

Book of Acts

Chapter 28

Theme: Paul arrives in Rome

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McGee Introduction: This, our final study in the Book of Acts, follows Paul from Melita to Rome. When Paul arrives in Rome, he ministers first to Jews and then to Gentiles. The narrative is not concluded but breaks off with Paul preaching in Rome. The acts of the Holy Spirit have not been finished even in our day. The Book of Acts will end with the Rapture.¹

Acts 28:1

And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

Barnes: They knew. Either from their former acquaintance with the island, or from the information of the inhabitants.²

[Melita] (Dake) Today it is called Malta, a British outpost about 50 miles south of Sicily in the Mediterranean. It is about 20 miles long and 12 miles wide in its greatest breadth. It is one immense rock of white, soft freestone, with hardly a foot depth of earth on the average; and most of it has been brought from Sicily. St. Paul's Bay, the traditional scene of the shipwreck, fulfills the description in Acts 27.

McGee: This is the island which we know today as Malta. The bay where this took place is known today as Saint Paul's Bay. This is a very interesting place to those of us who lived during World War II when this island made the headlines at the very beginning of the conflict. It was the most bombed spot of the war because it was in a strategic position. At that time General Darby was the general and the governor of the island. He was a Christian and a worthy successor to the apostle Paul. He said that he had no notion of surrendering. I think it is interesting to be reading about Paul landing at this bay and to realize that General Darby had command on that same island.

Certainly in the incident of this shipwreck and the landing of Paul on the island of Melita we see the providence of God in the life of the apostle Paul. All of this is recorded for our learning.³

Barnes: Was called Melita. Now called Malta. It was celebrated formerly for producing large quantities of honey, and is supposed to have been called Melita from the Greek word signifying honey. It is about twenty miles in length from east to west, and twelve miles in breadth from north to south, and about sixty miles in circumference. It is about sixty miles from the coast of Sicily. The island is an immense rock of white soft free-stone, with a covering of earth about one foot in depth, which has been brought from the island of Sicily. There was also another island formerly called *Melita*, now called *Meleda*, in the Adriatic Sea, near the coast of Illyricum; and some have supposed that

¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:634). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:634). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Paul was shipwrecked on that island. But tradition has uniformly said that it was on the island now called Malta. Besides, the other Melita would have been far out of the usual tract in going to Italy; and it is further evident that Malta was the place, because, from the place of his shipwreck, he went directly to Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli, thus sailing in a direct course to Rome. In sailing from the other Melita to Rhegium, Syracuse would be far out of the direct course. The island now is in the possession of the British.

BBC: Malta (ancient Melita) was on the shipping route from Rome to Egypt, whereby empty ships would sail quickly to Alexandria to load up more cargoes. It was the stop immediately after Syracuse in Sicily. The alternative proposed site for this island near Dalmatia (Meleda, modern Mljet) is based on a misreading of “Adria” in Acts 27:27 and has no merit; winds from the north could not have driven them there.⁴

Paul the Helper (Acts 28:1–10) (Wiersbe)

God had brought them to the Isle of Malta (which means “refuge”), where the native people welcomed all 276 of them and did their best to make them comfortable. To the Greeks, anybody who did not speak Greek was a “barbarian.” These people proved to be kind and sympathetic. The storm abated, but the weather was cold; so the natives built a fire.

After all he had done for the passengers, Paul could well have requested a throne and insisted that everybody serve him! Instead, he did his share of the work and helped gather fuel for the fire. No task is too small for the servant of God who has “the mind of Christ” (Phil. 2:1–13).

One rainy day, a man accompanied by two women arrived at Northfield, hoping to enroll his daughter in D.L. Moody’s school for young women. The three needed help in getting their luggage from the railway depot to the hotel, so the visitor “drafted” a rather common-looking man with a horse and wagon, assuming he was a local cabby. The “cabby” said he was waiting for students, but the visitor ordered him to take them to the hotel. The visitor was shocked when the “cabby” did not charge him, and was even more shocked to discover that the “cabby” was D.L. Moody himself! Moody was a leader because he knew how to be a servant.

The episode of the viper reminds us of Paul’s experience in Lystra (Acts 14:6–18). First, the people thought that Justice, one of their goddesses, had caught up with this notorious prisoner who was supposed to drown in the sea but had somehow escaped. (If only they knew!) When Paul failed to swell up and die, they decided that he must be a god himself! Such are the reasonings of people who judge by appearances.

Was the viper a weapon of Satan to get Paul out of the way? The storm did not drown him, but a hidden trap might catch him. As Christians, we must constantly be alert, for either the serpent or the lion will attack us (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Peter 5:8). We should also keep in mind that we are being watched, and we must use every opportunity to magnify Christ.

Paul and the party remained on Malta for three months; and, thanks to Paul, they were treated graciously and sent on their way with generous gifts. Since they had lost everything in the shipwreck, the passengers were grateful to have their needs supplied. Luke says nothing about evangelism on the island, but we must believe that Paul shared the Gospel with anybody who would listen. His miraculous deliverance from the sea and

⁴ Bible Background Commentary: New Testament

from the viper, and his power to heal, would certainly arouse the interest of the people; and Paul would want to give the glory to the Lord (Matt. 5:16).⁵

ESV: Malta was on the main route from Myra (27:5) to Rome. God's providence had brought them through the storm and back on course. The most famous archaeological remains on Malta are prehistoric or Phoenician; however, Malta also thrived under the Romans, and residential villas used in the NT period have been excavated.

Cheiko Okazaki "If you've ever been cold and wet clear through, in shock from having escaped with your life after being in danger, then you will know how Paul felt. These people's kindly intentions must have warmed his heart as much as the fire warmed his body. And surely the irony hadn't escaped him that the Romans, who represented the most civilized nation on earth, were suggesting wholesale executions (Acts 27:42) while the 'barbarians' were showing kindness. The memory of their kindness has endured in the Bible for nearly two thousand years.

"Perhaps Paul had this incident in mind when he wrote to the Hebrews, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares' (Heb. 13:2Heb. 13:2)." (*Disciples*, 199 - 200.)⁶

Acts 28:2

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

[**barbarous**] Greek: *barbaros* (GSN-915). Translated "barbarian" (Acts 28:4; Romans 1:14; 1 Cor. 14:11; Col. 3:11). It does not mean that they were uncivilized, for Greeks called any people "barbarians" who did not speak the Greek language. Paul himself used the term of those whose language he did not understand (1 Cor. 14:11). The Egyptians also called all "barbarians" who did not speak their language. Term is misleading as we use it in a different way than the Romans did. A barbarian meant that one didn't speak Greek or Latin!

[**no little kindness**] Again Luke uses the dominative, to mean they showed much kindness.

After coming ashore, they discovered that the island was called **Melita** (AV; modern *Malta*, RSV) lying about a hundred miles directly south of Sicily. Melita (the Canaanite word for "refuge") was inhabited by people of Phoenician extraction. 2. From the Roman and Greek point of view, every one who spoke a foreign language was called a barbarian. **Barbarous people** (AV) has no reference to fierce character or primitive culture, but merely indicates that their language (Phoenician) was not Greek or Latin. Since it was

⁵Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Ac 28:1). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

⁶<http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/NewTestament/ntindex.html>

raining and cold, these natives showed **no usual kindness** by building a fire so that the chilled and soaked travelers might warm themselves.⁷

ESV: In Greek the **native people** are designated “barbarians” (*barbaroi*), a word that did not carry negative connotation but simply referred in a general way to those who did not speak Greek. No doubt the island also had a number of educated people who did speak Greek.

Barnes: And the barbarous people. Romans 1:14. The Greeks regarded all as barbarians who did not speak their language; and applied the name to all other nations but their own. It does not denote, as it does sometimes with us, people of savage, uncultivated, and cruel habits, but simply those whose speech was unintelligible. See 1 Corinthians 14:11. The island is supposed to have been peopled at first by the Phoenicians, afterwards by the Phoenicians, and afterwards by a colony from Carthage. The language of the Maltese was that of Africa, and hence it was called by the Greeks the language of barbarians. It was a language which was unintelligible to the Greeks and Latins.

The rain. The continuance of the storm.

And of the cold. The exposure to the water in getting to the shore, and probably to the coldness of the weather. It was now in the month of October.

BBC: The Maltese were of Phoenician descent, and commoners there spoke and read only Punic (the late Phoenician dialect of the Carthaginians). But Roman citizens and retired soldiers also lived there, and the island was certainly not considered culturally primitive. Anyone who did not speak Greek was called a “barbarian,” and Greeks did not expect kind treatment from them. But Luke’s use of the term translated “barbarous” (KJV) in this context (cf. “natives”—NASB; “islanders”—NIV) is not derisive; he indicts Greek racial prejudice at the same time that he displays God’s providential care through them.

McGee: It may cause us to smile a little that Dr. Luke labels the natives of the island “barbarous people.” The word *barbarian* was used to describe one who did not speak Greek. It does not imply tribal savagery. Here we have another instance of the kindness and the courtesy of pagans. Remember that there are 276 people who have landed on this little island. Out of this crowd, many are criminals who are being sent to Rome for punishment. Yet we find this wonderful compassion and helpfulness on the part of people who are pagans. We find in the Book of Jonah another instance of this same thing when the pagan sailors tried to spare Jonah. They didn’t want to throw him overboard even though he had told them they should do it. They tried to bring the ship to land but found out they couldn’t do it. Sometimes pagan folk are more gracious than the folk who are religious.

⁷ Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

Spurgeon: Compassion and kindness are such precious things, that the Spirit of God records them in favor of the barbarians: even thus will Jesus remember a cup of cold water given to his disciples. Should not kindness be yet more abundantly found in the followers of Jesus?

Acts 28:3

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.

[**viper**] Greek: *echidna* (GSN-2191). Poisonous asps or adders, not ordinary snakes. Common ones are about 4 inches long and no thicker than a wire. They lurk under stones, in the sand of the desert, or in cracks of old walls, and are very deadly and aggressive (Genesis 49:17; Job 20:16; Isaiah 59:5; Acts 28:3). There are no snakes on Malta any more. The books are full of things about this, but remember that it was 2000 years ago, as things get cultivated, the snakes are gone.⁸

The viper was, doubtless, in the bundle of sticks or limbs of trees which Paul had gathered, but was concealed, and was torpid. But when the bundle was laid on the fire, the viper became warmed by the heat, and ran out, and fastened on the hand of Paul.

LAN: God had promised safe passage to Paul (Acts 27:23-25), and he would let nothing stop his servant. The poisonous viper that bit Paul was unable to harm him. Our lives are in God's hands, to continue on or to come to an end in his good timing. God still had work for Paul to do.⁹

McGee: You remember that at the end of the Gospel of Mark there is this promise: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17-18). I believe that these signs were confined to that time before the New Testament was completed when the believers needed the sign gifts to substantiate the message of the gospel.

