



Paul Imprisoned in Rome

Acts 28:16-31

Lieutenant Ruby entered the bridge and announced over the ship's intercom system: "All hands on deck for Commander Cosmos! Crew and Space Cadet meeting begins in five minutes."

Doors and hatches opened and the crew of the Skylab Omega scurried to the command center of the ship. Moments after everyone was gathered, Commander Cosmos strode confidently into the room. As the crew applauded, he smiled, waved, and shouted, "Thank you, thank you!" He promptly tripped over a chair, barely catching his balance, in usual Commander Cosmos fashion, before actually hitting the ground. He jumped up and announced, "I meant to do that! At ease, crew."

He waited until everyone was seated, then continued, "This is the last week of our mission. We have been through the entire book of Acts, spreading God's Word to every major planet in the galaxy, so Star Command is bringing us home. I have good news! Admiral Angel has called this the most successful mission in Skylab history and..."

"Incoming message! Incoming message!" the computer voice interrupted. Everyone turned to look at the large screen that filled the front of the bridge.

"Greetings, Skylab Omega," Admiral Angel said as he appeared on the screen. The light reflected off of the metal bars on his shoulder, flashing his high rank.

"Admiral Angel! What a surprise," Commander Cosmos saluted, as did the entire crew.

The admiral returned the salute. "Congratulations Skylab, your mission is accomplished! Great work! Some of you will be coming home."

The crew was quiet for a moment as the admiral's words sunk in. Lieutenant Ruby gasped, "Some of us? What does that mean?"

"We're sending a transport ship to pick up Professor von Himmel and Dr. Sominex. We need them back on earth to start work on a time travel project," the admiral explained.

"Time Travel!" Commander Cosmos exclaimed. "What will they think of next?"

Ruby frowned. "Wait a minute! What about the rest of us?"

The admiral smiled. "This is a historic day. Captain Yago has decided he would like to visit other planets and share God's Word. You are going to be part of the first Interplanetary Gospel Mission. Captain Yago and Ambassador Nofutu will be beaming aboard to join you on this two-year journey."

Ruby's mouth dropped open. "Two years?!"

"I know. We're as excited as you are," Admiral Angel continued. "The transport will meet you in three days to pick up the scientists and bring you supplies. Let us know if you need anything special."

"I could use a few cases of chocolate chip cookies. They're my favorite," Commander Cosmos requested.

Admiral Angel nodded. "We will get right on that. Good luck! Over and out!"

"Over and out, sir!" Commander Cosmos saluted, as the admiral's image faded away. As the crew went back to their stations, Commander Cosmos turned to Ruby. "Ah, we're going to be a part of history! Do you know what this means?"

"Yes, it means two more years in space! I don't think I can last!" Ruby groaned. "I'm worried I might go crazy locked up in this floating prison for another two years!"

"Oh, Ruby Starlight," Commander Cosmos said, shaking his head, "don't look at it as a prison. Look at it as an opportunity to answer God's call."

Ruby shrugged her shoulders. "Well, it feels like a prison to me."

"God can use us even in prison," Commander Cosmos said.

Ruby stared at him. "What are you talking about? How could God use us in prison?"

"He used Paul. Let me show you." Commander Cosmos picked up the Bible from the Bible box and opened the book to Acts 28. "Well, look at that, Paul was imprisoned in Rome for two years!"

"He was?" Ruby slumped into the chair. "That must have been awful!"

"Actually, it wasn't bad." Commander Cosmos explained, "Paul was not considered dangerous so he was allowed to stay in his house with just one guard to watch him."

"Could he have visitors?" Ruby asked.

"Oh yes," Commander Cosmos continued, "Paul invited all the Jewish leaders in Rome to his house to tell them Jesus was the Savior they had been waiting for."

"Wow, Paul was pretty bold," Ruby said with a low whistle.

"That's right. The Bible says, 'Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God...'" Commander Cosmos said.

Ruby interrupted, "Do you think the people listened?"

"Let's see what the Virtual Bible says," Commander Cosmos picked up the remote and tapped a few keys. He read the words that appeared on the screen. "Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe."

"Well, look at that!" Ruby exclaimed. "If Paul couldn't convince everyone, how are we supposed to?" Ruby said with a shrug.

"We're not," Commander Cosmos said.

"We're not?" Ruby sat up straight. "But, Admiral Angel said we had to save the universe!"

Commander Cosmos shook his head. "No, he said he wants us to spread God's Word across the universe."

Ruby put her head in her hands. "Oh, what's the difference?"

Commander Cosmos walked across the room and stared out the window into space. "The difference is it's not our job to save the universe. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads people to Jesus."

Ruby looked up as she responded, "And it's just up to us to deliver the message. In fact, it's our privilege to spread his message."

Commander Cosmos turned around to look at Ruby and smiled. "You've got it! That's why Paul went to the Gentiles."

Ruby stood up and joined the commander at the window. "When the Jewish people did not accept Jesus as God's Son, Paul went to others that would listen."

"And now we are going to go to all who will listen," Commander Cosmos added. "Just like Paul did in Rome, we will spend two years teaching people about Jesus!" He stared out the window at the reflection of a nearby moon.

Finally it was Ruby's turn to smile. "You're right, Sir. This is the greatest mission ever!"

Commander Cosmos put his arm around the young lieutenant's shoulders and together they looked out into space, each thinking about all the adventures still to come on their new mission.