go by cart. There just simply was not enough money floating around for him to do such a thing. And instead, it is very likely that the majority of the time he was walking on foot.

Now believe it or not, vehicles for travel could be rented. Hertz, Avis, the forerunners of them. But again, the price of those things—did you ever rent a car for the Feast of Tabernacles? Expensive. It is quite a deal. Can you imagine renting a cart to go to Jerusalem from Rome? And by the time you get back, you could have owned about 20 carts. No, he did not do anything like that. Horses, very unlikely. Even the wealthy Romans did not tend to go by horseback and the reason for that was they did not have very good saddles. And not only that, making it even worse was that stirrups were not an invention until several centuries later, so riding a horse was quite uncomfortable for those people then. I do not know why anybody did not think of it before that time, but the stirrups make it much easier to ride a horse. But they did not have those things then, so it was very unlikely that he would have been traveling by horse.

What about a donkey? A possibility, but it is felt by a man like Casson that even that was unlikely. He may have had a donkey with him, but the donkey

would have been carrying baggage and Paul would have been walking. Now there was even a reason in a way not to take a donkey with you and that is, it depended on how fast you wanted to go. Apparently, it was faster to walk yourself than it was to take a donkey with you. But if it was necessary, then you would take the donkey with you because you could use him as a beast of burden. In addition to that, there was another reason why people tended to travel without donkeys if they could get away with it, and that was that any Roman soldier or Roman official could commandeer your donkey and use it for himself. Which meant that if you were going east and he was going west and he saw your donkey and he commandeered it, suddenly you also were going west even though you wanted to go east.

Well, Paul was a busy man. And so it is just a matter of assuming and using a little bit of deduction. It seems most likely that he traveled as lightly as he possibly could and that he could probably make the best time, especially if he was heading from east to west, by walking. If he was going from west to east, we find in the Bible that he tended to take a ship. If he was going east to west, in almost every case we find that he walked, that he traveled on land, because going from east to west on the sea was always precarious.

Now, how far did the average person travel in a day's time? Well, the indications are that if a person was going by cart, pulled by horse or donkey, that they made somewhere about 20 to 22 miles a day. If the person was walking, it was somewhere a little bit less. Now, if the person was walking with a donkey, then it was even less than that. So again, the estimate is that in good weather, he would probably make somewhere between 18 and 20 miles a day.

In his first journey, how far did he go? That is the one in which he left Antioch in Syria, went over to Cyprus. He went from Cyprus north into the Pisidia, which is in the southern part of what is today Turkey. And then he virtually retraced his steps. Now that trip was 1,300 miles (these are round figures), 750 of which were by sea, 550 by land. What does that compare to today? That is quite a number of miles. That would be the equivalent of going from Los Angeles to San Francisco. Let me see, there is a sign on I-210, not too far from my house, that says Sacramento 379 miles. So, it would

be like going from my house to Sacramento roughly three and a half times, pretty close to four times, in order to make that one trip. Now can you imagine yourself making a trip like that?

Let us move on to the second journey. This was the one where Paul left Jerusalem. He went by land up to Antioch and then around the southern end of what is today Turkey, then he went up into northwestern Turkey, jumped across the Aegean Sea and into Philippi, then down to Thessalonica. From Thessalonica to Corinth, and then Corinth back to Jerusalem, roughly. Now that trip was 3,085 miles long. Almost 1,800 miles by land, 1,290 miles (or 1,300) by sea.

His third journey was pretty much a retracing of what he had done on the second journey. However, it was a little bit longer. This was the one that was 3,500 miles. Now in this case, he was on land a great deal more than he was on sea, 2,200 miles by land, and 1,300 miles by sea.

The fourth one. This is the one that took him to Rome. This is the one that he was shipwrecked on. From Jerusalem to Rome, in the way that the apostle Paul went, not as the crow flies, not as we would do it today, but the way the apostle Paul went was a minimum of 2,100 miles. 1,900 miles by sea and 200 miles by land.

**II Corinthians 11:27** [He says that he was] in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and in nakedness.

It is very likely that he found himself pretty far away from human habitation, especially at nightfall, quite a number of times. Now as I mentioned before, neither Luke nor Paul tell what the weather was like. They do not tell whether he had to get in out of rain, dodge hail storms, or whatever. He does not tell us whether his passages were blocked by snow, which was likely. The Anatolian Plateau, which most of western Turkey and central Turkey consists of, has an average height of about 3,000 feet. But very large parts of it are in the neighborhood of 6,000 feet, which is about the height of Mount Wilson over here. He also mentioned being in floods. That is in verse 26, in perils of waters. It means being flooded.