My advice to you today is not to deliberately pick up a rattlesnake. I lived in Tennessee for many years and I have never known an authentic case where someone picked up a rattlesnake during a meeting, was bitten, and was unaffected by the venom of the snake. Most of them die. Those who live through it almost die. The venom has a tremendous effect upon them.

May I point out something else. Paul did not deliberately pick up this viper. Paul was not tempting God. I consider this another evidence that Paul's "... thorn in the flesh ..." (2 Cor. 12:7) was eye trouble. (I'll develop that when we get to the Epistle to the Galatians.) Paul couldn't see very well. When he picked up some sticks, there was a viper on the sticks and Paul just didn't see it.

⁸ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁹ Life Application Notes, Life Application Bible

There is another interesting sidelight to the apostle Paul that I want you to notice here: the great apostle Paul gathered sticks. These people on the island had been very gracious to them. They had accepted the 276 strangers who landed there. It was cold and rainy, and they had started a big fire to help warm these people who had come in from the sea. When the fire began to go down, Paul went out to gather a bundle of sticks. This should dispel any notion that Paul was a lazy preacher. He himself tells us that he practiced his trade as a tentmaker so that he would not be a burden to the church. Obviously he was not afraid of work.

When Paul threw the sticks onto the fire, the viper would naturally crawl away from the fire. The viper not only bit Paul but actually fastened onto his hand.

A large fire for such a large company needed constant replenishing with fuel, and Paul set about gathering wood for the flames. In one bundle was a poisonous snake, stiff from the cold; and as the apostle stood by the fire warming his hands, the **viper**, revived by the heat, crawled away from the flames and sank its fangs into Paul's hand. 4. The natives interpreted this event in terms of their own superstition. They concluded that Paul actually was a murderer; and although he had escaped death in the sea, the goddess of justice, *Dike*, had now wrought a proper fate upon him. 5, 6. When Paul shook the snake off into the fire without injury, the natives decided that they had been completely wrong. Instead of a victim of the gods, he was himself a divine being who could not be hurt by ordinary human misfortunes.¹⁰

While Paul was gathering sticks for the fire, a viper came from the pieces of wood and bit him on the hand. In the conclusion to ch. 16 of Mark's Gospel, Jesus is said to have predicted of His followers, "They will take up serpents ... it will by no means hurt them" (Mark 16:18). Only one prediction in this passage of Mark has not been fulfilled in N.T. history, namely, the prediction about drinking "any deadly thing." Certainly what happened to Paul here could be understood as a fulfillment of Mark's passage, in view of the fact that the natives of the island felt sure Paul would drop dead. However, we have no other incident in Scripture comparable to this event in Paul's life. Further, recognizing that it is unwise to base a doctrine or practice upon a passage of debated authenticity (cf. Mark 16:9, note), it is best to attribute Paul's survival to God's miraculous intervention. Taking up serpents is not intended as a standard activity for the Christian life.¹¹

Spurgeon: He was not too proud to gather sticks, nor should the most eminent Christian think any work beneath him by which he may minister to the comfort of others. It seemed strange that there should be but one viper, and that it should fasten upon the apostle's hand; serpent-bites will wound the most benevolent and holy hands.

Chuck Smith: This gives us, I think, a very interesting insight into Paul. He is the kind of fellow who just couldn't sit still. He had to always be doing something. Paul was a doer. So they're building a fire, so he, rather than just letting the people gather and build

¹⁰ Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

¹¹ Believers Study Bible

the fire for him, he has to join in and go out and gather a bundle of sticks to throw into the fire. He was just the kind of a guy that had to always be doing.

Acts 28:4

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 suffereth not to live.

[No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live] It was held by the heathen here that if one was worthy of death a serpent would bite him. Even Jews held this idea, as found in some of the writings of the Rabbis.

Barnes: Whom, though he hath escaped the sea. They supposed that vengeance and justice would still follow the guilty; that though he might escape one form of punishment, yet he would be exposed to another. And this, to a certain extent, is true. These barbarians reasoned from great original principles, written on the hearts of all men by nature, that there is a God of justice, and that the guilty would be punished. They reasoned incorrectly, as many do, only because that they supposed that every calamity is a judgment for some particular sin. Men often draw this conclusion; and suppose that suffering is to be traced to some particular crime, and to be regarded as a direct judgment from heaven. John 9:1, John 9:2-3. The general proposition, that all sin will be punished at some time is true; but we are not qualified to affirm of particular calamities always that they are direct judgments for sin. In some cases we may. In the case of the drunkard, the gambler, and the profligate, we cannot doubt that the loss of property, health, and reputation is the direct result of specific crime. In the ordinary calamities of life, however, it requires a more profound acquaintance with the principles of Divine government than we possess, to affirm of each instance of suffering that it is a particular judgment for some crime.

Barnes: Suffereth not to live. They regarded him as already a dead man. They supposed the effect of the bite of the viper would be so certainly fatal, that they might speak of him as already in effect dead.-*Beza*.

BBC: Ancients argued in courts that their survival of troubles at sea proved their piety and hence innocence; on the importance of arguing Paul's innocence, see the introduction to Acts. In some stories, the impious escaped one form of terrible death (e.g., at sea) only to face something worse (besides Greek stories, see Amos 5:19). "Justice" was a goddess who executed the will of Fortune or the Fates; although the Maltese observers refer to some Punic deity, Luke translates their idea into the idiom of Greek poets. Several groups of Jewish catacombs dating between the second and fifth centuries A.D. have been found on the island; but if Jewish people were on the island in the first century, this narrative does not mention them.

McGee: The Greek word here for “vengeance” is dike which actually would be better translated “justice.” “Yet justice suffereth not to live.” In other words, they felt that Paul was guilty of a great crime, and justice was catching up with him. He had escaped from the sea but now he would surely die of the venom. Very frankly, I think they sat down to watch what would happen to him. They expected that any moment he would begin to show swelling in his hand and arm, then would fall down dead. They knew by sad experience, as that is what had happened to their own people. They expected it to happen to Paul.

Notice that these pagans did have a sense of justice. They assumed that Paul was a murderer and that he deserved punishment. In such a circumstance today, folk would be helping the criminal to get back out to sea to escape being punished. This incident shows that throughout the Roman Empire there was a sense of justice. Pagan Rome made that contribution to the world. Rome was noted for justice, not mercy. Sins were not forgiven. If you broke the law, you paid the penalty. Under the iron heel of Rome the world was crying for mercy. This was a preparation for the coming of Christ who came as the Savior from sin—that mankind might know the mercy and forgiveness of God.

Acts 28:5

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

[shook off the beast into the fire] This is the way Paul handled snakes. He did not make a show of it to prove to the heathen that he had faith, as some foolishly do today. That is not the meaning of Mark 16:17-18.

Mark 16:17-18 ¹⁷*And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ¹⁸They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

[felt no harm] This was a true demonstration of the promise of Mark 16:17-18.

BBC: Adam’s rule over the beasts (Genesis 1:26) was cut short by the Fall, but Jewish interpreters of Isaiah 11:6-9 believed that this rule would be restored in the messianic time, and a few holy men were believed to have that power in the present age. Some Greek initiates to mystery cults may have practiced snake handling. Paul simply deals in faith with a situation thrust upon him.

Again, insight into Paul, he didn't start screaming and yelling for help. Just shakes the thing back off into the fire and makes no big deal over it.

Acts 28:6

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.

[looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly] (Dake) They looked intently to see him soon swell and die by the poison of the viper that was introduced into the blood stream. Such poison causes the blood to coagulate quickly. As it thickens, the vessels become obstructed, strong inflammation takes place, and all parts become painfully swollen, producing death in a short time.¹²

McGee: The promise of God in Mark 16:18 was fulfilled in Paul's experience. He suffered no ill effects from the venom. When folk today deliberately pick up snakes and claim that promise as their protection, they are far afield from what God had in mind.

When they saw that no harm came to Paul, they decided that he certainly could not be a criminal but was instead a god. Although they were equally as wrong in this judgment, it did give Paul a very important contact on the Island of Melita here.

Barnes: When he should have swollen. When they expected he would have swollen from the bite of the viper. The poison of the viper is rapid; and they expected that he would die soon. The word rendered "swollen" means, properly, to burn, to be inflamed, and then to be swollen from inflammation. This was what they expected here, that the poison would produce a violent inflammation.

[great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds] Past the point where they knew the poison would have killed an ordinary person. When they saw it had no effect on him they changed their minds and said he was a god.

Barnes: They changed their minds. They saw he was uninjured, and miraculously preserved; and they supposed that none but a god could be thus kept from death.

[god] Hercules was one of the gods of the Phoenicians and was worshiped on Malta as the dispeller of evil. They perhaps thought he was Hercules; and the more so, because Hercules was famous for having destroyed two serpents that attacked him in the cradle when he was a baby.

That the Maltese were idolaters there can be no doubt. But what gods they worshipped is unknown, and conjecture would be useless. It was natural that they should attribute such a preservation to the presence of a divinity. A similar instance occurred at Lystra. Acts 14:11.

BBC: Whenever similar stories were told, those who survived bites from poisonous snakes or lizards were considered holy men (e.g., the pious Jewish holy man Hanina ben Dosa); Greco-Roman paganism often considered such holy men to be divine or

¹² Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

semidivine. The change of mind on the part of Paul's viewers could strike the ancient reader as humorous, as in some similar accounts in antiquity where a human was mistaken for a particular divinity.

Seeing that **Paul** was bitten by **the snake** the **islanders** concluded he was **a murderer**, now getting **justice**. But when he was unaffected by the viper's bite (with not even any swelling of his hand), the islanders superstitiously **said** that Paul **was a god**. No doubt Paul's response to this, though not recorded, was similar to his reaction at Lystra (14:8-18).¹³

ESV: When the Lystrans took Paul as a god, he protested vigorously (cf. 14:14–15). The situation differs here, as no attempt to worship him is related. Throughout Acts miracles provide an opportunity for witness, and likely Paul also witnessed to the Maltese.

Chuck Smith: It, to me, shows how foolish it is for us to seek the fickle adulation of the world. They may look at you in one moment as a murderer and the next moment as a god, or it can be the other way around. They can look at you as a god, as a hero, but then the next day as a goat.

Some of the greatest sports heroes, when they go into a slump, find how fickle is the adulation of the crowd. And they get up to bat and they're used to hearing the cheers and the whistles and the screaming of adulation. Let them go into a prolonged slump, and every time they step up they hear the boo's and the hisses of the crowd. How fickle is the glory of the world.

The scripture exhorts us not to seek the glory of man, the approbation or the approval, but let's really seek the glory of God, His approval.

Acts 28:7

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.

