

THE BOOK OF ACTS

CHAPTER 28

PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME

THE CHALLENGE OF CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Paul has experienced the same shipwreck as the other passengers. He is cold, tired, wet, and hungry, yet he is the only one mentioned as gathering sticks with the natives of the island to help build the fire so the other survivors can be warmed in the heat of the flames. While doing something that will benefit others, he is bitten by a venomous snake. Most would focus on the poison of the situation, but Paul doesn't even give one thought to the attack, and it has no effect on him.

When we walk with the Lord for any length of time, while doing good for others, we will eventually be unexpectedly attacked by another. The attack may come from the world outside or from someone in the family of God. Our response should be to shake off the offense, and not allow ourselves to be poisoned by the venom of unforgiveness. When we respond in this way, we will be free to bless those around us who may be weary and worn out by the storms of life.

PAUL'S MINISTRY ON THE ISLAND OF MILETAS (1-11)

All passengers, in fulfillment of Paul's prophecy, make it to the shore alive, and the natives of the island build a fire for those shipwrecked to warm themselves. Paul gathers sticks to lie on the fire. When he is bitten by a venomous snake, Paul shakes the snake off his hand into the fire. The natives observe that no harm has come to Paul. The governor of the island, Publius, invites Paul to stay on his estate. Publius's father is sick, Paul prays for him, and he is healed. Others suffering from diseases then come to Paul for prayer and are healed. The people of the island bless Paul and the others from the ship who have lost everything.

Act 28:1 Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta.

Swimmers and non-swimmers all make it to shore and fulfilled Paul's prophecy (27:22).

Act 28:2 And the natives showed us unusual **kindness**; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.

These are unbelievers with great manners and concern for others. They do not prey on shipwrecks and kill people for their possessions. They prepare a fire for them because the survivors are wet, and it is a very cold time of the year.

28:2 kindness, *philanthropia* (fil-an-thro-pee-ah); Compare "philanthropist" and "philanthropy." Love for mankind, hospitality, acts of kindness, readiness to help, human friendship, benevolence, and taking thought of others. The word is a compound

of *philos*, love," and *anthropos*, "man." In Titus 3:4, *philanthropia* is used to describe God's loving kindness toward men.

Act 28:3 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

Paul is not laying on the shore with the rest of the people who are recovering from the shipwreck. He is helping start the fire. He is gathering sticks because this has always been his ministry as an under rower. Snakes become dormant in the cold. This snake has been sleeping among the sticks, and Paul does not distinguish the snake from the wood. The fire causes the snake to jump out at Paul and fasten to his hand. Its fangs are buried deep into Paul's hand.

Act 28:4 So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live."

And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast (snake) hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet vengeance (an act of the gods) suffereth not to live.

The snake keeps hanging onto Paul's hand in plain sight of everyone while they questioned and reasoned among themselves. The sinners assume the same thing many Christians do, "God is punishing him." They do not understand the tactics of Satan, therefore they blame God for everything in life. These natives assume the god of vengeance is after Paul because he must be a murderer. They have assigned to him a sin and already judged him. Their venom is worse than that of the snake.

Act 28:5 But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

The snake holds fast to Paul's hand. Paul has to take authority over it (Luke 10:19; Mark 16:8) for the grip to loosen. Paul does not pry its mouth open with his other hand; God breaks the grip, and Paul suffers no harm. Paul is not too concerned about ecology. He drops the snake into the fire to be burned up! He does not release it back into its natural habitat.

Act 28:6 However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

There are two reactions caused by this snake. An instant death or the body swelling up, causing a slow death. As these men continue to stare at Paul, neither reaction occurs. Paul is miraculously spared. Because of this, one minute Paul is a murderer in their thinking, and the next, he is a god. Because of this miracle, many people received Jesus as savior. Because of the healing of the father of the Roman governor of the island, many more will believe and be born again. There will be a church started on Malta. Many of the Maltese believers will also be healed and taught the Word during the next three winter months Paul is with them.

Act 28:7 In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days.

In the same quarters (neighborhood, area) were possessions (estates, castles) of the chief man (protos: governor, ruler) of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

This is a Roman man. He officiates over this island as a Roman possession. He is rich and has a large estate. Paul's team spends three days on the estate in the castle. This is a good leader over a good island of people. He and all of his people are courteous.