Now anyone on the Roman road, in addition to their animals being requisitioned, *you* could also be requisitioned as well. Did you ever read that in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus said, if someone bids you to go one mile, go with him two miles? That is where that came from. Romans could do that. So even if you were traveling along without a donkey, there was a chance that you could be requisitioned to help be a porter for military equipment or something else.

Paul had a trade that was in great demand and it was one that he could work out on the road. He did not necessarily need a shop. He could do it just about anywhere. It is very likely that while he was on the road, that he was very frequently asking people for business. That is, do they have a tent that they need something sewed together, some seams sewed together so it would be a little bit more weather tight. If they were using animals, the harnesses needed to be repaired, and he could do that kind of thing. Most of the people wore leather shoes. Paul was in the leather business. Paul undoubtedly was repairing shoes as well. They carried their water in leather vessels, wine as well. However, you have to understand that he never had any control over the demand. That is, he did not have a steady shop set up somewhere and he could not control the number of people that were on the road. And there might be long periods of time that he was traveling that nobody came along that had anything that needed to be repaired.

Now I am sure that Paul was not carrying a grocery store with him. What did he do in cases like that? Well, you either went hungry—he says fastings often—or you hoped that when you got into the next town, there would be somebody that would either need some work that you could earn some money or maybe somebody even who would hand out something to you.

It appears that Paul's life, from what he says in Philippians 4, was kind of a continuous feast or famine. He said, I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. There were times when he was well off and a lot of times when he was not well off at all.

I said that he had no way to control the demand. And it might be that Paul might feel that he had to hurry on to the next city to do something and find out that there was somebody that needed some work done. And so he needed



to take care of it. Or it might happen at the other end of the day. He was tired, weary, dirty, dusty from a day's travel and he would be getting near where a place was that some people were camped and somebody would find out that he was a leather worker and they would want to get off on the road very early in the morning and they would call upon him to work late in the night to do some repairing on their harnesses or whatever.

Now if he happened to do some work for a governmental official or for someone in the military, it was highly unlikely that he would get paid for it. So he might work for hours and end up doing it as a favor to the empire.

I mentioned before that there were no motels but they did have some inns. Now all they were really, from the descriptions that this man Casson has been able to dig up, nothing more than a courtyard, a wall, you see, that had stall-like affairs on the inside edge. In other words, they were equivalent [sound cut out]. . . Baggage and all the animals, the people who stopped there, then were in the courtyard. So you were actually sharing your accommodations with the animals that were there.

It was not like in a motel. Even if you did wanted to pay to get one of the stalls and be inside, possibly out of the worst of the weather, you had to be aware all the time that the animals were going to be stamping and snorting around. In addition to that, thieves were the order of the day. You could not lock yourself in. Now what if a thief would steal the apostle Paul's tools, his spare leather or whatever that he carried with him to do some repairs, and his needle and thread? Then what? I do not think it made for very secure and sound sleeping.

Now there was also something else that was really rampant in those inns: bedbugs. I am going to read something to you from a book called the *Acts of John*. It is supposed to be a tale of the apostle John. This thing was written in the 3rd century AD and it tells some of his experiences on a trip from Laodicea to Ephesus.

On the first evening we arrived at a lonely inn. While we were trying to find a bed for John, we noticed a curious thing. There was one unoccupied and unmade bed, so we spread the cloaks which we were wearing over it and begged him to lie down on it while all the

rest of us slept on the floor. When John laid down, he was troubled by the bugs. They became more and more troublesome to him. It was already midnight when he said to them, in the hearing of us all, "I order you, bed bugs, to behave yourselves one and all. You must leave your home for tonight and be quiet in one place and keep your distance from the servants of God." While we all laughed and went on talking, John went to sleep. We talked quietly, and thanks to him, were not disturbed.

Now as day was breaking, I got up first and Verus and Andronicus with me. We saw by the door of the room which we had taken an enormous mass of bugs. [Like a live bowl of spaghetti.] We were astounded at the great number. All the brethren woke up because of them, but John went on sleeping. When he woke up, we explained to him what we had seen, and he sat up in bed and looked at the bugs and said, "Since you have behaved yourselves and listened to my correction, you may go back to your own place." And when he said this and got up from the bed, the bugs came running from the door towards the bed, climbed up its legs, and disappeared into the joints.