BBC: Hospitality was an important virtue, especially toward people who had been shipwrecked and were stranded without possessions. Publius is a Latin *praenomen*, and as the top official he had probably received a grant of Roman citizenship; the title assigned to him here has been found in Greek and Latin inscriptions as the proper title of the island's governor.

Paul continued to minister to others, even as a shipwrecked prisoner. On this trip alone, his centurion, the chief official of Malta, and many others were affected. It is no wonder that the gospel spread like wildfire.

¹³Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:429). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The chief man of the island. The leading official. The word used has been found in two inscriptions as a title for an official in the island. We do not know whether this **chief man** was a native official or a representative of Rome. This Publius had an estate in the neighborhood, where he entertained Paul and his companions for three days, showing them gracious hospitality.¹⁴

Acts 28:8

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.

The wording here implies an instantaneous healing.

[fever] Greek: *puretos* (GSN-4446), fevers. Here; Matthew 8:15; Mark 1:31; Luke 4:38-39; John 4:52.

[bloody flux] Greek: *dusentaria* (GSN-142), dysentery.

[healed him] Such a miracle of healing took place that the heathen could see it and know that it was the hand of God. This produced faith so that many others were brought and were healed.

Clarke: Paul—prayed—That God would exert his power; and laid his hands on him, as the means which God ordinarily used to convey the energy of the Holy Spirit, and healed him; God having conveyed the healing power by this means. In such a disorder as that mentioned here by St. Luke, where the bowels were in a state of inflammation, and a general fever aiding the dysentery in its work of death, nothing less than a miracle could have made an instantaneous cure in the patient. Such a cure was wrought, and even the heathens saw that it was the hand of God.¹⁵

Paul was now exercising his gift as an apostle. He entered in and he prayed. Apparently he did not pray for the man; he prayed for himself. That is, he prayed to determine the will of God. Was this man to be healed through Paul? That is what he prayed to know.

Barnes: And laid his hand on him, In accordance with the promise of the Saviour, Mark 16:18. This miracle was a suitable return for the hospitality of Publius, and would serve to conciliate further the kindness of the people, and prepare the way for the usefulness of Paul.

Dysentery and fever were common on the island of Malta. 9, 10. **Healed** in 28:9 is a different word from that in 28:8, and might better be translated *were cured or were*

¹⁴ Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

¹⁵ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament

treated. It suggests not miraculous healings but medical treatment, probably at the hands of Luke the physician. Verses 10 and 11 suggest that this medical ministry lasted throughout the three months stay at Malta, so that when Paul and Luke left the island they were **honored with many honors**, and their ship was loaded with everything they needed for the remaining journey.¹⁶

God heals through His human instruments in many ways. The father of their host Publius was ill. Luke diagnosed it as fever and dysentery. Through Paul's ministry of prayer and touch, he was healed. Many others came to be healed. The ministry of prayer and a loving touch proved to be the channel God used for healing. He can still use the same channels to accomplish His healing purposes.¹⁷

Acts 28:9

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

The word "healed" here is a different word in the Greek, implying a gradual healing.

[and were healed] We do not find Luke the physician having one thing to do with these cures. All were done by prayer and faith, so the modern theory that Luke accompanied Paul as his personal physician to keep him well is out of harmony with truth. Not one thing is ever mentioned of this in all the history of Luke with Paul. Could a man not be trained as a physician and leave his practice to go into gospel work without such a conclusion? Just because he was once a physician, does that give us authority to teach Paul was a preacher employing a personal physician, especially when he himself prayed for the sick and healed them by the power of God? See 2 Tim. 4:20.

Acts 28:10

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

Barnes: Who also honoured us. As men who were favoured of heaven, and who had been the means of conferring important benefits on them in healing the sick, etc. Probably the word "honours" here means gifts, or marks of favour.

McGee: The question has been raised whether or not Paul preached the gospel in Melita. There are those who believe that this is one place where Paul did not preach. This is an instance where I think the Holy Spirit expects us to use ordinary common sense. Of course, he preached the gospel. We are coming to the end of the book, and the incident is related in a very brief and blunt manner. By now Dr. Luke expects us to know what Paul

¹⁶ Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

¹⁷ Disciple's Study Bible

would do. Remember that Paul is the man who wrote, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). With the apostles, healing was God’s witness that the gospel they preached was from Him. It is very important for us to realize that Paul preached the gospel and that the healing was the result of it. It was the evidence of the truth he was preaching. I think it can be only a normal inference that Paul did exactly the same here as he did everywhere he went.

Barnes: They laded us. They gave us, or conferred on us. They furnished us with such things as were necessary for us on our journey.

Travelers on ancient ships had to provide their own meals. The hospitable Maltese people equipped Paul and his shipmates for the remainder of their voyage.

Acts 28:11

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

[three months we departed] They perhaps reached Malta the last of October or early November, so they sailed again in January or February. At this time of the winter the seas were more calm and the sailing comparatively safe.¹⁸

Clarke: After three months—Supposing that they had reached Malta about the end of October, as we have already seen, then it appears that they left it about the end of January, or the beginning of February; and, though in the depth of winter, not the worst time for sailing, even in those seas, the wind being then generally more steady; and, on the whole, the passage more safe.

[ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle] This was another grain boat from Africa sailing for Italy, which had wintered in Malta until it was more safe to sail again (cp. Acts 27:6).

[Castor and Pollux] Greek: *Dioskouroi* (GSN-1359), twin sons of Jupiter and Leda, who were supposed to have been translated to heaven and made the two brightest stars in the constellation called Gemini. This sign was propitious to mariners, and it was the custom to have their images on the head and stern of their ships.¹⁹

[Castor and Pollux] - these were twin sons of Zeus in mythology. (We would know them as Gemini.)²⁰

Barnes: Castor and Pollux. These were two semi-deities. They were reputed to be twin brothers, sons of Jupiter and Leda, the wife of Tyndarus, king of Sparta. After their death, they are fabled to have been translated to heaven, and made *constellations* under the

¹⁸ Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

¹⁹ Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

²⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Acts, khouse.org

name of *gemini*, or the twins. They then received divine honours, and were called the sons of Jupiter. They were supposed to preside over sailors, and to be their protectors; hence it was not uncommon to place their image on ships.

Clarke: Whose sign was Castor and Pollux—These were two fabulous semi-deities, reported to be the sons of Jupiter and Leda, who were afterwards translated to the heavens, and made the constellation called Gemini, or the Twins. This constellation was deemed propitious to mariners; and, as it was customary to have the images of their gods both on the head and stern of their ships, we may suppose that this Alexandrian ship had these on either her prow or stern, and that these gave name to the ship. We, who profess to be a Christian people, follow the same heathen custom: we have our ships called the Castor, the Jupiter, the Minerva, the Leda, (the mother of Castor and Pollux), with a multitude of other demon gods and goddesses; so that, were ancient Romans or Grecians to visit our navy, they would be led to suppose that, after the lapse of more than 2000 years, their old religion had continued unaltered!

Barnes: Whose sign. Which was ornamented with an image of Castor and Pollux. It was common to place on the prow of the ship the image Of some person, or god, whose name the ship bore. This custom is still observed.

Since Paul stayed in Melita for three months, it is evident that the few verses given to us here are not the complete story of his ministry on that island. Therefore, I think we can be sure that Paul preached the gospel.

“Castor and Pollux,” the sign of their ship, were gods of the Romans. There is still a pillar to them in the Roman Forum.

Paul the Preacher (Acts 28:11–31) (Wiersbe)

Whether all 276 people boarded the Alexandrian ship, or just Julius and his guard and prisoners, we do not know; nor do we know why Luke took such care to identify the ship. In Greek mythology, “Castor and Pollux” were the names of the twin sons of Zeus and were revered as the protectors of men on the sea. Many Roman ships bore their image as a plea for safety. It was 80 miles to Syracuse, another 70 to Rhegium, and about 180 to Puteoli, the port of Naples. This time the “south wind” was exactly what they needed in order to make the voyage quickly and safely.

In Puteoli, Paul and his friends, along with Julius and the other prisoners and guards, were urged by the believers to stay and rest for a week; and Julius gave his consent. The centurion knew that Paul had saved their lives, and perhaps he was even getting interested in what these Christians had to offer.

Word had gotten to Rome that Paul was coming; how, we do not know. Perhaps Aristarchus did not go with Paul and Luke on the grain ship, but made his way instead overland to Rome where he met Paul’s friends. (At least twenty-six are named in Rom. 16.) Or, perhaps a delegation from Caesarea headed for Rome as soon as Paul appealed to Caesar.

Julius and his party took the famous Appian Way and traveled 125 miles from Puteoli to Rome. The first group of Christians met Paul at the Forum of Appius, about 43 miles from Rome; and the second group met him at the Three Taverns, 10 miles nearer to the

city. (Some saints will go farther than others!) Paul was greatly encouraged when he met them, as well he might be. Now he could fellowship with the saints and they could be a blessing to one another.

Paul's greatest concern was his witness to the Jews in Rome. They had received no special word about Paul, but they did know that the "Christian sect" was being spoken against in many places (Acts 28:21–22). When you read Paul's letter to the Romans, you get the impression that the Jews in Rome had misunderstood some of his teachings (Rom. 3:8; 14:1ff). The apostle made it clear that his appeal to Caesar must not be interpreted as an indictment against his nation. Actually, he was a prisoner *on behalf of* his nation and "the hope of Israel."

On the day appointed, Paul spent "from morning till evening" explaining the Scriptures and revealing Christ in the Law and the Prophets. He had "dialogued" this way with the Jews in one synagogue after another, and now he was sharing the Word with the leaders of many synagogues in Rome.

The result? Some were persuaded and some were not. When the Jewish leaders left Paul's house, they were still arguing among themselves! But Paul had faithfully given his witness to the Jews in Rome, and now he would turn to the Gentiles.

Paul quoted the words of Isaiah to these men (Isa. 6:9–10), words that described their tragic spiritual condition. Jesus had used this passage in connection with His parables of the kingdom (Matt. 13:13–15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10). The Apostle John in his Gospel applied them to Israel (John 12:39–40), and Paul quoted them in his Roman epistle (Rom. 11:7–8). It is one thing to *listen* and quite something else to *hear*, and there is a great difference between *seeing* and *perceiving*. If anybody should have possessed spiritual understanding, it was these Jewish leaders, but their hearts were dull and hard. Too often those who enjoy the most spiritual privileges are not ready when they must make spiritual decisions.

But their unbelief did not put an end to Paul's ministry of the Gospel! He announced that the Gospel some of the Jews had rejected would be proclaimed to the Gentiles, "and they will hear it!" This is one of the major themes of Acts, how the Gospel moved from the Jews to the Gentiles and from Jerusalem to Rome. Without the Book of Acts, we would turn in the New Testament from the Gospel of John to Romans and ask, "How did the Gospel ever get from the Jews in Jerusalem to the Gentiles in Rome?"

