

## **Paul Arrives in Rome** **Acts 27**

### **Introduction**

Paul's journey to Rome is a beautiful example of God's providence. God is faithful. He had told Paul that he would have a chance to be a witness in Rome. However, Paul was not misguided. He knew it was a dangerous time of the year to be in the water. His faith was not in his own wisdom, but in God's wisdom from above. God used Paul throughout the journey to be a witness and an encouragement to both the crew and passengers. What could have ended in shipwreck was instead met with safe harbor. Every man on board the ship survived. God protected Paul on the island and the islanders respected Paul because of the power of the Holy Spirit working through him. Later, as Paul made the last leg of the journey to Rome, he was again encouraged by God. Christians whom he had never met came and greeted him, walking with him on the remainder of his journey.

All believers should be encouraged by the example of the relationship between Paul and God. It is not a distant God we serve. He is very present in our time of need, and, even more so, when we think we don't need Him. He is always protecting and providing for His children. He is in control and will carry out His perfect will in each life.

### **Outline of Acts 27**

- I. Three Month Stay in Malta - Acts 28:1-10
- II. Traveling to Rome - Acts 28:11-16
- III. Turning from the Jews to the Gentiles - Acts 28:17-31

#### **I. Three Month Stay in Malta - Acts 28:1-10**

As the survivors found their way to the shore, they did not know where they were. But it wasn't long before the natives (people living on the island before they arrived) informed them they were on the island of Malta. Some

of the sailors may have visited Malta in the past, for it did have a large harbor known as Valletta. However, it is unlikely that they would have been able to identify the island from this unknown sandy bay. Malta was approximately 60 miles south of Sicily. In ancient times, the island was called Melita which means "a place of refuge" or shelter from danger. It was certainly a welcome refuge for the tired travelers.

The natives were extremely hospitable, and in the cold and rain, began a fire to warm the tired travellers. Paul joined in their efforts by helping to gather wood. A snake stiff and motionless because of the cold was in the pile of wood he collected, and when he laid the bundle on the fire, the heat revived the snake. It attached itself to Paul's arm, either by its fangs or by coiling itself around his arm. Either way, the islanders immediately assumed Paul must be a murderer. Why else would he escape a deadly shipwreck only to be killed by a venomous snake! Even though these islanders did not know about Jesus, they had a sense of justice—of right and wrong. This is an example of how every person has God's law within their spirit. Some people say they do not believe in God. But saying something doesn't make it true. I can say that I am a dog over and over again. But, I will not be a dog no matter how many times I try to convince you that I am. In the same way, saying that you do not believe in God, doesn't make God disappear. It would be better to say, "I refuse to acknowledge God." No one has an excuse to disobey God because every person knows God exists (Romans 1:21, 2:15). Justice and knowing right from wrong is part of knowing God exists. The islanders living on Malta knew about justice. When Paul didn't die from the venomous snake bite, they decided he must be a god, instead of a murderer.

The quick change from murder to God is similar to what happened to Paul in Lystra (Acts 14:11-20). Although, the Lystrans went from calling Paul a 'god' to then wanting to stone him. What these two examples have in common is their fickle (easily changed) minds. Have you ever heard the expression: If you don't stand for something you'll fall for anything? Wisdom and stability of mind come from God alone (Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10). Is your mind set firmly in the truth of God's word?

While on the island, Luke and Paul were both able to serve the natives. Paul was able to divinely heal a notable man's father. Word of the healing spread and the sick were brought to Paul and Luke. Together, they ministered to the sick, Paul with his prayers, and Luke with his medical skills.

The people of Malta were generous to Paul and Luke on their departure. They supplied them with things they would need on their trip.

## **II. Traveling on to Rome - Acts 28:11-16**

It was early spring and time to continue the voyage to Rome. They set sail on a ship that had come from Alexandria, Egypt. It had spent the winter in the large harbor of Valetta and was probably another grain ship, like the one they had lost. The figurehead on the front of the ship was the twin brothers who, according to Greek mythology, were Castor and Pollus, twin sons of the god Zeus and protectors of sailors.

First they stopped at Syracuse, the most important city in Sicily. They stayed there for three days. Because the winds were not favorable, the ship had to circle around in order to reach Rhegium which is located on the "toe" of Italy. After spending a day there, a gentle south wind began to blow and they had smooth sailing to Puteoli. It was the main port in Rome for grain ships from Egypt to unload. Still, they were 152 miles south of Rome. Paul remained with Christians he met in Puteoli for seven days. These were days

when the centurion responsible for Paul was probably doing business in the city.