Well, you wonder how many nights the apostle Paul scratched through. Cold, sharing a bed with bugs who are trying to keep warm.

I think that we get the impression from high school history that traveling in Rome or in the Roman Empire was relatively safe. That Rome impressed its form of government and its laws and its authority over the entirety of the empire and everybody just quivered in their boots at the thought of having to face up to that authority. Well, that just was not so. As all of us are pretty well aware, the Jews, from the history that we know, seem to be constantly in a state of agitation because nobody likes to be an occupied power. They were not alone in that. Almost everywhere that Rome imposed its rule, there was a constant state of agitation because nobody wanted to be under the authority of Rome except those who benefited directly from that authority, and that was usually the politicians or maybe some merchantmen or something. People who had a vested interest, then, would cooperate, but most people did not.

The only place that the imperial power was actually expended in those areas were those areas where there was somebody with enough clout to influence the emperor or someone close to the emperor. But there was no formal police institution at all. There was no highway patrol. Lesser officials, like city mayors or town managers, they had no permanent forces at all at their disposal. About the only places that had any imperial forces at all were the major cities where there would be a detachment of soldiers. Remember when we were talking there about the time that the apostle Paul was arrested there in Jerusalem, that from all appearances, the detachment of Roman soldiers in Jerusalem was about 1,000, for a place as large as that. Now when you are considering a whole empire, it is very likely that almost all of the other cities, unless they were major, you know, something on the order of Jerusalem, there were not going to be very many representatives of the empire there.

Now contemporary history, that is the history that was written at the time that these things were going on in the book of Acts and shortly thereafter, indicates that those towns and cities that the apostle was going into was very similar to our ideas or pictures of what the Wild West was like—like Dodge City without a sheriff. No sheriff, no police force, nobody to defend at all individual rights. Where people customarily took the law into their own hands, where the towns were run by influential families in their own interests. Where the poor were totally defenseless against the casual brutality of the wealthy. Now if someone did become incensed at an injustice that was done against him and did take it to the governor, there was absolutely no way in which one could predict that the governor would believe your side of the story in case you happened to be the one who actually got to him.

So the only way that people could defend themselves was for neighbors to band together in mutual interest. And what it did was it made each town, each little area, very clannish and suspicious of others, and if you happened to be a stranger and they knew you were a stranger coming through, they knew you were an outsider, you can imagine the predicament that the apostle Paul and his group was in almost constantly because they were always outsiders. And they would have been easily victimized had not God intervened in some way.

Now a person could avoid a charge of murder simply by moving away. I mean you could murder your next-door neighbor. You could get away from it just by moving to three or four towns away. That is all you had to do because there was no unified control over these areas at all. If a slave ran away, they were rarely ever caught. And if a person was convicted of a capital crime, they were executed right on the spot. It was vigilante justice. This was the order of the day.

That is the way the towns worked. Well, the rural areas were absolutely chaotic. I mean, anarchy was the order of the day. There just was no control whatsoever. And Paul mentions here in II Corinthians 11, in perils of robbers. They had no fear of ever being caught because it almost never happened. Because like I said, there was no highway patrol. There was nothing that could restore order out there and keep order.

Paul mentioned something else too about animals. Now this is from *The Golden Ass*. It says, "Wild animals were another danger." The story of *The Golden Ass* is set in an area well known to Paul, the area between Berea and Thessalonica. As recounted by Apuleius, that was the man who wrote *The Golden Ass*, "it was to this region that the rich man from Corinth came to collect wild beasts for his gladiatorial shows." Apuleius refers explicitly to bears, wolves, and wild boars that were caught between the area of Berea and Thessalonica. I think I mentioned it to you, that *The Golden Ass* was written about 70 years after the apostle Paul was traveling through this area. So it is very likely that the same kind of conditions existed at the time that he was going through here. Now travelers in this story are armed with throwing spears, heavy hunting spears, bows, and clubs when they travel through that area.