Paul kept "open house" and received anybody who wanted to discuss the things of the kingdom of God. He was chained to a guard who was relieved every six hours, but who was forced to listen as Paul preached and taught and prayed. No wonder some of them were saved! (Phil. 1:12–14; 4:22)

During these two years in Rome, Paul wrote Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. He expected to be released (Phil. 1:23–27; 2:24; Phile. 22) and most students agree that he was. During this time, he had Timothy with him (Phil. 1:1; 2:19; Col. 1:1), as well as John Mark, Luke, Aristarchus, Epaphras, Justus, and Demas (Col. 4:10–14; Phile. 24). He also met Philemon's runaway slave Onesimus and led him to faith in Christ (Phile. 10–21). Epaphroditus brought a gift to him from the Philippian church and almost died ministering to Paul (Phil. 2:25–30; 4:18). Tychicus was Paul's "mailman" who delivered Ephesians (Eph. 6:21), Colossians, and Philemon (Col. 4:7–9).

Dr. Luke ended his book before Paul's case had been heard, so he could not give us the results of the trial. We have every reason to believe that Paul was indeed released and

that he resumed his ministry, probably traveling as far as Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28). During this period (A.D. 63–66/67), he wrote letters to Timothy and Titus. He left Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5), Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20), and Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). He planned to meet some of his helpers at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12–13) after he had visited some of the churches he had established. Wherever he went, he sought to bring Jews and Gentiles to faith in Jesus Christ.

He was arrested again, probably about the year 67, and this time his situation was changed drastically. He did not live in a house, but was chained in a prison and treated like a criminal (2 Tim. 1:16; 2:9). Winter was coming, and he asked Timothy to bring him his cloak (2 Tim. 4:13). But the saddest thing about this second imprisonment was his being forsaken by the believers in Rome (2 Tim. 4:16–17). The great apostle to the Gentiles was abandoned by the very people he came to assist.

Even Demas forsook him, and only Luke was with him (2 Tim. 4:10–11). The family of Onesiphorus ministered to his needs (2 Tim. 1:16–18), but he longed for Timothy and Mark to come to be at his side (2 Tim. 1:4; 4:9, 21). Paul knew that the end was coming (2 Tim. 4:6–8). Tradition tells us that he was beheaded at Rome in A.D. 67/68.

Luke did not write his book simply to record ancient history. He wrote to encourage the church in every age to be faithful to the Lord and carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. “What was begun with so much heroism ought to be continued with ardent zeal,” said Charles Spurgeon, “since we are assured that the same Lord is mighty still to carry on His heavenly designs.”

“Lo, I am with you always!”²¹

Acts 28:12

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

[Syracuse] One of the most famous cities of antiquity. It was the captial of Sicily, built in 730 B.C. Christianity has existed there since Paul's three-day visit of Acts 28:12.

Clarke: Landing at Syracuse—In order to go to Rome from Malta, their readiest course was to keep pretty close to the eastern coast of Sicily, in order to pass through the straits of Rhegium and get into the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Syracuse is one of the most famous cities of antiquity: it is the capital of the island of Sicily, and was built about 730 years before the Christian era. It lies 72 miles S. by E. of Messina, and about 112 of Palermo. Long. 15°. 30'. W., lat. 37°. 17'. N. In its ancient state, it was about 22 English miles in circumference; and was highly celebrated for the martial spirit of its inhabitants. This was the birthplace of the illustrious Archimedes; who, when the city was besieged by the Romans, under Marcellus, about 212 years before Christ, defended the place with his powerful engines against all the valor and power of the assailants. He beat their galleys to pieces by huge stones projected from his machines; and by hooks, chains, and levers, from the walls, weighed the ships out of the water, and, whirling them round, dashed them in pieces against each other, or sunk them

²¹Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Ac 28:11). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

to the bottom: several also, he is said to have destroyed by his burning glasses. When the city was taken by treachery, Archimedes was found intensely engaged in the demonstration of a problem. A Roman soldier coming up, and presenting his dagger to his throat, he cried, "Stop, soldier, or thou wilt spoil my diagram!" The brute was unmoved, and murdered him on the spot.

This city was almost totally destroyed by an earthquake in 1693: its present population amounts to but about 18,000. Christianity, in some form or other, has existed here ever since St. Paul spent the three days in it, mentioned in the text.

Acts 28:13

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:

[Rhegium] A city in southern Italy opposite Sicily. It is now called Reggio. This was a city of Italy, in the kingdom of Naples, on the coast near the south-west extremity of Italy. It was nearly opposite to Messina, in Sicily.

[Puteoli] A city on the Bay of Naples, now called Pozzuoli. It was built about 470 B.C. It was famous for its temple of Jupiter Serapis, which was not built according to the Grecian and Roman, but according to the Asiatic pattern.

Barnes: To Puteoli. The wells. It was celebrated for its warm baths; and from these, and its springs, it is supposed to have derived its name of *the wells*. It is now called *Pozzuoli*, and is in the Campania of Naples, on the northern side of the bay, and about eight miles north-west from Naples. The town contains at present about 10,000 inhabitants.

Clarke: The next day to Puteoli—This place, now commonly called Pozzuoli, is an ancient town of Naples in the Terra di Lavoro; and is supposed to have been founded by the Samians, about 470 years before Christ. Within this city are several warm baths, very highly celebrated; and from these, and its springs in general, it seems to have had its ancient name Puteoli, from PUTEI, wells or pits; though some derive it from *putor*, a stench, or bad smell, because of the sulphureous exhalations from its warm waters. Varro gives both these etymologies, lib. iv. de Ling. Lat. cap. 5. It is famous for its temple of Jupiter Serapis, which is built, not according to the Grecian or Roman manner, but according to the Asiatic. Near this place are the remains of Cicero's villa, which are of great extent. The town contains, at present, about 10,000 inhabitants. Long. 14°. 40'. E., lat. 41°. 50'. N.

The south wind blew—This was the fairest wind they could have from Syracuse, to reach the straits of Rhegium.

BBC: Rhegium was the Italian harbor closest to Sicily. In the first century, mercantile vessels, including the Alexandrian grain fleet, put in at Puteoli just west of Naples; to have reached it in two days meant that they had made optimum time (about ninety miles a day).

The storm is over. The Euroclydon, that tempestuous wind from the north, is passed. Now there is a south wind blowing again.

Acts 28:14

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

[**Where we found brethren**] There were already Christians living in Puteoli, perhaps having heard the gospel on Pentecost, being converts of men who were in the Jerusalem revival of Acts 2-8. Many from Rome were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Many in Italy had been converted since then. Paul wrote his epistles to Christians here about 30 years after Pentecost, or about 60 A.D.

Clarke: We went toward Rome—One of the most celebrated cities in the universe, the capital of Italy, and once of the whole world; situated on the river Tiber, 410 miles SSE. of Vienna; 600 SE. of Paris; 730 E. by N. of Madrid; 760 W. of Constantinople; and 780 SE. of London. Long. 12°. 55'. E., lat. 41°. 54'. N. This famous city was founded by Romulus, at the end of the seventh Olympiad, A.M. 3251; of the flood, 1595; and 753 years before the Christian era. The history of this city must be sought for in works written expressly on the subject, of which there are many. Modern Rome is greatly inferior to ancient Rome in every respect. Its population, taken in 1709, amounted to 138,569 souls only; among whom were 40 bishops, 2686 priests, 3359 monks, 1814 nuns, 893 courtezans, between 8 and 9000 Jews, and 14 Moors. This city, which once tyrannized over the world by its arms, and over the whole Christian world by its popes, is now reduced to a very low state among the governments of Europe, by whom it is supported, for it has no power sufficient for its own defense.

BBC: The Jewish community in Puteoli had been there a long time, as had Egyptian and Phoenician cults. As the regular port receiving visitors from the East, it naturally received foreign religions as well as goods. Thus it is not surprising to find Christians there; but readers of Luke's day might be more surprised that these Christians offer hospitality to Paul's captors, who accept it from them.

Acts 28:15

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

[**Appii**] A town about 52 miles from Rome. Christians from Rome met the apostle here. When Paul saw them he gave thanks and took courage.

[**The three taverns**] About 33 miles from Rome.

Barnes: And The three taverns. This place was about eight or ten miles nearer Rome than Appii forum. Cicero ad Att. ii. 10. It undoubtedly received its name because it was distinguished as a place of refreshment on the Appian way. Probably the greater part of the company of Christians remained at this place, while the remainder went forward to meet Paul, and to attend him of his way. The Christians at Rome had doubtless heard much of Paul. His epistle to them had been written about A. D. 57, or at least five years before this time. The interest which the Roman Christians felt in the apostle was thus manifested by their coming so far to meet him, though he was a prisoner.

LAN: Where did the Roman believers come from? The gospel message had spread to Rome by various methods. Many Jews who lived in Rome visited Jerusalem for religious festivals. Some were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:10), believed in Jesus, and brought the message back to Rome. Also, Paul had written his letter to the Romans before he visited there.

The Forum of Appius was a town about 43 miles south of Rome; Three Taverns was located about 35 miles south of Rome. A *tavern* was a shop, or a place that provided food and lodging for travelers. The Christians openly went to meet Paul and encourage him.

Clarke: When the brethren heard of us—By whom the Gospel was planted at Rome is not known: it does not appear that any apostle was employed in this work. It was probably carried thither by some of those who were converted to God at the day of pentecost; for there were then at Jerusalem, not only devout men, proselytes to the Jewish religion, from every nation under heaven, Acts 2:5, but there were strangers of Rome also, Acts 2:10. And it is most reasonable to believe, as we know of no other origin, that it was by these Christianity was planted at Rome.

The Christians at Rome soon heard of Paul's coming, so they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius (a market town 43 miles from Rome) and the Three Taverns (33 miles from Rome) to meet him and his companions. The noun *apantēsin*, translated as an infinitive "to meet," was used in Greek literature of an entourage coming out of a city to meet an official going to the city. It is also used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, which speaks of believers being "caught up . . . to meet (*apantēsin*) the Lord in the air." Like an entourage, believers will go up at the Rapture into the clouds to meet Jesus, their Savior and Lord, coming from heaven to take them to Himself. Paul looked forward to joining that group.

At the sight of these men Paul thanked God and was encouraged (lit., "received courage," *tharsos*; the verb *tharseō* is used in the LXX of people in distress who were then encouraged; cf. comments on Mark 6:50). At last God was bringing Paul to Rome. And the welcome of fellow believers, whom he had never met, uplifted his soul. So they proceeded on the Appian Way, "the queen of the long roads," to the city of Rome.²²

lit. literal, literally

LXX Septuagint

cf. *confer*, compare

²²Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:429). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Barnes: As far as Appii forum. This was a city about fifty-six miles from Rome. The remains of an ancient city are still seen there. It is on the borders of the Pontine marshes. The city was built on the celebrated Appian way, or road from Rome to Capua. The road was made by Appius Claudius, and probably the city also. It was called the *forum* or *market-place* of Appius, because it was a convenient place for travellers on the Appian way to stop for purposes of refreshment. It was also a famous resort for pedlars and merchants. See Horace, b. i. sat. 5.3.

