

## Bibles???

### The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 28

This evening, we are going to finish the book of Acts –

Let's pray...

[Act 28:1-31 NKJV] 1 Now when **they had escaped**, they then found out that the island was called Malta.

I had you make a note of the phrase, “when they had escaped”

Because the word that is used in the original Greek is the word for:

to save thoroughly, to cure, to preserve, to make perfectly whole.

It is a word that is used in the gospels in multiple occasions to show what happened to the multitudes that were seeking an encounter with Jesus Christ

In Matthew 14:36 – the same word is used to describe what happened to the people that were seeking Jesus and hoping to touch the hem of His garment – Matthew tells us that they were made perfectly well.

Peter uses the same word in 1 Peter 3:20 when he writes about how Noah and his family were saved through the water -

So here Luke uses this word to describe their situation, even though, they had no ship, no food, no shelter (remember, it's winter time) and (at first) no idea where they were.

And the reason I bring this up is because if you and I had been in Paul or Luke or Aristarchus' shoes – we most likely would have been complaining like crazy.

They weren't worrying or complaining, but were confident in the Lord's provision for them.

They knew that He still had not left them or abandoned them.

Malta is an island just 17 miles long and 9 miles wide that sits beneath Sicily.

(Show map)

If they would have missed it – they would have all been dead

They would have kept on going to they hit Africa

The fact that they made it to this spot is a testament to God's precise providence.

When God wants something done, nothing can stop Him.

Not wind or waves or odds or obstacles.

He will have His way.

And though we do not know every pit stop or waylay that lies ahead of us, of this we can be sure: Our God will bring us safely to shore.

**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.**

Now, if you have a an KJV – it uses the word “barbarians”

And the reason they use barbarians is because the Greek word that is used here is where we get our word for barbarians.

However, during this time – anyone who spoke anything other than Greek was considered a barbarian.

So don't think these were headhunters with spears –

They were just the locals that lived there.

And notice that they didn't come to loot the ship – they actually came down to the beach and brought help to Paul and those on the boat.

So they are showing a sense of good morals here – and this is something we will see throughout Paul's stay in Malta.

Think about the contrast between the soldiers that were in the ship in chapter 27 – that were ready to kill all the prisoners as the ship was about to crash and the people of Malta.

The people of Malta were kind and generous but, they still needed the Gospel.

And that is the point here -

It's good to remind ourselves that even "good" people need to be saved.

**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. 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."**

Notice that Paul was gathering sticks –

Even though there were 275 other people that were on the ship and were wet and cold – plus the locals that are there, Paul still saw himself as a servant.

And as he is picking up sticks – he is bitten by a venomous snake.

Someone may ask - Why would God allow this to happen while Paul was serving Him?

And the answer is - Bad things happen to God's people all the time.

While our Lord promised to never leave us, He never said we would be without trouble or suffering. In fact, the opposite is true.

We can become frustrated when we try to honor God or serve Him and encounter some kind of difficulty or trial.

It feels unfair.

But, the truth is, serving God sometimes results in more attacks. Think of the prophets in the OT or even to Jesus Himself.

So when the locals see that Paul has a venomous snake attacked to his arm – they assumed that Paul must've been bad (they assumed he was a murderer) because something bad happened to him.

They were like Job's friends - They thought that Job's problems were due to some kind of secret sin.

And sometimes we have that mindset of thinking "Well, they got what's coming to them.."

Sometimes that actually is the case.

Sometimes it's not.

The Bible says,

**(Psalm 103:10 NKJV) He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.**

If God gave us every kind of punishment we deserved, we'd all be dead and in hell right now.

But sometimes God chooses to show mercy to us.

Sometimes bad things happen to good people.

Like Paul

Sometimes good things happen to bad people.

**5 But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 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.**

So first they thought he was a murderer and when they noticed that he didn't drop dead from the snake bite – they thought he was a god.

After His resurrection, Jesus promised His disciples when He gave them the Great Commission that there will be signs –

One of them was that they would be able to handle snakes with safety (Mark 16:18)

Some people interpret this verse to mean that they could go looking for snakes and the snakes will not harm them.

Jesus is saying that there will be a time in the future when a disciple will take up a snake and it won't hurt them.

He's not commanding them to take up snakes, He's telling them what's in the future.

In Paul's case, he didn't go looking for the snake, but when the snake bit him, his trust was in the Lord, and God did whatever He wanted to do – and this time God kept Paul unharmed.

The people who practice snake handling in church – they are tempting God because they are hoping that God will bail them out if they get bit.

**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. 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.**

So we see the hospitality here of the governor of Malta – Publius. (*pawblius*)

His name means popular -

He is housing and entertaining the 276 people from the ship – and then Paul finds out that Publius's dad is sick – he laid hands on him and healed him

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

I had you make a note of the word, healed that is used here at the end of verse 9

And the reason is that Luke uses a different word here than he did back in verse 8

The word that is used in verse 8 refers to instant healing (miracles) – like Publius' father.

The word that Luke uses here means, “to receive medical attention.”

What was Luke's occupation – he was a Dr right.