Now what about traveling by ship? Now there is a story about, actually it is not a story, it is a diary. It was written by a historian by the name of Pliny, and how he could, as a governmental official, he could requisition a boat. All he had to do was go to the harbor, which is apparently what this Julius did whenever he had the apostle Paul in tow, that he could go to the harbor and requisition one, and off it would go in whichever way Pliny wanted it to go because he had the authority to do such a thing. However, other travelers simply had to take whatever was available. Now, sea travel on the

Mediterranean was risky between about March and May and September and October. The only time that it was good were those months between May and September. And as we mentioned there in Acts 27, that after the Fast, it was a time in which travel on the Mediterranean was not advised at all, and it was extremely dangerous.

Josephus gives a record of a vessel that was commandeered by the military and they left the port somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean. They got out into the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. It was a kind of an urgent mission. What it was, I do not know, but they got out there in the Mediterranean Sea in the middle of the winter, sailing when they should not have been sailing, but sailing they were. They got into a storm and they never touched land for three months. That was the one I mentioned to you before that there were 600 men killed on it. But the storm blew them around, one storm after another, one coming from one direction, one coming from another, and they were just hopelessly sailing around out there, bobbing around, and they did not come ashore for three months.

Now there was another reason why they did not go out there. All their navigation was done by celestial sightings. They would take sightings off the sun, moon, stars, or whatever. Fogs were frequent in those times, or heavily overcast skies. So even if the sailing weather was reasonably good, it made it impossible for them to take any kind of sightings, and they very frequently ran aground simply because they did not know where they were. Maybe a fog or a heavy overcast would settle in, and for a week's time it would be just going around, not knowing where they were and get washed ashore.

A typical sailing ship was 180 feet long, had a 50-foot beam, and from the deck to the bottom of the hold was about 44 feet. Now if you were traveling from west to east, a person could go from Rome to Alexandria, Egypt in about 10 days. If you were heading in the other direction, nobody could even guess how long it was going to take you. A long, long time.

What they did was this. They put the cargo in the hold. Any passengers were like so much gravy to the owner. But they did not have any staterooms. There were no beds, nothing of that nature. You came on board, on the deck, and that is where you stayed. Now they had no specific schedule. Nobody said this ship is going to leave at 10 a.m. in the morning. They waited until

the wind blew right. And in addition to that, to when all of the omens were right. You know, astrology, those kinds of things. And then, if the omens were right and the wind was right, they blew the whistle, and off they went, which meant that if you wanted to get on a boat, you had to hang around the harbor until one left. And so there were no schedules. Would that not be glorious in a way. We are so stuck on schedules and so structured. But those people, they just lived their life. Time did not mean maybe so much as it did to us. So there was no regularly scheduled trips and if there was space there on a cargo ship, you got on and if there was not, you just did not go.

Once you got on the boat, there were no meals served. You had to bring your own food. There were no services. The only thing that the owner of the boat was obligated to supply you was water. You had to provide all other provisions. You had to cook for yourself. If you are doing any cooking, and normally what that meant was the crew would eat first. And they would use the galley stove. Then after they were done, then you had the opportunity to get at the galley stove yourself. Now if there were 276 people on board, which was the number that was on board the boat that Paul was on, then there was going to be an awful long time before you got to the stove. More than likely it would happen to you that just about the time you finally worked your way up to the stove, the weather would get rough and a wave would put the stove's fire out. Either that or it would have to be put out because it was in danger of throwing coals over on the ship and maybe burning it. So fire was a constant hazard. And so I would think that people tended to make sure that if they went on a boat, they were going to take provisions that did not require very much cooking.

You had to live on deck. There was no shelter provided. If you had anything at all to shelter you, it would probably be a tent that you brought with you. And of course, you almost always had to travel with somebody else in order to make sure that nothing was stolen and also to help you to carry all the provisions that had to be taken on board. Now according to this book, people went by ship only as a last resort because sailing was so precarious that it was generally assumed that when you said your goodbyes to somebody who was going by ship, it was very likely the last time you would ever see them. Now the apostle Paul said that he was shipwrecked three times and that he spent a night and a day in the deep at one time. Verse 26 is where he says that that occurred.

Undoubtedly, the experiences of the apostle Paul affected his thinking a great deal. I am sure that in that kind of a situation where he was traveling in the way that he was, that he was constantly running into the downtrodden masses of people moving from one place to another, seeing human nature in its raw form from every angle possible. He saw people who had been brutalized by society, by a system of values that they could neither escape nor change. I am sure that he saw people who were living without hope. Where could they go? What did they do? What could make their life any better? Well, he had the answer and I am sure that it helped to spur him on.