Barnes: He thanked God. He had long ardently desired to see the Christians of Rome, Romans 1:9-11, 15:23,32. He was now grateful to God that the object of his long desire was at last granted to him, and that he was permitted to see them, though in bonds.

Barnes: And took courage. From their society and counsel. The presence and counsel of Christian brethren is often of inestimable value in encouraging and strengthening us in the toils and trials of life.

BBC: In older times, isolated inns had grown into larger settlements that retained the names of the inns. One of these was the Tres Tabernae, or Three Inns, thirty-three Roman miles from Rome on the ancient and famous Appian Way. The “Market of Appius,” or Appii Forum, was about forty-three miles from Rome on the same paved road. Jewish communities had existed in Italy for a long time and may have formed the basis for the first Christian groups there (cf. Acts 2:10).

Paul is now on the Appian Way. Again we see how important the encouragement of believers was to the apostle Paul.

News of Paul’s approach reached Rome during these seven days, and Christian brethren came down the Appian Way to meet Paul and Luke and to accompany them back to the city. The word rendered **to meet** is the same word used of the ‘rapture’ of believer **to meet** the Lord in the air at his second coming (I Thess 4:17). It is a term regularly used of the official welcome tendered by a delegation who went out to meet a visiting official and accompany him into the city. The **Forum of Appius** is some forty-three miles from Rome, and **Three Taverns** is about ten miles nearer. Both were stopping places on the Appian Way, with inns where travelers might lodge.²³

Acts 28:16

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.

[**came to Rome**] The fulfillment of Acts 19:21; Acts 23:11.

²³ Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

[**Rome**] One of the most noted cities of the world—the capital of Italy. Founded by Romulus about 753 B.C.

[**captain of the guard**] Commander of the emperor's guards.

Barnes: The captain of the guard. The commander of the Praetorian cohort, or guard. The custom was, that those who were sent from the provinces to Rome for trial were delivered to the custody of this guard. The name of the prefect or captain of the guard, at this time, was Burrhas Afranius. Tacit. Ann. 12, 42, 1.

But Paul was suffered, This may have been by the permission of the centurion, whose favour he had gained on the voyage. See Acts 27:43.

Barnes: With a soldier that kept him. That is, in the custody of a soldier, to whom he was chained, and who, of course, constantly attended him. See Acts 24:23. Acts 12:6.

BBC: Along the Appian Way, Paul and the others would enter Rome's Porta Capena. Paul was loosely chained by the wrist to a soldier (Acts 28:20), who would be a member of the Praetorian Guard, Caesar's elite personal guard in Rome, which consisted of nine or twelve cohorts.

The Praetorian Guard was commanded by the Praetorian prefect, one of the most powerful men in Rome, who was at this time Afranius Burrus. Burrus was officially responsible for all prisoners from the provinces to be tried by Caesar's court, although the task itself was probably delegated to a lower officer, the *princeps castrorum*, who administered the Praetorian Guard's *officium*. Burrus later died with Nero's philosopher-tutor Seneca during Nero's purges (A.D. 62).

Paul apparently had the freedom to live in a house, but he was always guarded by a soldier. In fact, different soldiers took turns on guard duty.

Acts 28:17

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.

[**Men and brethren**] The elders of the synagogues in Rome. He wanted to explain to the Jews why he was in Rome and why he had to appeal to Caesar. He made it clear that he had nothing to accuse his nation of (Acts 28:19).

Clarke: Paul called the chief of the Jews together—We have already seen, in Acts 18:2, that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome; see the note there: but it seems they were permitted to return very soon; and, from this verse, it appears that there were then chiefs, probably of synagogues, dwelling at Rome.

Clarke: I have committed nothing—Lest they should have heard and received malicious reports against him, he thought it best to state his own case.

Barnes: Paul called the chief of the Jews. He probably had two objects in this: one was to vindicate himself from the suspicion of crime, or to convince them that the charges alleged against him were false; and the other, to explain to them the gospel of Christ. In accordance with his custom everywhere, he seized the excellent opportunity of making the gospel known to his own countrymen; and he naturally supposed that charges highly unfavourable to his character had been sent forward against him to the Jews at Rome by those in Judea.

BBC: The “leaders of the Jews” (NIV) are leaders of different synagogue communities; no single body ruled over the whole Jewish community in Rome. The Jewish congregations in Rome were all autonomous, and Christians could spread their views among the various synagogues with relative freedom. The Jewish community there had also made many Roman converts and sympathizers (to the chagrin of many male Roman aristocrats). Many of these sympathizers would be happy to embrace a version of the Jewish faith that accepted them fully without circumcision.

In his presentation Paul made several significant points: (1) He was innocent of damaging **the Jews** or their **customs** (28:17). (2) The Roman authorities in Judea thought Paul was innocent (v. 18; cf. 23:29; 25:25; 26:31-32). (3) Paul’s only recourse was **to appeal to Caesar** because the Jews refused to deal with Paul justly (28:19; cf. 25:11). (4) This fourth point is a major one: he was not pressing charges against Israel; he only wanted to be acquitted (28:19). (5) His primary objective in calling the leaders was to **talk with** them about **the hope of Israel**. This term and concept was used by Paul a number of times in the last part of Acts (cf. 23:6; 24:15; 26:6-7). The hope of Israel was more than a resurrection; it meant fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to Israel (cf. 26:6-7). Paul firmly believed Jesus is the Messiah of Israel who will return someday and establish Himself as the King of Israel and Lord of the nations (cf. 1:6).²⁴

Acts 28:18

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

LAN: Paul wanted to preach the gospel in Rome, and he eventually got there—in chains, through shipwreck, and after many trials. Although he may have wished for an easier passage, he knew that God had blessed him greatly in allowing him to meet the believers in Rome and preach the message to both Jews and Gentiles in that great city. In all things, God worked for Paul’s good (Romans 8:28). You can trust him to do the same for you.

v. verse

cf. *confer*, compare

²⁴Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:430). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

God may not make you comfortable or secure, but he will provide the opportunity to do his work.

Acts 28:19

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

[I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar] See Acts 25:11.

Acts 28:20

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.

[For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you] I wanted to meet with you elders to make it clear to you that it was for the hope of Israel that I am bound by this chain.

[the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain] This refers to the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6; Acts 24:15,21; Acts 26:7-8), to the Messianic hope of Israel in restoring the kingdom of David (Acts 13:34; Acts 14:22; Acts 15:13-17; Acts 17:3,7,18; Acts 18:5,28; Acts 19:8; Acts 20:25), and to the salvation of Israel (Acts 13:38-39; Acts 20:21; Acts 26:6-7,18; Romans 9-11).

Barnes: I am bound with this chain. Acts 26:29. Probably he was attached constantly to a soldier by a chain.

We see Paul following his usual pattern of approaching the Jews first. He explains to them why he has been brought to Rome.

Barnes: Because that for the hope of Israel. On account of the hope which the Jews cherished of the coming of the Messiah; of the resurrection; and of the future state through him. Acts 23:6.

Clarke: For the hope of Israel I am bound, etc.—As if he had said: This, and this alone, is the cause of my being delivered into the hands of the Romans; I have proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah; have maintained that though he was crucified by the Jews, yet he rose again from the dead; and, through him, I have preached the general resurrection of mankind: this all Israel professes to hope for; and yet it is on this account that the Jews persecute me. Both the Messiah and the resurrection might be said to be the hope of Israel; and it is hard to tell which of them is here meant: see Acts 13:6; 24:15, 21; 26:6. It is certain that, although the Jews believed in the general resurrection, yet they did not credit it in the manner in which Paul preached it; for he laid the foundation of the general resurrection on the resurrection of Christ.

BBC: Imprisonment and chains were not used as punishments but as a means of detention until trial. Paul continues to emphasize the continuity between the Old Testament message and his own; this point would be important to Jewish leaders and also to Roman readers, who needed to understand that the Jesus movement was rooted in an ancient religion worthy of toleration (even if, after 70, Judaism was unpopular in some circles).

There were a number of Jewish synagogues in Rome, but since Paul was a prisoner, even though he enjoyed some freedom, it was not convenient for him to visit them. Therefore he called the leaders of the Jews together that he might present his case to them. He claimed that he had violated none of the Jewish customs and as an innocent man was delivered prisoner into the hands of the Romans. In spite of the fact that the Romans had wished to released him, the Jews had opposed their decision, and so Paul had felt that his only way of escape was to appeal to Caesar. However, Paul did not desire to make any accusation against the Jews for their treatment of him. He was a prisoner only because of **the hope of Israel**. By this, he meant that his Christian faith was the true fulfillment of the hope of God's people.²⁵

Acts 28:21

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

[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]

Three great factors in Paul's favor:

1. No letters of complaint from the Jews in Judea. This proves that the Jews in Judea knew that their case against Paul was hopeless. Being frustrated in killing him with their own hands, they decided to let the matter drop. They had no real case to present to Caesar.
2. All that came from Judea on the journey with Paul were for him.
3. The law and the prophets supported Paul's teachings (Acts 28:23-24).²⁶

Clarke: We neither received letters, etc.—This is very strange, and shows us that the Jews knew their cause to be hopeless, and therefore did not send it forward to Rome. They wished for an opportunity to kill Paul: and, when they were frustrated by his appeal to the emperor, they permitted the business to drop. Calmet supposes they had not time to send; but this supposition does not appear to be sufficiently solid: they might have sent long before Paul sailed; and they might have written officially by the vessel in which the centurion and the prisoners were embarked. But their case was hopeless; and they could not augur any good to themselves from making a formal complaint against the apostle at the emperor's throne.

²⁵ Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

²⁶ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Barnes: We neither received letters, Why the Jews in Judea had not forwarded the accusation against Paul to their brethren at Rome, that they might continue the prosecution before the emperor, is not known. It is probable that they regarded their cause as *hopeless*, and chose to abandon the prosecution. Paul had been acquitted successively by Lysias, Felix, Festus, Agrippa; and as they had not succeeded in procuring his condemnation before them, they saw no prospect of doing it at Rome, and chose therefore not to press the prosecution any farther.

Barnes: Neither any of the brethren that came. Any of the Jews. There was a very constant intercourse between Judea and Rome; but it seems that the Jews, who had come before Paul had arrived, had not mentioned his case, so as to prejudice them against him.