Act 28:8 And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.

And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick ("and dying [Greek]) of a fever (puretos: on fire, inflamed) and of a bloody flux (dusenteria: dysentery; dus: dangerous; enteria: intestines): to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

Publius' father is bleeding from the rectum. Paul does not pray "for him," he just prays. He hears the Holy Spirit, then lays hands on him, and the man is healed by God through Paul. This opens the entire island to the gospel.

Act 28:9 So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.

So when this was done (ginomai: came to pass, came into being), others also, which had diseases (astheneia: all kinds of diseases, infirmity, sickness, weakness) in the island, came, and were healed:

The healing power of the Lord is demonstrated to show that God is no respecter of persons. Many probably think Paul will heal the governor's father, but not them. Paul shows God's mercy is toward all.

28:8-9 Paul's Healing Ministry in Malta, DIVINE HEALING. Here is a reference to divine healings in spite of the fact that Luke, a physician, accompanied Paul. This fact is so troublesome to critics of modern healing that some have come forth with the theory that the healings mentioned in verse 9 were the work of Luke who used medical remedies, although Luke is not mentioned by name. The theory is based on the use of *therapeuo*, the Greek word for "healing" (verse eight), which some insist refers to medical therapy.

In fact, however, this word occurs 34 times in the NT. In 32 instances it clearly refers to divine healings; and the other cases the use is general. Both words (*iaomai* and *therapeuo*) are used in references to the same healing in Matthew 8:7-8, indicating the terms are used interchangeably in the Bible.

This observation is certainly not to oppose medical treatment or to say medicine or medical aid is wrong. It is not. However, it does clarify that this text is not grounds for the substitution of medical therapy for prayer. God heals by many means; the prayer of faith, natural recuperative powers, medical aid or medicine, miracles.

Act 28:10 They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.

Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded (laid heavy upon) us with such things as were necessary.

They give many materialistic things to Paul and those on the ship who have lost everything. This includes food and clothing. Paul has been on the island for three months and has been treated well by these people. He has been on a three month vacation after many years of work and imprisonment.

HEADING TOWARD ROME (12-16)

After three months on the island, Paul is put on a ship heading toward Rome. He finds great favor and is permitted to stay with believers in Puteoli for seven days. Once arriving in Rome, rather than being delivered to the captain of the guard, he is allowed to remain with a soldier, a private guard.

Act 28:11 After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island.

The captain of the ship decides not to attempt sailing any further and remains in Malta for the winter. Castor and Pollux are the twin sons of Zeus and Lida. One was a famous horse tamer, the other a boxer. The two together are believed to be “good luck” for sailors against storms. The image of these two sons is carved on the front of this grain ship sailing from Alexandria to Rome.

Act 28:12 And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days.

Syracuse is a Southeast port of the island of Sicily. Syracuse is a famous Greek military stronghold that is eventually conquered by Rome.

Act 28:13 From there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli,

And from thence we fetched a compass (perierchomai: went around, wondering about), and came to Rhegium: and after one day (Paul probably prayed) the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

They are headed toward the Straits of Messina, and the winds are unfavorable to pass through. They then sail around to Rhegium to wait for a south wind. This is the only way a ship can

safely pass through and not be smashed on the rocks or drowned by the whirlpool formed by the currents. They continue on to Puteoli, a resort city in the Bay of Naples. At this time, it is a very wealthy city, the home of many millionaires.

Act 28:14 where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome.

Where we found brethren (believers), and were desired (asked permission) to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

Paul's influence on the ship is now so great he is granted permission to stay a week with the believers in Puteoli.

Act 28:15 And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

Appii forum is ninety miles up the coast from Puteoli. Word has spread of Paul's presence and believers come to the docks to meet him. Three Taverns is the next city, famous for its taverns. Many travelers stop there. Two groups of believers travel from Rome to see Paul. One group goes forty miles and meet him at Appii forum. The others travel thirty miles and meet him at the Three Taverns. Paul takes courage at their presence. He has probably become discouraged about his mission to Rome and thinks he will be the only believer in the city. He now finds others who probably tell him of the many churches praying for him and for his visit. Paul is overjoyed and encouraged to find the gospel has been spread throughout Italy despite his own disobedience.

