

**they
committed themselves
unto the
sea**

Acts 27:35 – 28:31

~ This final report completes our safari travel log through the wonderful Book of Acts. Reluctantly, we must depart from the apostle Paul in the city of Rome as he awaits an appeal before the madman Nero. Paul still has much work to do from this point forward; and we see that work develop when we examine his writings from prison. Having completed the Pentateuch, Gospels, and three of the Historical Books, our safari heads back to the Old Testament after this report to consider the history of Samuel, King Saul, King David and all the other kings of Israel and Judah. There is a whole lot of work and learning ahead of us in our Bibles, friends.

As we reach this particular place in the Word of God, we need to understand the works of the church continue today – and our only commission is to take the Word of God to the entire world. That’s our purpose; that’s our only cause as genuine children of God. I believe this Book of Acts is continuing to be written in Heaven right now – probably by Luke himself. However, the Lord saw fit to stop recording the church account at this particular point. The communications I have with people around the world tell me that many are still hearing about and accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior! The world is rapidly becoming hyper-religious; but very few – as in, almost none – know the Jesus of Holy Writ properly, correctly and completely.

Our current journey with Paul began back on the little isle of Clauda, just south of Crete, where severe storms developed and grew. Remember, the two hundred seventy-six men on board fasted for fourteen days with no bread as we sailed with them all the way across the Adriatic Sea near the island of Melita – known today as Malta. The storm began to really rage at that time, so they threw all the cargo overboard. Many were ready to jump ship. Ultimately, the ship will be lost – but not yet, and this is where our account begins in this report....

XXVII

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.

37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land:

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

~ This account could certainly be treated as miraculous, and we could say many things in comment concerning it; however, the story speaks for itself, and I think spiritualizing it is unnecessary - and may even be counterproductive or outright dangerous. What we do know is that all the men were able to get to land safely. Well, since this is a spiritual safari, we will let the record speak for itself and move on from chapter twenty-seven....

XXVIII

1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita (Malta).

~ Now, we are going to examine an extraordinary truth concerning the providence of God in relation to the life of the apostle Paul. I wouldn't have you miss this part of our expedition for anything in the world, my beloved. We know this all took place in modern day St. Paul's Bay in Malta. If you know anything about World War II, you will know this place made headlines from the beginning of the war. This city was the single most-bombed target – including more than London. General Darby was the commander and governor on this strategic stronghold island. Darby was a Christian and he stated very clearly that there would never be a surrender of the island. Well, from the time of Paul in which we are studying, right up to this present moment, the island of Malta has been populated by Christians....

2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

~ So, we're suddenly stranded on a desert island with barbarians; and what we encounter is the kindness and courtesy of heathens and pagans! Personally, with a background in commercial construction, I can tell you that the lost man who drinks alcohol at 9:00 in the morning will give you his lunch if you're hungry – and the shirt off of his back if you need it; whereas the self-proclaimed "born-again" will tell you he is praying for you – and to just trust the Lord. Whether they actually get around to praying for me is always questionable, but that seems to be the difference between the lost

and saved man in our affluent contemporary culture. Most of the men who are now overwhelming the island were criminals being taken to Rome. I'm sure the ships occupants were likely as many in number as inhabited the island originally....

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

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

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

~ Alright, let's be clear that Paul did not deliberately pick up a snake. Paul wasn't in the business of tempting God, friends. Paul was in no way exercising his authority to handle serpents and all that nonsense. I understand the end of the Gospel of Mark records certain acts being performed without harm. Well, that exhortation is confined to the immediate period of time in which Mark was written. They cast out demons; they spoke in tongues, and they could survive drinking any deadly thing while handling vipers – but NOT you today. They also laid hands on the sick and the sick recovered. You can't heal anyone even if you have a doctorate in medicine. My advice is: don't pick up an Eastern Diamondback rattlesnake; and don't try to survive drinking a cup of hemlock or rat poisoning. It won't end well for you. Many have tried and didn't live to pass on my warning. Some survived, but barely! They won't try it again – I promise you that.

This is another proof in my premise that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was eye trouble. We're going to consider my perception completely in the epistle to the Galatians. There is an abundance of evidence concluding the thorn in

the flesh was, indeed, eye problems. Someone has said that the thorn was Paul's wife because he never even mentions her. Well, the man who made that statement must have had a real winner for a wife to even think of that scenario. Anyways, this viper wasn't even on a stick that Paul grabbed for the fire. It came out of the heat – out of nowhere. Paul never even saw it coming until it was latched on his hand.