Now, I want to give you one more set of mileage figures for the things that we pick up in the epistles of Paul, from what he did after he was released from prison in Rome in 64 AD. I gave this to you last week, but I am going to give it to you again. Only this time I am going to add the mileage figures.

He left Rome and went to Macedonia. I calculated this out with a set of dividers, and I did it as the crow flies and so I feel that I am giving you figures that are conservative by almost any estimate. From Rome to Macedonia, 650 miles. He went from Macedonia to Ephesus, 250 more miles. He went back to Rome, 850 more miles from Ephesus. Well, that part right there is 1,700 miles in that little jaunt.

He went from Rome to Spain. Now if he went in a direct line, it would be a little bit less than 1,000 miles. But it is most likely that what he did is he went from Rome to Corsica to Marseille and then down into Spain. Now that way the distance would be about 1,000 miles. Then he went from Spain all the way back to Ephesus, 1,850 miles. From Ephesus he went back to Macedonia, another 250 miles. And then he went from Macedonia to Crete, 400 miles. From Crete he went back to Ephesus, another 200 miles. From Ephesus he went to Nicopolis, another 400 miles, and then from Nicopolis back to Rome (where he was martyred), another 450 miles.

Now in those four years between 64 AD and the summer of 68 AD, he traveled at the age very likely, if we calculate that he was somewhere around 30 to 35 years old at the time of conversion, another 30 to 35 years had already passed. By the time you get to 64 AD, it is roughly about 31 years. Up to 68 AD would make 35 years. And if we calculate that he was 35 at

conversion, then by the time 68 AD arrived, he was 70 years old. In the last 4 years of his life, he had walked and traveled by boat 6,300 miles. You talk about dedication! You talk about discipline! You talk about sacrifice! You talk about beating your body! A man that age with a thorn in his flesh besides. And brethren, some of us have a hard time driving 20 miles. Some of us have a hard time coming to Bible study and keeping ourselves awake till 9 o'clock.

I do not say that to our shame. I am trying to get us to compare a little bit and try to think about why God appears to show in here that here was a man who says he worked harder than they all. What an example! It is just awesome to try to compare ourselves with that. We are so soft and weak by comparison. I dare say that we could not walk, most of us, from North Hollywood to Pasadena. But it is quite a thing to compare ourselves to. What dedication.

Now God required it of the man. Do you not think that it is interesting, or at least something to think about as we go into these Days of Unleavened Bread, do we really have anything to complain about in terms of the physical things that we go through for the Kingdom of God? Are the hardships that we go through physically in terms of health problems, or hardships in terms of having our income reduced, or hardships in terms of not feeling as though somehow or another God is not treating us well? He is too hard on us. That He is overbearing. Why have You dealt with me thus? We do not have a great deal to complain about in those areas. I have no doubt that our spiritual trials are every bit as hard as they were for him because those things never change. But physically, God has been very kind and generous and easy toward us. He has allowed us to live in a land where we do not have to make a great number of exertions. We probably would not be in a good enough condition to do the kind of things that the apostle Paul did.

At any rate, I wanted to give that to you so that you can be thankful for something during these Days of Unleavened Bread, when we are so frequently reminded of the problems and trials and difficulties that we have. At least we can be thankful for the way in which God has dealt with us physically. We are reaping the benefit of the things that God has blessed us with because of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and we can be so thankful we do not have to endure the kind of things that the apostle Paul had to do. I do not think that he thought it was bad because he did not know anything else. I



mean, that was his life for those 30 some years. And I do not think that he looked upon it as though God was dealing with him in a way that was too hard. You know, unlike some of the prophets, there is hardly any discouragement that ever creeps into the apostle Paul's letters. He always seems to be up. Just an awesome display of spirituality.

Well, I am sure that the apostle Paul could say though very fervently, "Thy Kingdom come." Now what we have to be concerned about is the hard times are coming. And maybe our time of testing in areas that are more physical, things that are certainly going to impact on us spiritually, are yet ahead of us. Maybe we can take heart from the apostle Paul and see that somehow or another, despite the weaknesses of the flesh, God gave him the strength to endure everything that He required of him. And I am sure that God will give us the strength to endure whatever we have to endure. If we put ourselves in faith in His hands, He is going to supply the need. He will provide. He will take care of us. He will keep us strong enough. He will keep us going. So be thankful that you have time to prepare for the hardship that is going to come.

