

THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

FROM MALTA TO ROME, ACTS 28:1-16

A. On Malta (1-10)

1. The island was identified as Malta (1-2), *After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.*
 - a. Luke reminds the reader of deliverance from the terrible storm.
 - b. The island on which they were carried by the wind and waves is Malta.
 - 1) Malta or Melita means *refuge*.
 - 2) It lies about 60 miles south of the island of Sicily and 500 miles west of Crete.
 - 3) Inhabitants were of Phoenician origin and were called *native people* by Luke. The word used is the one from which we get the word *barbarians*, which then referred to non-Greek speakers.
 - c. The inhabitants of Malta showed great kindness to those from the ship by kindling a fire to warm them from the rain and cold.
2. Paul was protected from harm (3-6)
 - a. He was bitten by a poisonous viper (3), *When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand.*
 - 1) Paul helped gather sticks for the fire and was bitten on the hand by a snake.
 - 2) The snake was a *viper* which is a poisonous snake.
 - 3) Stanley Toussaint, ...*the heat of the fire would drive a viper from the flames and also make it more active.*
 - b. The locals thought he was receiving due punishment (4-5), *When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.*
 - 1) They islanders saw the snake hanging from Paul's hand and assumed he was a murderer.
 - 2) They assumed that he escaped the sea but not Justice.
 - a) *Justice* is capitalized because they were referring to a god or goddess they worshiped.
 - b) They believed that god sought out and punished the guilty.
 - 3) Paul shook the snake off his hand and had no injury.
 - c. They concluded that he was a god since he suffered no harm (6), *They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.*
 - 1) The inhabitants of Malta expected Paul's hand to swell or that he would fall down dead.
 - 2) After a long time, Paul had no ill effects and they changed their opinion of Paul.
 - a) They assumed Paul was a god.
 - b) The people of Lystra declared Paul a god because of his healing a man in their city, note Acts 14:8-18.
 - 3) This event is another confirmation of the true God's sovereign control of every event. A poisonous snake could not keep Paul from proclaiming the Gospel to Caesar. K. Gangel, ...*God rescued Paul from the sea, and he had no intention of killing him on land.*
3. The healing of Publius' father (7-10)
 - a. The leader of the island cared for those shipwrecked (7), *Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.*
 - 1) *the chief man of the island*, Publius was the Roman governor of Malta.
 - 2) Publius took Paul and other companions (including Luke) to his estate for three days.
 - 3) Paul was probably invited because of the incident with the snake.

- b. His sick father was healed by Paul (8), *It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him.*
 - 1) Publius' father was sick with fever and dysentery.
 - a) The illness was probably what is now called Malta Fever which can last for several years.
 - b) The disease has been traced to the milk of Maltese goats.
 - 2) Paul healed Publius' father.
 - a) Healing came through Paul's prayer and putting his hands on the father.
 - b) This is the only time in Acts where healing came through prayer and touch.
 - c) Could it have been that Paul's prayer was for the father but also Paul's request for direction from God, resulting in a touch of faith by Paul?
- c. Others on the island came to Paul and were healed (9), *And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured.*
 - 1) The healing of Publius' father brought others to Paul seeking physical healing.
 - 2) All who were sick came and were healed.
 - a) The word for *heal* in verse 8 is a different word than the one in verse 9.
 - b) The word in verse 8 emphasized the healing touch, the supernatural aspect, whereas the other word may have included miraculous healing by Paul and treatment by Luke, the physician.
- d. The locals gave them needed supplies when they prepared to depart (10), *They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.*
 - 1) The people of Malta honored Paul and his companions by providing them their daily needs for three months and provided the supplies for their journey.
 - 2) The reasons they honored Paul was because of the many people healed of physical illness. Also, they probably had a higher view of who he was, possibly deity, because he was not made ill by the viper and his ability to heal the sick.

B. To Rome (11-16)

- 1. They departed after spending three months on Malta (11), *After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead.*
 - a. After three months, they sailed from Malta on a ship that had stayed on the island of Malta during the winter.
 - b. It was a ship from Alexandria with a figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux, patron saints of sailors.
 - c. Thomas Constable, *Perhaps Luke mentioned them to contrast God's real protection, as illustrated in the previous chapter and this one, with the protection the pagans superstitiously thought these gods provided. I can imagine Paul saying to Luke as they got ready to board this ship, "We have a better Protector than the twin brothers!"*
- 2. The travel itinerary (12-14), *Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome.*
 - a. Syracuse
 - 1) They stayed for three days at Syracuse which was on the east coast of the island of Sicily.
 - 2) It was the most important city on the island.
 - 3) Cicero called it, *the loveliest city in the empire.*
 - b. Rhegium
 - 1) This is the site of modern Reggio Calabria.
 - 2) It was an important harbor near the tip of the "toe" of Italy's boot opposite Sicily.

- c. Puteoli
 - 1) This city is now called Pozzuoli.
 - 2) It is 180 miles north on the west side of the boot and 130 miles south of Rome.
 - 3) It was the final destination of many of the Egyptian wheat ships.
 - 4) A church had been established there and Paul and his companions stayed with those Christians for seven days.
 - d. Rome
 - 1) Paul had almost reached the destination promised him by the Lord.
 - 2) T. Constable, *They had not really arrived in Rome, but Luke viewed Puteoli as close enough to warrant this enthusiastic announcement of their arrival.*
3. Christians came to greet Paul (15), ***And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.***
- a. Christians from Rome heard of Paul's arrival and traveled to greet him.
 - 1) They traveled down the Appian Way, one of the major roads in Italy, to Three Taverns, 33 miles from Rome.
 - 2) Others went as far as Appius, another 10 miles south. They were the first to meet Paul.
 - 3) Paul had sent his Epistle to the Romans to the churches in Rome, 3 years earlier (57 A.D.) from Corinth while he was on his third missionary journey.
 - b. Paul was encouraged by the greeting and thanked God.
 - 1) *took courage*, was used elsewhere to emphasize a change from distress to relief.
 - 2) God's promise to Paul that he would go to Rome was finally taking place, Acts 23:11, *The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."*
4. Paul stayed by himself with his guard in Rome (16), ***And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.***
- a. Julius, the Roman soldier, had experienced much with Paul. His trust in Paul must have been strong since he allowed Paul the freedom to stay in a private residence instead of housed in a prison, note Acts 28:30, *He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,*
 - b. This is the last time Luke spoke of *we*. It is uncertain who remained with Paul in Rome. K Gangel notes, *Though the text does not tell us so, perhaps we can assume that Luke and Aristarchus stayed with Paul in Rome with Epaphras, John Mark, Demas, Timothy, and others coming and going over the next two years.*

CONCLUSION

- A. God keeps his promises, you can count on it.
- B. Christians should encourage other Christians.
- C. Difficulties pale in comparison to the joy of seeing God work in one's life.