

Acts of the Apostles - Chapter 28 (NIV)

Paul Ashore on Malta

28:1 Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. 2 The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.

Everyone from the ship made it to Malta just as the angel said. That had to be no small feat since there were 276 men on the ship. Malta means refuge, how appropriate. Turns out that Malta is inhabited but there is no port on this side of the island. The city is on the other side. The islander or locals built a fire for the survivors, remember it is in the winter.

28:3 Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. 4 When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live." 5 But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. 6 The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

We have seen throughout Acts that Paul is a hard worker. It is not surprising that he would gather wood for the fire. When Paul put his load of wood on the fire, he was bitten by a snake and it held on. When the locals saw the snake hanging from Paul's arm. They first thought he was a murderer and was now getting what he deserved from the goddess, Justice. Paul had no ill effects from the snake bite. Then the locals thought he was a god. I wonder if this is where the snake worshipers in W.Va. got their theology. They let a venomous snake bite them and if you survive then you are a righteous person.

28:7 There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. 8 His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. 9 When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. 10 They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

You think of Paul and the other survivors roughing it with the locals. They were forced to sleep under the stars but nearby was the estate of the chief official on the island. Paul moved off the beach and into Publius' home. I imagine that only a few of them moved into the house for the three days. Publius' father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery (intestinal bug). When I read this, my human side said "It is a good thing that they have Dr. Luke with them."

"The rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed: Soon, the work Paul did went to many others. This word for healed is not the customary word for a miraculous healing. The word more literally means, "to receive medical attention." It may be that Luke (who was a physician according to Colossians 4:14) served as a medical missionary on Malta.

I would imagine that having the Roman soldiers present aided in getting supplies and a ship to finish their journey.

Paul's Arrival at Rome

28:11 After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island—it was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. 12 We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. 13 From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. 14 There we found some brothers and sisters who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome. 15 The brothers and sisters there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these people Paul thanked God and was encouraged.

Now it is spring, they had spent the winter in Malta. After making a few stops they made it to Rome. In these verses, it sounds as though Paul is not traveling with his Roman guards. The Roman soldiers would not have allowed the “brothers and sisters” in Christ to join them as they traveled. These brothers and sisters invited them to stay with them for a week. This is another thing that the Roman soldiers would not have allowed. Having other Christians coming to greet him and travel with him must have given him great encouragement to finish his trip to Rome.

“Luke is far from giving the impression that Paul was the first person to bring the gospel to Rome...the presence of those Christians – *the brothers*, as Luke calls them – provides evidence enough that the gospel had reached Rome already.” (Bruce) There were Jewish people from Rome present at Peter’s preaching on Pentecost many years before (Acts 2:10), so there had probably been Christians from and in Rome from the beginning.” (Guzik)

28:16 When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.

When he reached Rome, Paul was allowed to live alone with a soldier to guard him.

“Paul wasn’t in a normal prison. He was allowed to dwell by himself and provide his own living space (a *rented house* according to Acts 28:30). Yet he was constantly under the supervision of a Roman guard, and often chained. The rotation of the guards gave him a constant supply of people to talk to.” (Guzik)

Paul Preaches at Rome Under Guard

28:17 Three days later he called together the local Jewish leaders. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: “My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. 18 They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. 19 The Jews objected, so I was compelled to make an appeal to Caesar. I certainly did not intend to bring any charge against my own people. 20 For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”

Since Paul was not in a “normal” prison, he was able to invite the Jewish Leaders to where he was living. This fit into the standard protocol that Paul had developed on his missionary journeys. First, he went to the cities and within the cities he went to the synagogues or the Jews.

“Paul wanted them to know that he had not forsaken Israel and that they were still brethren to him. As Paul explained to the crowd on the temple mount at the beginning of this ordeal, *I am indeed a Jew* (Acts 22:3).”(Guzik)

At this point, it looks as though Paul is giving the Jewish leaders in Rome a heads up and not just poking the bear. Paul says that he is chained for the sake of the hope of Israel. He wants them to know of his belief in Israel’s Messiah or Christ, who is Jesus, “hope of Israel”.

“As the year A.D. 70 approached, time was running out before an unparalleled national calamity struck a Jesus-rejecting Israel. In 10 years or so it would be clear that Jesus was the hope of Israel, yet a hope that many of them rejected.” (Guzik)

28:21 They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. 22 But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.”

This is surprising, the Jews in Rome have heard nothing from the Jews in Jerusalem or the Jews of Asia that had tormented Paul on his missionary journeys. They want to hear what Paul has to say about this sect because they have not heard anything about Paul. They had heard negative things about this “sect” or the Way.

28:23 They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. 24 Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe.

Paul set up a time and met with the Jews from Rome. Their response was much like the Jews he had encountered in his travels. Some accepted and some rejected the Gospel message. It was more than an hour and a half Worship service. He witnessed to them from morning to night. He showed them where Jesus was foretold in the Law and the Prophets.

“Paul undoubtedly taught what Jesus taught: That in Jesus God brought a spiritual kingdom that would take root in men’s hearts before it took over the governments of this world. Most of the Jewish people of Jesus’ day and of Paul’s day looked for a political kingdom, not a spiritual kingdom.” (Guzik)

28:25 They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

***26 “Go to this people and say,
“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”***

***27 For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.***

***Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,***

*understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.'*

Paul used the words of the Prophet Isaiah to tell them that they didn't get it and they never would get it. Isaiah's words were appropriate for the Jews of his day and for the Jews of Paul's day. They were:

- a. Hearing but not understanding
- b. Seeing but not perceiving
- c. Their hearts were calloused
- d. They could scarcely hear with their ears
- e. They have their eyes closed
- f. If they saw with their eyes, heard with their ears, understood with their hearts and turn/repent then God would heal them.

28:28 "Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!" [29 When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves. (Not in NIV but taken from NASB)]

30 For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. 31 He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

Since they didn't accept Jesus as the Messiah, God's salvation would be given to the Gentiles. For two years, Paul shared the Gospel with all that visited him. While in Rome, he wrote letters to the *Ephesians*, the *Philippians*, and the *Colossians*.

"There is no end to the story, because the history of the church continues this story on and on through the centuries. Trusting in Jesus, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Father, the word of God will continue to spread without hindrance and continue to change lives for the glory of God. The Book of Acts really is a never-ending story." (Guzik)

"Now unto him, who is able to work so as none can hinder, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, forever and ever. Amen." (Poole)