We may be stopped, but the gospel can never be stopped.

Act 28:16 Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

Paul has so impressed the centurion that he is put in a private cell with a private guard. Paul stays here for two years before taking his fourth missionary journey. The remainder of this chapter deals with Paul's stay in prison.

PAUL'S FIRST MEETING WITH THE ROMAN JEWS (17-32)

Paul is permitted to address the Roman Jews, preaching that the Messiah has already come. The hearts of the Jews in Rome are open to hearing the gospel. Paul remains in this place for two years, preaching the kingdom of God.

Act 28:17 And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans,

Paul is now meeting with the most prominent Jews in the city. He thinks either these Jews or the Jews from Jerusalem have written ahead to the Roman government and told them Paul was coming and all the trouble he had caused them. This is probably one reason he is becoming discouraged as he comes nearer to Rome (verse 15).

Act 28:18 who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death.

The Romans could find no fault with Paul.

Act 28:19 But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation.

Paul is saying, "I am not here to accuse Israel before Rome."

Act 28:20 For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

Paul is preaching the Jewish message, but instead of the Messiah coming, Paul preaches He has come.

Act 28:21 Then they said to him, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you.

The Jews of Jerusalem think Paul is dead. When he was put on the first ship from Adramyttium, they believed he would never make it to Rome. They forgot about Paul, and never told the Roman Jews what they had done.

Act 28:22 But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere."

But we desire to hear of (from) thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect (faction, heresy [24:5, 24]), we know that every where it is spoken against.

They want to hear and be objective about Christianity. This is probably a great revelation to Paul. He had such a great desire to go to Jerusalem that he was willing to miss the will of God entirely. He did what he wanted to do and met opposition to the gospel, and not one Jew received Jesus because Paul never had an opportunity to preach. God's intention was for Paul to preach in Rome and He had to work a miracle to get Paul there safely. Now Paul sees the open hearts of the Jews in Rome and realizes God knew the condition of their hearts the entire time. God sends us to places where hearts are open and people will listen.

Act 28:23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

Paul uses the Old Testament to persuade them of Jesus as Messiah of Israel.

Act 28:24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

This is the usual response to the gospel. Yet, this is a better response to the gospel than Paul received at Jerusalem.

Act 28:25 So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers,

Act 28:26 saying, 'GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY: "HEARING YOU WILL HEAR, AND SHALL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND SEEING YOU WILL SEE, AND NOT PERCEIVE;

Act 28:27 FOR THE HEARTS OF THIS PEOPLE HAVE GROWN DULL. THEIR EARS ARE HARD OF HEARING, AND THEIR EYES THEY HAVE CLOSED, LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, LEST THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEARTS AND TURN, SO THAT I SHOULD HEAL THEM." '

Go to this people and say:

Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand;

And seeing you will see, and not perceive;

For the hearts of this people have grown dull.

Their ears are hard of hearing,

And their eyes they have closed,

Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,

Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,

So that I should heal them."

Paul is quoting Isaiah 6:9-10 here. Because of their negative attitude toward the Lord, they may hear and see physically, but never have their spiritual eyes and ears been opened (cf. Proverbs 4:20-22; Matthew 13:13-17).

Act 28:28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the **salvation** of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

Paul explains, "You are no longer under the age of Israel, the Jewish dispensation, but the Church age, the age of the Gentiles."

28:28 salvation, *soterion* (so-tay-ree-on); Rescue, deliverance, safety, liberation, release, preservation, and the general word for Christian salvation. (Compare "soteriology.") *Soterion* only occurs five times. *Soteria*, the generic word, occurs forty-five times. It is an all-inclusive word signifying forgiveness, healing, prosperity,

deliverance, safety, rescue, liberation, and restoration. Christ's salvation is total in scope for the total man: spirit, soul, and body.

Act 28:29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.

This verse is not found in the original text.

Act 28:30 Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,

These are Gentiles who want to grow in the Word and those who need salvation.

Act 28:31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

“Preaching” is to unbelievers and “teaching” is to believers. Paul ministers in peace for two years under Roman protection.