BBC: Unable to win their case in Judea, Paul's accusers would have even less chance in Rome. By A.D. 62, the Jewish community in Rome had an advocate with the emperor in his wife (former mistress) Poppaea Sabina—until Nero kicked her to death while she was pregnant. It is by no means clear that the Roman Jewish community was uniformly hostile to the Christian movement (Acts 28:24), but they naturally had questions, especially if their previous expulsion in Acts 18:2 was due to Christian teachings.

Acts 28:22

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

[desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest] This was Paul's opportunity to present the gospel to Jews at Rome.

[sect] Greek: *hairesis* (GSN-139), a choosing, hence, a sect (Acts 5:17; Acts 15:5; Acts 24:5; Acts 26:5; Acts 28:22) and heresy (Acts 24:14; 1 Cor. 11:19; Galatians 5:20; 2 Peter 2:1). The word itself has no evil meaning. It simply refers to a doctrinal view or belief at variance with the recognized and accepted tenets of a system, church, or party. The word heretic is used once in Scripture (Titus 3:10), and means one who holds a heresy; a dissenter, nonconformist. It only takes on an evil meaning when sound doctrine is rejected and fallacy is accepted and taught in preference to truth. If the doctrine is unsound and one dissents from the main body who holds the fallacy, then he is a heretic in a good sense.

The word signifies a sect or party, whether good or bad, distinguished from all other sects and parties. It formerly was applied to different sects of heathen philosophers. The church of Rome uses it only in an evil sense to apply to all who cannot go along with their many dogmas and rituals that have been added for many centuries to the pure teachings of the Christian faith. A heretic to them is one who is not a papist, and because of this is outside the Christian religion. Most all denominations use it in this same sense of those who do not see eye to eye with them. True Christians apply it to all false religions who do not accept the true Christian doctrines. Jews called Christians a sect (Acts 24:5,14; Acts 28:22) and Christians called the Pharisees and Sadducees and

other groups sects (Acts 5:17; Acts 15:5; Acts 26:5). All deviation from truth is heresy (Galatians 5:20; 1 Cor. 11:19; 2 Peter 2:1).²⁷

[every where it is spoken against] Justin Martyr says that the Jews cursed Christians in their synagogues and sent chosen men throughout the world to poison the Jews against Christians.

Barnes: Spoken against. Particularly by Jews. This was the case then, and, to a great extent, is the case still. It has been the common lot of the followers of Christ to be spoken of with contempt. Comp. Acts 24:5.

Acts 28:23

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.

[appointed] Greek: *tasso* (GSN-5021), arranged for a day to hear him (note, □ Acts 13:48).

[expounded] Greek: *ektithemi* (GSN-1620), set before them. Here; Acts 7:21; Acts 11:4; Acts 18:26; Acts 28:23. Paul expounded or set before the Jews the divine fulfillment of Scripture in Christ.

[morning till evening] One can cover much ground in a whole day, especially with people who are acquainted with the law and the prophets as all the Jews were who had been taught the Scriptures from childhood.

Clarke: To whom he expounded—the kingdom of God—To whom he showed that the reign of the Messiah was to be a spiritual reign; and that Jesus, whom the Jewish rulers had lately crucified, was the true Messiah, who should rule in this spiritual kingdom. These two points were probably those on which he expatiated from morning to evening, proving both out of the law and out of the prophets. How easily Jesus, as the Messiah, and his spiritual kingdom, might be proved from the law of Moses, any person may be satisfied, by consulting the notes written on those books. As to the prophets, their predictions are so clear, and their prophecies so obviously fulfilled in the person, preaching, miracles, passion, and death of Jesus Christ, that it is utterly impossible, with any show of reason, to apply them to any other.

²⁷ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Acts 28:24

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

[some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not] This is always the case. In every crowd who loves Scripture there will always be some who will be honest and open to truth, even though it is presented in a new way.

Clarke: Some believed, etc.—His message was there treated as his Gospel is to the present day: some believe, and are converted; others continue in obstinate unbelief, and perish. Could the Jews then have credited the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom, they would have found little difficulty to receive Jesus Christ as the MESSIAH.

Multitudes of those now called Christians can more easily credit Jesus as the Messiah than believe the spiritual nature of his kingdom. The cross is the great stumbling block: millions expect Jesus and his kingdom who cannot be persuaded that the cross is the way to the crown.

We see here the kind of liberty that Paul had as a prisoner. Apparently he could have quite large crowds come to his home. However, there was always a soldier on guard to watch him.

Again we see that the apostle Paul used his background in the Old Testament to persuade the Jews concerning Jesus. As always, there was the double response to the message. Some believed, but others did not.

Acts 28:25

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,

Isa 6:9-10; cf. John 12:36-40.

[agreed not among themselves] This fulfilled the prediction of the prophets and of Jesus who came to bring division (Matthew 10:34-36). Division is caused by men because some will not believe and other will (2 Cor. 2:15-17).

[Holy Ghost by Esaias] Paul's testimony that the Holy Spirit had inspired Isaiah the prophet (2 Peter 1:21; Acts 3:21; Hebrews 1:1).

Clarke: Agreed not among themselves—It seems that a controversy arose between the Jews themselves, in consequence of some believing, and others disbelieving; and the two parties contested together; and, in respect to the unbelieving party, the apostle quoted the following passage from Isaiah 6:9.

Barnes: Had spoken one word. One declaration of solemn prophecy, reminding them that it was the characteristic of the nation to reject the testimony of God, and that it was to be expected. It was the last solemn warning which we know Paul to have delivered to his countrymen the Jews.

Barnes: Well spake. Or he spoke the truth; he justly described the character of the Jewish people. The passage here quoted was as applicable in the time of Paul as of Isaiah.

JNTC: Some were convinced by what he said, while others refused to believe (Greek *apisteô*, “disbelieve, refuse to believe, be unfaithful”). Of the “large numbers” of Jewish leaders present (v. 23), “some” (Greek *oi men*, “these, on the one hand”) were persuaded and “some” (*oi de*, “these, on the other”) disbelieved, refused to believe. The “some” and the “some” are correlative, of comparable size, of more or less the same order of magnitude. What may reasonably be concluded, therefore, is that the whole leadership of Rome’s Jewish community was well represented by the “large numbers,” and that a sizeable proportion of them, though not necessarily half, were persuaded of the truth of Messianic Judaism then and there. This is why I say that the meeting must be unique in world history (v. 23)—I know of no other reported instance of a sizeable proportion of a major Jewish community’s leadership coming to faith in the Gospel in one day.

So they left, disagreeing among themselves. The Gospel properly proclaimed always causes division, because those who believe it and those who do not have different world-outlooks (see 20:3, Mt 10:35–36, Yn 7:43N). Since those who were persuaded were leaders, they surely returned to their synagogues and communicated the Gospel themselves; so that in due time, especially with Sha’ul’s continued teaching over the next two years (v. 30), entire synagogues must have become Messianic. A “people-movement” took place in Rome, a movement in which entire families and communities were won to the Lord Yeshua the Messiah. Though we are not told this directly, the indications are present: an openness to the Gospel rather than a predisposition against it, leaders being persuaded, substantial numbers being involved, broad community participation, respect for the evangelist and Spirit-blessed ministry.²⁸

Acts 28:26

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

Isaiah 6:9-10 ⁹*And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.* ¹⁰*Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

John 12:36-41 ³⁶*While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

³⁷*But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:* ³⁸*That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be*

²⁸Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 28:24). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? ³⁹Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, ⁴⁰He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. ⁴¹These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

[Go unto this people, and say ...] The 21st and last Old Testament prophecy fulfilled in Acts (Acts 28:26-27; Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:14-15, notes; John 12:40).

[Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive] All heard the Word alike, but all did not show a like attitude of faith in it; all saw the same thing that Paul set before them, but all did not choose to believe it. The responsibility is with the people and not with God or His Word. All can believe and accept it alike if they want to. It is not that God is responsible for the faith of some and the unbelief of others.

Acts 28:27

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.

[For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed] This is a commentary on Acts 28:26 and shows that the trouble was in the heart. They had permitted their hearts to wax gross (Greek: pachuno (GSN-3975), to thicken or fatten; to become calloused), their ears to become dull of hearing, and their eyes to be blind to truth. It is noted that their hearts, their ears, and their eyes were responsible, not God. No man is forced to do this by God. If he does it, it is man submitting to Satan and not to God (2 Cor. 4:4). It is, therefore, a human and satanic action in rebellion against God and His Word.

[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] This means that any time a man wants to reject Satan and sin and humble himself to believe and conform to God he is free to do so. If he will, then he can see right, hear right, understand right, and become converted and be healed (John 3:16-20; 1 John 1:9; Romans 10:9-10).

Spurgeon: If we also remain unbelieving, God may take the gospel from us, and send it to others who will accept it. That would be a dreadful thing indeed. How long will it be ere we believe in Jesus? Do we mean to provoke the Lord to forsake us forever?

Acts 28:28

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

[Be it know therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it] The 20th and last New Testament prophecy in Acts (Acts 28:28, fulfilled). Gentiles have been receiving the salvation of God ever since (Romans 11:1-25). This was uttered by Paul in Acts 13:46; Acts 18:6.

Clarke: The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles—St. Paul had spoken to this effect twice before, Acts 13:46, and Acts 18:6, where see the notes; but here he uses a firmer tone, being out of the Jewish territories, and under the protection of the emperor. By the salvation of God, all the blessings of the kingdom of Christ are intended. This salvation God could have sent unto the Gentiles, independently of the Jewish disobedience; but He waited till they had rejected it, and then reprobated them, and elected the Gentiles. Thus the elect became reprobate, and the reprobate elect.

Barnes: And that they will hear it. They will embrace it. Paul was never discouraged. If the gospel was rejected by one class of people, he was ready to offer it to another. If his own countrymen rejected and despised it, he never allowed himself to suppose that Christ had died in vain, but believed that others would be inclined to embrace its saving benefits. How happy would it be if all Christians had the same unwavering faith and zeal as Paul!

Is sent unto the Gentiles. Since you have rejected it, it will be offered to them. Acts 13:46.

Acts 28:29

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

[reasoning among themselves] Great disputation among themselves.

Clarke: And had great reasoning among themselves—The believers contending with the unbelievers; and thus we may suppose that the cause of truth gained ground. For contentions about the truth and authenticity of the religion of Christ infallibly end in the triumph and extension of that religion.

Barnes: And had great reasoning. Great discussion or debates. That is, the part which believed that Jesus was the Messiah, Acts 28:24, discussed the subject warmly with those who did not believe. This whole verse is wanting in the Syriac version and in some Greek Mss., and is supposed by Mill and Griesbach to be spurious.

Acts 28:30

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

[dwelt two whole years in his own hired house] This shows that special favor was shown Paul, or else he would have been kept in prison. He became known in all of Caesar's house (Phil. 1:12-13; Phil. 4:22).