It's also interesting to me that this great man of God, the apostle Paul, is out gathering sticks with common criminals. I picture him as a great leader who would have directed the picking up of the sticks – but not actually being the one doing the picking up of them. The imagery of him gathering twigs alongside prisoners is a most revealing sidelight into the apostolic office. I think the typical mental picture of Paul is one of him hopping from city to city like a jet-set evangelist and world-traveler doing nothing much of anything. Well, Paul did all manner of work, including tent making, throughout his ministry so he didn't have to burden the churches he established by asking them for money. Here, he is helping others. That's when he was bitten.

The people who saw this simply sat down to watch and wait for Paul to turn blue and fall over dead. They had a whole lot of experience with this particular snake. They knew what should happen. Their convoluted sense of justice made them convict Paul in their minds of some crime. Otherwise, this "karma" would not have happened, right? Yes, these are superstitious people, friends - and they thought the only type of people this would happen to were deserving of it. The entire empire of Rome had an overwhelming sense of justice, and they believed justice must always prevail over mercy. Of course, as soon as they realized Paul was going to survive this deadly snake bite, they formed another superstitious conclusion to the opposite extreme; saying he was a god. Now, they want to worship Paul! Well, we know Paul isn't going to allow them to worship him, but he did form a very important contact on this island....

7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

~ I am sure the prayer was NOT for the sick man to be healed. No, friends - the prayer was to determine the will of God for his life. I am absolutely sure that when Paul exercised his apostolic office of healing, he ALWAYS prayed first to see if it was the will of the Father to heal that particular person. That is SO - SO important to recognize, friends. As these others now come to be healed, I believe it was the will of God to heal them all; so, the Gospel could be established with credibility. Healing was the seal of authenticity of the Gospel that Paul preached before the canons of Scripture were established and closed. Today, the Word of God itself is our seal; we do not need healing as credibility. Even if you did perform a healing today, it won't cause anyone who witnesses it to accept Christ. The person you heal may not even believe as the result of you healing them.

That brings up the question of whether or not Paul preached the Gospel on this island at this time. There is no record of him teaching or preaching, but I suspect the Holy Spirit expects us to use some good old fashioned ordinary common horse sense here. Of course, Paul preached the Gospel. If this incident had happened at the beginning of Acts, I think it would have received much more attention than this brief and blunt account that we are given. Most Christians have given up on their study of Acts by this chapter. I almost never hear this account even mentioned. I think Dr. Luke expects us to know Paul well enough by now to understand preaching the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is what Paul did. It's all Paul did, my beloved....

9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

10 Who also honoured us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.

13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

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

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

~ So, that brings us to the end of Acts in our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God. A lot of time goes by in this concluding

passage. It is only reasonable to assume Paul preached the Gospel and the healing was the result of his preaching. That's the gift of an apostle. That's what true apostles do; and that's how true apostles do it, too, by the way – by the Book!

Castor and Pollux in verse eleven are Roman Gods and you'll find them in the forum. This pagan ship sets sail again with Paul on board. The Euroclydon is over, and the south winds are blowing again. Paul will now arrive in Rome, and he explains to the Jews what he is doing there. Paul also continues to preach the Gospel and teach the Scriptures. Speaking of teaching the Scriptures; from here, our safari returns to the time period when God raised up prophets, allowed Israel to be ruled by kings against His express command to the contrary, and bring the nation of Israel to its zenith under King Solomon – only to have it all shattered by sin and rebellion resulting in captivity.

I want to close this report with the emphasis on verse twenty-four. The church is beginning to reach the ends of the earth in this day in which we are studying. The history of the church is not yet complete as you read this report and I type it. I see many people talk about how they wish the Lord would return now and all that; well, perhaps they are sincere. But, since it hasn't happened, I wish they would go ahead and live today as if they actually love the Lord Jesus. They say they do – but they aren't taking any interest in the death, burial and resurrection of the Son of God taught properly, correctly and completely in the sound doctrine of the apostles. So, I have my doubts, quite frankly. In the Garden of Eden, there was doubt; and that doubt led to disobedience. The only way back is through the obedience of faith. Even today, some people will believe - and some won't
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