Now we are going to begin to go into the book of Lamentations. A couple of people that I have mentioned this to have already told me or asked me why that book. I do not know. I just felt like going through it. I have never gone into it. I have read it before a couple of different times, but I have never really looked into it in terms of a study, and so I thought that I would do that and share it with you. So we will begin to give you at least a little bit of an introduction to the book of Lamentations.

First of all, the title. The title comes from the first word of the book. It is the Hebrew, I am not sure exactly how it is pronounced, but phonetically it is spelled *echah*. And it is translated into the English 'how.' Now it is called Lamentations, or dirges or elegies. It all depends on which language it is translated into. But it is called Lamentations as a result of commentaries in rabbinic literature. And three of the chapters, chapter 1, chapter 2, and chapter 4, begin with this same word *echah*.

Now turn with me back to Jeremiah 9.

**Jeremiah 9:17-22** Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send forth

skillful wailing women, that they may come. Let them make haste and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run with tears, and our eyelids gush with water. For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion: 'How we are plundered! We are greatly ashamed, because we have forsaken the land, because we have been cast out of our dwellings.'" Yet hear the word of the Lord, O women, and let your ear receive the word of His mouth; teach your daughters wailing, and everyone her neighbor a lamentation. For death has come through our windows, has entered our palaces, to kill off the children—no longer to be outside! And the young men—no longer in the streets! Speak, "Thus says the Lord: 'Even the carcasses of men shall fall as refuse on the open field, like cuttings after the harvester, and no one shall gather them.'"

Now I read this to you because it is an indication of something that was not at all uncommon in those days. That is, it was not at all uncommon to compose dirges or lamentations or elegies whenever a loved one died or whenever a notable person died.

Now go back to II Samuel, chapter 1, verse 17.

**II Samuel 1:17-20** Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, and he told them to teach the children of Judah the Song of the Bow; indeed it is written in the Book of Jasher: "The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places! How the mighty have fallen! Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon— lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

And on it goes. But this was David's lamentation for Saul and for Jonathan.

In chapter 3 of II Samuel.

**II Samuel 3:33-34** And the king sang a lament over Abner and said: "Should Abner die as a fool dies? Your hands were not bound nor your feet put in fetters; as a man falls before a wicked man, so you fell."

Now there is his lamentation for Abner. Let us go back to the book of Amos, the 5th chapter.

**Amos 5:1-3** Hear this word which I take up against you, this lamentation, O house of Israel: The virgin of Israel has fallen; she will rise no more. She lies forsaken on her land; there is no one to raise her up. Thus says the Lord God: "The city that goes out by a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which goes out by a hundred shall have ten left to the house of Israel."

There are quite a few others in the book of Jeremiah and the book of Ezekiel as well. Now most people lack the ability to compose a lament or to lament well. So what happened is that a class of professional mourners arose. And thus you see there in Jeremiah 9 that God was calling upon these people, through His prophet Jeremiah, to come out and mourn for the nation. And not only were they to mourn, but they were to teach their children, their daughters to mourn, and also to teach their neighbors to mourn. Now the reason He said that is that the dying was going to be so great that there were going to be needed a tremendous multitude of lamenters, of wailers.

What these people did is they tried to arouse the relatives to an outward display of grief, that they would wail with all kinds of plaintive and mournful cries. Sometimes they would bare their breasts, they would flail their arms, they would throw dust on their heads and dishevel their hair. Now this was not just a Jewish practice. It was something that was fairly common at that time in Gentile nations as well. As a matter of fact, I can even remember it from my boyhood. We lived out in a rural area, but we were fairly close to a Jewish cemetery. As a matter of fact, it was just beyond a gully that was beyond my father and mother's property. And when I look back on it now, it must have been on the Day of Atonement. It was just one day a year. But it seemed to me like it was the Day of Atonement, or it could have been the 9th of Av. You know, when I think about it, I know that it was fairly warm when this was going on. But at any rate, I would hear, you could not miss it, these plaintive cries and wails that were coming from the cemetery that was just across the way from where I lived.

Well, I think that I am going to stop there because I want to go on to the section regarding the authorship, and I think it would be good to just stop

Lamentations (Part One; 1989) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<https://www.cgg.org>)

there. So we will leave you right there, and in the next Bible study, we will pick up on the introduction to Lamentations.