Clarke: Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house—As a state prisoner, he might have had an apartment in the common prison; but peculiar favor was showed him, and he was permitted to dwell alone, with the soldier that guarded him, Acts 28:16. Finding now an opportunity of preaching the Gospel, he hired a house for the purpose, and paid for it, St. Chrysostom observes, by the fruits of his own labor. Here he received all that came unto him, and preached the Gospel with glorious success; so that his bonds became the means of spreading the truth, and he became celebrated even in the palace of Nero, Philippians 1:12, 13; and we find that there were several saints, even in Caesar's household, Philippians 4:22, which were, no doubt, the fruits of the apostle's ministry. It is said that during his two years' residence here he became acquainted with Seneca, the philosopher, between whom and the apostle an epistolary correspondence took place. In an ancient MS. of Seneca's epistles in my own possession, these letters are extant, and are in number fourteen and have a prologue to them written by St. Jerome. That they are very ancient cannot be doubted; but learned men have long ago agreed that they are neither worthy of Paul nor of Seneca.

While he was in captivity, the Church at Philippi, to which he was exceedingly dear, sent him some pecuniary assistance by the hands of their minister, Epaphroditus, who, it appears, risked his life in the service of the apostle, and was taken with a dangerous malady. When he got well, he returned to Philippi, and, it is supposed, carried with him that epistle which is still extant; and from it we learn that Timothy was then at Rome with Paul, and that he had the prospect of being shortly delivered from his captivity. See Philippians 1:12, 13; 2:25; 4:15, 16, 18, etc.

Barnes: Paul dwelt two whole years. Doubtless in the custody of the soldiers. Why he was not prosecuted before the emperor during this time is not known. It is evident, however, Acts 28:21, that the Jews were not disposed to carry the case before Nero; and the matter, during this time, was suffered quietly to sleep. There is great probability that the Jews durst not prosecute him before the emperor. It is clear that they had never been in favour of the appeal to Rome, and that they had no hope of gaining their cause.

Probably they might remember the former treatment of the Roman emperor of their people, Acts 18:2; they might remember that they were despised at the Roman capital, and not choose to encounter the scorn and indignation of the Roman court; and as there was no prosecution, Paul was suffered to live in quietness and safety. Lardner, however, supposes (vol. v. pp. 528, 529, Edit. 8vo. Lond. 1829) that the case of Paul was soon brought before Nero, and decided; and that the method of confinement was ordered by the emperor himself. Lightfoot also supposes that Paul's "accusers, who had come from Judea to lay their charge against him, would be urgent to get their business despatched, that they might be returning to their own home again, and so would bring him to trial as

soon as they could." But nothing certain is known on the subject. It is evident, indeed, from 2 Timothy 4:16, that he was at *some time* arraigned before the emperor; but when it was, or what was the decision, or why he was at last set at liberty, are all involved in impenetrable obscurity.

In his own hired house. In a house which he was permitted to hire, and occupy as his own. Probably in this he was assisted by the kindness of his Roman friends.

And received all, Received all hospitably and kindly who came to him to show him kindness, or to listen to his instructions. It is evident from this, that he was still a prisoner, and was not permitted to go at large.

BBC: At the end of two years, if no accusers had arrived and no charges had been sent against him (Acts 28:21), Paul would normally be automatically released. Paul was later arrested again and beheaded, but Luke wishes to end on a note of positive legal precedent, before the corruptions of Roman law introduced by Nero's tyranny. A number of ancient works had sudden endings; and following the pattern of other Jewish and Christian works (but in contrast to many Greek works), Luke wishes to end happily.

LAN: While Paul was under house arrest, he did more than speak to the Jews. He wrote letters, commonly called his Prison Letters, to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians. He also wrote personal letters, such as the one to Philemon. Luke was with Paul in Rome (2 Tim. 4:11). Timothy often visited him (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Philemon 1:1), as did Tychicus (Ephes. 6:21), Epaphroditus (Phil. 4:18), and Mark (Col. 4:10). Paul witnessed to the whole Roman guard (Phil. 1:13) and was involved with the Roman believers.

LAN: Tradition says that Paul was released after two years of house arrest in Rome and then set off on a fourth missionary journey. Some reasons for this tradition are as follows: (1) Luke does not give us an account of his trial before Caesar, and Luke was a detailed chronicler; (2) the prosecution had two years to bring the case to trial, and time may have run out; (3) in his letter to the Philippians, written during his imprisonment in Rome, Paul implied that he would soon be released and would do further traveling; (4) Paul mentions several places where he intended to take the gospel, but he never visited those places in his first three journeys; and (5) early Christian literature talks plainly about other travels by Paul.

It may be that during Paul's time of freedom, he continued to travel extensively, even going to Spain (see Romans 15:24, 28) and back to the churches in Greece. The books of 1 Timothy and Titus were written during this time. Later, Paul was imprisoned again, probably in Rome, where he wrote his last letter (2 Tim.).

Acts 28:31

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

The Book of Acts tells of the beginning of the movement of the gospel to the ends of the earth. Remember that in the Garden of Eden man doubted God and that led to disobedience. The way back to God is by faith, "... for obedience to the faith ..." as Paul says in Romans 1:5. So we find in that day that some believed the gospel and some did not.

The Book of Acts ends with Paul "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence." The record is not concluded. The Holy Spirit continues to work today. The acts of the Holy Spirit have not been finished even in our day. The Book of Acts will end with the Rapture, the coming of Christ for His own. The work of the church has not yet been completed; it is a continuing story. What you and I have done in the power of the Holy Spirit will be included in that record.

Why does the book of Acts end here and so abruptly? The book is not about the life of Paul, but about the spread of the gospel, and that has been clearly presented. God apparently thought it was not necessary for someone to write an additional book describing the continuing history of the early church. Now that the gospel had been preached and established at the center of trade and government, it would spread across the world.

In this period is when Paul writes the letter to the Philippians, the letter to the Ephesians, the letter to Colossians, and the letter to Philemon: the so-called prison epistles.

According to tradition (not found in the Bible), Paul did appear before the emperor, and the case was dismissed. He went back to Crete where Titus was left in charge; he also probably visited Ephesus where Timothy was left in charge. There is some evidence that he visited Spain, and some scholars believe he even visited Britain. But Paul was arrested again and did some more time in prison in Rome. (Where he probably wrote the 2 Timothy letter, his last letter.) One day he was taken outside the walls of Rome and beheaded.

The book of Acts deals with the history of the Christian church and its expansion in ever-widening circles touching Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, and Rome—the most influential cities in the western world. Acts also shows the mighty miracles and testimonies of the heroes and martyrs of the early church—Peter, Stephen, James, Paul. All the ministry was prompted and held together by the Holy Spirit working in the lives of ordinary people—merchants, travelers, slaves, jailers, church leaders, males, females, Gentiles, Jews, rich, poor. Many unsung heroes of the faith continued the work, through the Holy Spirit, in succeeding generations, changing the world with a changeless message—that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord for all who call on him. Today we can be the unsung heroes in the continuing story of the spread of the gospel. It is that same message that we Christians are to take to our world so that many more may hear and believe.

[Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ] This is the sum of Paul's teaching in all his ministry among Jews and Gentiles.

[all confidence] Preached with all boldness.

Clarke: Those things which concern the Lord—The Redeemer of the world was to be represented as the LORD; as JESUS; and as the CHRIST. As the Lord, the sole potentate, upholding all things by the word of his power; governing the world and the Church; having all things under his control, and all his enemies under his feet; in short, the maker and upholder of all things, and the judge of all men. As Jesus—the Savior; he who saves, delivers, and preserves; and especially he who saves his people from their sins. For the explanation of the word JESUS, see the note on John 1:17. As Christ—the same as Messiah; both signifying the ANOINTED: he who was appointed by the Lord to this great and glorious work; who had the Spirit without measure, and who anoints, communicates the gifts and graces of that Spirit to all true believers. St. Paul taught the things which concerned or belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ. He proved him to be the Messiah foretold by the prophets, and expected by the Jews; he spoke of what he does as the Lord, what he does as Jesus, and what he does as Christ. These contain the sum and substance of all that is called the Gospel of Christ. Yet, the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, necessarily include the whole account of his incarnation, preaching in Judea, miracles, persecutions, passion, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and his sending down the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. These were the subjects on which the apostle preached for two whole years, during his imprisonment at Rome.

Clarke: With all confidence— Liberty of speech; perfect freedom to say all he pleased, and when he pleased. He had the fullest toleration from the Roman government to preach as he pleased, and what he pleased; and the unbelieving Jews had no power to prevent him.

It is supposed that it was during this residence at Rome that he converted Onesimus, and sent him back to his master Philemon, with the epistle which is still extant. And it is from Philemon 23, 24, of that epistle, that we learn that Paul had then with him Epaphras, Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke.

Here St. Luke's account of Paul's travels and sufferings ends; and it is probable that this history was written soon after the end of the two years mentioned in Acts 28:30.

That the apostle visited many places after this, suffered much in the great cause of Christianity, and preached the Gospel of Jesus with amazing success, is generally believed. How he came to be liberated we are not told; but it is likely that, having been kept in this sort of confinement for about two years, and none appearing against him, he was released by the imperial order.

Concerning the time, place, and manner of his death, we have little certainty. It is commonly believed that, when a general persecution was raised against the Christians by Nero, about A.D. 64, under pretense that they had set Rome on fire, both St. Paul and St. Peter then sealed the truth with their blood; the latter being crucified with his head

downward; the former being beheaded, either in A.D. 64 or 65, and buried in the Via Ostiensis. EUSEBIUS, Hist, Eccles. lib. ii. cap. 25, intimates that the tombs of these two apostles, with their inscriptions, were extant in his time; and quotes as his authority a holy man of the name of Caius, who wrote against the sect of the Cataphrygians, who has asserted this, as from his personal knowledge. See Eusebius, by Reading, vol. i. p. 83; and see Dr. Lardner, in his life of this apostle, who examines this account with his usual perspicuity and candour. Other writers have been more particular concerning his death: they say that it was not by the command of Nero that he was martyred, but by that of the prefects of the city, Nero being then absent; that he was beheaded at Aquae Salviae, about three miles from Rome, on Feb. 22; that he could not be crucified, as Peter was, because he was a freeman of the city of Rome. But there is great uncertainty on these subjects, so that we cannot positively rely on any account that even the ancients have transmitted to us concerning the death of this apostle; and much less on the accounts given by the moderns; and least of all on those which are to be found in the Martyrologists. Whether Paul ever returned after this to Rome has not yet been satisfactorily proved. It is probable that he did, and suffered death there, as stated above; but still we have no certainty.

BBC: That Paul could preach under the very nose of the Praetorian Guard suggests that, before Nero instituted his persecution against Christians for political reasons, they were tolerated under Roman law. Luke’s defense of Christianity on legal and philosophical grounds paved the way for second-century defenders of Christianity and points the way for Christian lawyers, statespersons and others to work in society today.

