

Paul Never Stops Doing God's Work

Acts 28

Paul, the crew, and the Roman soldiers are now shipwrecked. Not a single person was lost, because God had promised it, and they are now on a sandy beach. This is where we pick up today.

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.

So now we know that they landed on the island of Malta. This is an island that is part of the province of Sicily and is 58 miles away from any large islands. The island was not as desolate as they assumed because there were people there and they were nice to them. They even started to build a fire so they could warm up. These islanders would have to have been Phoenician based on where this island was.

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.

Paul helped the islanders gather some firewood. Once the fire got going a snake came out of it because of the heat and latched onto Paul. When the islanders saw this, they thought to themselves that Paul was a bad dude. They thought that their goddess of justice was going to kill Paul. However, he just shook the snake off and nothing happened to him. The islanders then thought that Paul was a god.

In verse 6 Luke uses the term, swell up, this particular wording was only used by Luke in the New Testament. Another interesting thing is that most likely the islanders would have attempted to worship Paul since they said he was a god.

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.

While on the island Paul goes to the house of Publius where he stays for 3 days. Now this is a name that would have been given to the first person to inhabit the island. It is a given name not a family name. This is why this man would be the chief official of the island. Anyway, while there Paul prays for his sick father and he was healed. The word spread quickly and soon all of the sick people on the island came to be prayed for and all of them got healed.

Do you see what is happening here? Paul is not setting around with a whoa is me attitude. He is not thinking I am shipwrecked, lost at sea, and I don't know how we are going to be rescued. No, he sets out doing God's work. I am certain, knowing Paul, that there was some teaching that went along with the praying.

¹⁰ They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

Where did the ship come from that they are going to set sail on?

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.

So, after being on Malta for 3 months they found that there was another Alexandrian ship on the other side of the island. That ship had wintered there and was about to set sail for Rome. So this would have to have been sometime around late February or early March. The sailing season was open again. This ship had two figureheads on it, Castor and Pollux, which were considered to be the sons of Zues. They were the Greek guardians of the sea.

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

Their first stop on the way to Rome was Syracuse, which was the capital of Sicily. They stayed there for 3 days. It is assumed that they stayed there because of the lack of wind but scripture doesn't tell us that exactly. After that they sailed to Rhegium where they spent the night. The next day they went on to Puteoli where they spent a week with fellow believers. I am sure Paul did some teaching while he was there with them.

Paul finally makes it to Rome and people come from all over to meet him there. I am sure to hear him speak. Paul's spirit was lifted, and he began to thank God. Appius was around 43 miles away and all these people travelled on foot. Would you do that? I know if he came anywhere near here, I would be the first one in line to go see him.

Notice here that it says that Paul was allowed to live by himself, and he only had one guard to watch him. I am sure that here again this was because everyone knew he was innocent. So Paul wasn't in prison at this point. He was staying in a home that he had rented. However, Paul would have been chained to the guard and that guard would have been relieved about every 4 hours.

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."

After being in Rome for 3 days Paul decides to try and talk to the Jewish leaders there and see if he could resolve the issues that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had with him. He starts off by calling them brothers to show the common Jewish blood that he shared with them. He tells them the story about what happened in Jerusalem. He is sure to tell them how he had been found innocent many times. I was about to be released but I had appealed to Ceaser so here I am. He finishes by

letting them know that he holds no ill will toward anyone, but I am here in chains because of all this.

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.”

Now Paul has an opportunity to preach, and boy does he.

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. 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.’^[a]

²⁸ “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” ^[29] ^[b]

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!

Paul never missed an opportunity to do God’s work. To preach, teach and try to bring people to repentance. If we do not take our cues from Paul then we are not doing it right.