During those seven days, news travelled to Rome about Paul's arrival. The Roman Christians had never met Paul and it had been at least three years since they had received their letter from him (Paul's epistle to the *Romans*). They showed their love and support for Paul by travelling down south to join him in his final leg of the journey. Some went nearly 50 miles south to Appii Forum so they could walk back with him. Round trip it was nearly 100 miles. How far would you travel to encourage someone? Do you think Paul appreciated their effort to encourage him? Seeing as how God answered his prayers (Romans 1:9, 10), it is most certain Paul was beyond blessed to meet these Roman Christians face to face.

Arriving in Rome, the centurion turned Paul over to the captain of the guard. Instead of being kept in prison, Paul was allowed to stay in his own rented house with a soldier chained to his wrist at all times. He was allowed some personal freedoms such as having guests and preaching the gospel to those who visited. Because the soldiers changed shifts, Paul and his message became well known to the *whole palace guard* (Philippians 1:13).

## **III. Turning from the Jews to the Gentiles - Acts 28:17-31**

Paul was anxious, as he always was, to speak to the Jews. However, his circumstances now would not allow him to go to the synagogue as he had done in the past. Instead, he invited the Jewish leaders to come to him.

Paul had five main points he wished to address with the Jewish leaders in Rome.

1. He wished to proclaim his innocence
2. The Romans also had found him innocent.
3. He was forced to request Caesar's help when the Jews did not believe his innocence.
4. He had nothing against his nation of Israel
5. The real reason he was bound by chains was for the hope of Israel and his desire to proclaim that hope to all.

In response to Paul's address, the Jews responded differently. The acknowledged that they had never received any communication from Jerusalem about Paul. Furthermore, none of the Judean travellers had said anything negative about Paul either. They went on to say that they wanted to hear more about Christianity, calling it a sect and saying that it was spoken against everywhere. They set a date to return to Paul to hear more, and this time they came with many more Jews.

Paul preached all day long about the kingdom of God and Jesus. He backed up everything he said with *the law of Moses and the Prophets*. As usual, there was a mixed response to the message. Some were impressed but others refused to believe. Because they could not agree, the Jews decided it was time to go. But Paul had final words to share with them. He quoted the prophet Isaiah, who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, had rightly laid God's judgment upon their forefathers. Paul, repeated this judgment on the current generation, saying, "*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.*" The Jews had been given the opportunity to hear and see, but they refused God. It can be painful to acknowledge when you are wrong. It can be hard to accept. Sometimes, when a little child is throwing a fit, she will cover her ears or eyes and shake her head, as if everything she doesn't like will disappear that easily. But that is not how it is with sin. It does not disappear on its own by covering our eyes and ears.

We must acknowledge it is there.

We must refuse it (want it no more).

We must confess it (admit guilt and our need for forgiveness).

We must repent (turn around and walk in the opposite direction, away from the sin).

We need the Savior. If we think we don't, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8). Paul's final words to the rejecting Jews were *the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!*

Paul was kept prisoner in his own rented house in Rome for two years. He preached the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ to all who would listen. The last word of Acts is a Greek word meaning *unhindered* (not held back). Reviewing the book of Acts, we are reminded time and time again of the various hindrances piled on Paul? He was imprisoned. He was lowered outside city walls in a basket at night! He was left for dead after being stoned! He was wrongly accused of bringing Gentiles into the temple, and the list goes on. What an unimaginable joy it must have been for Paul to preach the word of God *unhindered*. †

### Epilogue

Most scholars believe after his two year imprisonment, Paul was acquitted and released. He continued his ministry travelling to Greece,<sup>1</sup> Macedonia,<sup>2</sup> Crete,<sup>3</sup> and Asia Minor.<sup>4</sup> He may have even made it to Spain,<sup>5</sup> as he had hoped.

In A.D. 64, a great fire burned much of the city of Rome. Many believe that it had been started by the order of the emperor, Nero. The emperor blamed the Christians for the fire and began a vicious persecution of them. In A.D. 66 or 67, Paul was arrested as part of this persecution, once again imprisoned, tried, and, this time, condemned. By order of Nero, he was executed outside the city of Rome.

If he were to have a tombstone, it would surely read:

**THE APOSTLE PAUL  
to live is Christ and to die is gain;<sup>6</sup>  
to be absent from the body and  
to be present with the Lord<sup>7</sup>**

1 Nicopolis in Titus 3:12

2 Thessalonica in 2 Timothy 4:10

3 Titus 1:5

4 Ephesus in 2 Timothy 1:18, Troas 2 Timothy 4:13, Miletus in 2 Timothy 4:20

5 Romans 15:23, 24, 28

6 Philippians 1:21

7 2 Corinthians 5:8