Barnes: With all confidence. Openly and boldly, without any one to hinder him. It is known, also, that Paul was not unsuccessful even when a prisoner at Rome. Several persons were converted by his preaching even in the court of the emperor. The things which had happened to him, he says, Philippians 1:12-14, had fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, so that his bonds in Christ were manifested in all the palace, and in all other places; and many brethren in the Lord, says he, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. In this situation he was remembered with deep interest by the church of Philippi, who sent Epaphroditus to him with a contribution to supply his wants. Of their kindness he speaks in terms of the tenderest gratitude in Philippians 2:25, 4:18. During his confinement, also, he was the means of the conversion of Onesimus, a runaway slave of Philemon, of Colosse in Phrygia, Philemon 1:10 whom he sent back to his master with a letter to himself, and with an epistle to the church at that place. Colossians 4:8,9,18. During this imprisonment he wrote, according to Lardner, the following epistles, in the following order and time, viz :-

Ephesians, April, A. D	61
2Timothy, May	61
Philippians, before the end of	62
Colossians	62
Philemon	62
Hebrews, spring of	63

Here closes the inspired account of the propagation of Christianity, of the organization of the Christian church, and of the toils and persecutions of the apostle Paul. Who can but be deeply affected when he comes to the conclusion of this inspired book of revivals, and of the history of the spread of the Christian religion, and of the account of that wonderful man—the apostle Paul? Who can help heaving the sigh of regret, that this interesting historian did not carry forward the history of Paul till his death; and that henceforward, in the history of the church, we want this faithful, inspired guide; and that, from the close of this book, everything becomes at once so involved in obscurity and uncertainty? Instead, however, of pouring forth the sigh of unavailing regret that the sacred historian has carried us no farther onward, we should rather speak the language of praise that he has given, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, a history of the church for thirty years after the ascension of the Saviour; that he has recorded the accounts of the first great revivals of religion; that he has presented us the examples of the early missionary zeal; that he has informed us how the early Christians endured persecution and toil; that he has conducted us from land to land, and from city to city, showing us everywhere how the gospel was propagated, until we are led to the seat of the Roman power, and see the great apostle of Christianity there proclaiming, in that mighty capital of the world, the name of Jesus as the Saviour of men. Perhaps there could be no more appropriate close to the book of the inspired history, than thus to have conducted the apostle of the Gentiles, and to have recorded the spread of Christianity, to the capital of the Roman world, and to leave the principal agent in the establishment of the Christian religion in that seat of intelligence, and influence, and power. It is the conducting of Christianity to the very height of its earthly victories; and having shown its power in the provinces of the empire, it was proper for the inspired author of this ecclesiastical history to close the account with the record of its achievements in the capital.

Why Luke closed his history here is not known. It may have been that he was not afterwards the companion of Paul; or that he might have been himself removed by death. It is agreed on all hands that he did not attend Paul in his subsequent travels; and we should infer, from the conclusion of this book, that he did not survive the apostle, as it is almost incredible, if he did, that he did not mention his release and death. It is the uniform account of antiquity, that Luke, after the transactions with which the Acts of the Apostles closes, passed over into Achaia, where he lived a year or two, and there died at the age of eighty-four years.

Everything in regard to the apostle Paul, after the account with which Luke closes this book, is involved in doubt and uncertainty. By what means he was set at liberty is not known; and there is a great contradiction of statements in regard to his subsequent travels, and even the time of his death. It is generally agreed, indeed, that he was set at liberty in the year of our Lord 63. After this, some of the Fathers assert that he travelled over Italy, and passed into Spain. But this account is involved in great uncertainty. Lardner, who has examined all the statements with care, and than whom no one is better qualified to pronounce an opinion on these subjects, gives the following account of the subsequent life of Paul. (Works, vol. v. 331–336. Ed. Loud. 1829.) He supposes that, after his release, he went from Rome to Jerusalem as soon as possible; that he then went to Ephesus, and from thence to Laodicea and Colosse; and that he returned to Rome by

Troas, Philippi, and Corinth. The reason why he returned to Rome, Lardner supposes, was that he regarded that city as opening before him the widest and most important field of labour; and that therefore he proposed there to spend the remainder of his life.

In the year of our Lord 64, a dreadful fire happened at Rome, which continued for six or seven days. It was generally supposed that the city had been set on fire by order of the emperor Nero. In order to divert the attention of the people from this charge against himself, he accused the Christians of having been the authors of the conflagration, and excited against them a most furious and bloody persecution. In this persecution, it is generally supposed that Paul and Peter suffered death; the former by being beheaded, and the latter by crucifixion. Paul is supposed to have been beheaded rather than crucified, because he was a Roman citizen, and because it was unlawful to put a Roman citizen to death on a cross. Lardner thinks that this occurred in the year 65. Where Paul was beheaded is not certainly known. It is generally supposed to have occurred at a place called the Salvian Waters, about three miles from Rome, and that he was buried in the Ostian Way, where a magnificent church was afterwards built. But of this there is no absolute certainty.

It is far more important and interesting for us to be assured, from the character which he evinced, and from the proofs of his zeal and toil in the cause of the Lord Jesus, that his spirit rested in the bosom of his Saviour and his God. Wherever he died, his spirit, we doubt not, is in heaven. And where that body rested at last, which he laboured "to keep under," and which he sought to bring "into subjection," 1 Corinthians 9:27, and which was to him so much the source of conflict and of sin, Romans 7:5,23 is a matter of little consequence. It will be watched and guarded by the eye of that Saviour whom he served, and will be raised up to eternal life. In his own inimitable language, it was sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption; it was sown in dishonour, it shall be raised in glory; it was sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power; it was sown a natural body, it shall be raised a spiritual body, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44. And in regard to him, and to all other saints, when that corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and that mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory," 1 Corinthians 15:54. To Paul now, what are all his sorrows, and persecutions, and toils in the cause of his Master? What but a source of thanksgiving that he was permitted thus to labour to spread the gospel through the world? So may we live, imitating his life of zeal, and self-denial, and faithfulness, that, when he rises from the dead, we may participate with him in the glories of the resurrection of the just!

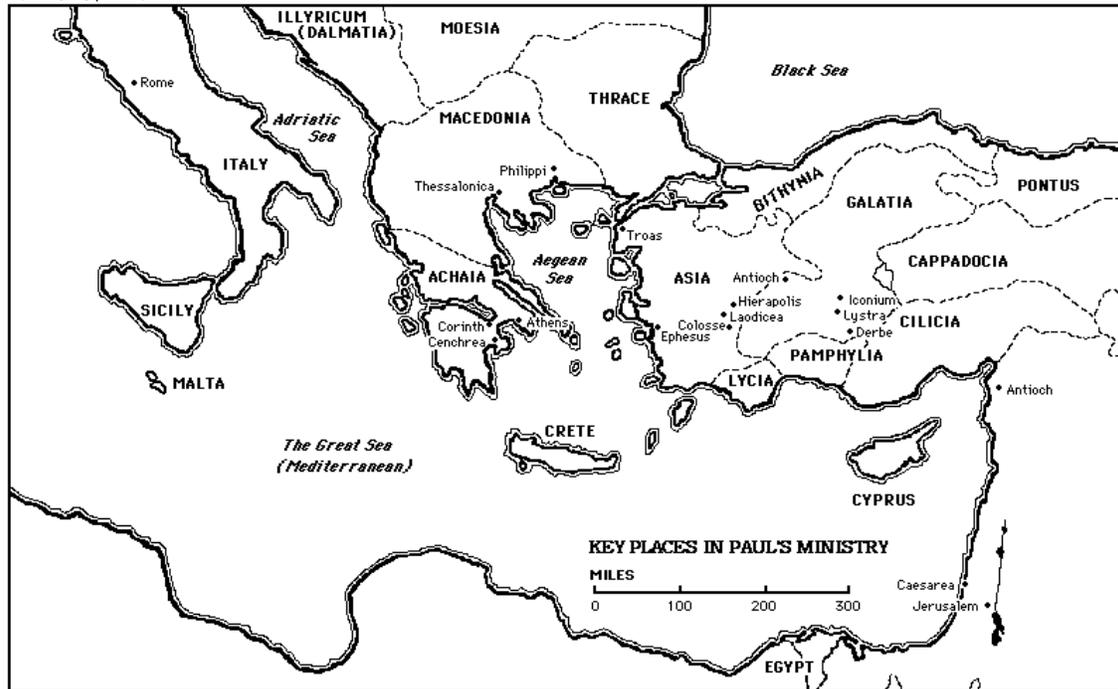
Conclusion:

Acts is an unfinished book, it has continued for the last 1900 years.

Revelation is, in a sense, a continuation.

The last word in the book of Acts is “unhindered.”

(BKC [NT] p. 433)



Places and Dates of the Writings of the New Testament Epistles

(BKC [NT] p. 434)

Decade	Books	Places	Dates
A.D. 40-49	James Galatians	Jerusalem Antioch of Syria	A.D. 45-48 40-49, after Paul's first missionary journey
50-59	1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Romans	Corinth Corinth Ephesus Macedonia Corinth	50-54, in Paul's second missionary journey 50-54, in Paul's second missionary journey About 56, in Paul's third missionary journey About 56, in Paul's third missionary journey 57, in Paul's third missionary journey
60-69	Ephesians 1 John 2 John 3 John Philippians Colossians Philemon 1 Timothy Titus 1 Peter Jude 2 Timothy 2 Peter Hebrews	Rome Ephesus Ephesus Ephesus Rome Rome Rome Macedonia? Macedonia? Rome? ? Rome Rome? ?	60 60-65 Early 60's Early 60's 60-61 60-62 60-62 63-66 63-66 64 67-80 67 67-68 68-69

Paul's Life	
Birth of Paul	around the time of Christ's birth
Conversion of Paul	A.D. 33
First missionary journey	47-48
GALATIANS written after first journey	49
Apostolic council at Jerusalem	49
Second missionary journey	49-52
1 and 2 THESSALONIANS written during second journey	51
Third missionary journey	56-58
1 and 2 CORINTHIANS written during third journey	55-56
ROMANS written during third journey	57-58
Arrest in Jerusalem	58
Journey to Rome	59-60
In Rome awaiting trial, under guard	60-61
PHILEMON, COLOSSIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS written from prison	61
Paul released, revisits churches, resumes evangelistic ministry	62-66
1 TIMOTHY, TITUS written	63-66
Paul arrested, imprisoned at Rome	66-67
2 TIMOTHY written from prison	67
Paul executed	67

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him" ([John 3:36](#)). So what I believe is important. My destiny hangs upon it according to the scriptures. "And some believed, and some believed not." It might be well if you ask yourself the question, "In which of the two categories do I stand?"