As a physician, he was probably able to assist and render that service.

And here we see that God uses not only the supernatural gifts that He gives, but also our natural abilities that have been offered to Him.

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

Because of Paul and his ministry to the people of the island, the whole ship was provided for.

**11 After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island. 12 And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. 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,**

So they spend three months in Malta – waiting out the winter.

And then they get on another boat to travel the remaining 500 miles to Rome.

And while they were sailing around Sicily – they were having issues with the winds until a helpful southern wind arose.

So here by the end of verse 13 – they have finally landed in Italy.

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

The way it is written here, it appears that Paul, Luke and Aristarchus – every time the ship stops, they go out to see if there are any Christians in town.

And the Christians they find in town, were ready to shower love on these newfound brothers who came in from the docks.

And by the time they get to Rome, there are more believers that were there to meet him.

And this brought encouragement to Paul

Despite the false charges and being beaten nearly to death, despite being abandoned by the Christians in Jerusalem and the attempted assassinations and the red tape and sitting in a jail cell for two years and the raging sea and almost being killed by the soldiers and then the shipwreck and then being bitten by a viper, despite all that, nothing could stop the will of God from being accomplished.

They could not be separated from God's love or God's work in and through them

Now, one of the things the scriptures do not provide for us is how the gospel came to Rome –

These believers were already there by the time Paul showed up.

However, we see a big contrast between the first time that Paul arrives in Rome and the second time he arrives in Rome.

Because in 2 Timothy 4 – Paul says that he was abandoned as he awaited his execution.

**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 was shown grace in this first Roman imprisonment.

We'll learn in verse 30 he was allowed to rent his own house rather than be thrown in some dungeon. In his 2<sup>nd</sup> imprisonment – there was not much grace.

So Paul had some freedom here but he had to be chained to a soldier the entire time.

**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, 18 "who, when they had examined me, wanted to let [me] go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. 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.**

So one of the things that Paul does while he was awaiting his appeal to Caesar – he called together the Jewish leaders in Rome to assure them that he was not going to make any accusations against the Jews before Caesar.

Paul felt no grudge toward his people, but felt this appeal was necessary for his survival.

**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."**

The hope of Israel was a technical term that would've grabbed the attention of these Jewish leaders.

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of "the hope of Israel" as God Himself who would leave His throne and arrive as a Savior in time of distress.

Jeremiah 17:12-13

Jeremiah 14:8

Paul expresses to the Jews that his wish is to be at peace with them and to share the good news to them about the coming of the Messiah.

That the hope of Israel was more than the liberation from Rome

That the hope of Israel included a Savior, the hope of Israel included resurrection from the dead and the promise of a future state of glory.

**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.**

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

The Jews in Rome were not aware of the charges that were made against Paul in Jerusalem.

They seem eager to want to know more about Christianity – all they had heard were rumors about what Christianity was all about.

**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. 24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.**

SO the Jews in Rome finally hear Paul share the gospel with them.

Paul goes through the entire Old Testament – he is careful in taking the whole counsel of God and bringing it together in his effort to convince them.

He is showing how everything points to Jesus

He gives them an all-day bible study

They all heard the same testimony

They were all given the same evidence

And we see that some believed and some didn't believe.

Sometimes we think, "Well if I was a better preacher or had more knowledge," or, "If that person heard Billy Graham, then they'd get saved."

Listen: We're called to grow in our knowledge, but even the great evangelists of history didn't turn every heart.

Because it is a heart issue.

In the end, a person must make the choice whether they will taste and see that the Lord is good, whether they will take refuge in Him or face eternity apart from Him.

**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, 26 "saying, 'Go to this people and say: "Hearing you will hear, and shall**

not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; 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." ' 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 is quoting here from the book of Isaiah

The Jews were so bound by their traditions and by their preconceived concept of the Messiah, that when they were presented with the truth in God's Word – they were blind to it – their hearts were hardened.

Sometimes people don't want to find the forgiveness and healing the Lord has to offer because they don't want to give up their sin – they don't want to turn / repent.

Turn to Hosea 10

**[Hos 10:12 NKJV] 12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For [it is] time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.**

This is why we believe in the regular, systematic teaching of the Bible.

It's why we try to prioritize prayer and being in God's presence.

It's why we try to avoid traditionalism and legalism.

So that our hearts can be plowed up, soft and ready for that planting or growing the Lord wants to accomplish.

**29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves. 30 Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.**

Paul waited another two years in Rome before he finally had his trial date with Caesar.

During these two years, he continued to share the gospel with anyone who showed up at his house and he also wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.

It's during these two years that Luke probably wrote out the book of Acts.

Church tradition tells us that Paul was eventually acquitted of all charges at his first trial before Caesar.

He spends time in Ephesus where he leaves Timothy in charge

He spends time in Crete where he leaves Titus in charge

And when he returns to Rome, he is arrested once again and thrown in a dungeon, condemned to death and beheaded at the command of Nero.

The book ends here because this is as far as things had gone when Luke wrote it out.

The book of Acts hasn't really ended.

The Holy Spirit is still working.

The work goes on.

It is being written with your life and my life.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'



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