

Acts 28:1 ¶ And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

Acts 28:2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

The narrative continues...

After escaping the danger from the storm, they realized that they were on the island of Melita, today known as Malta. It is a small island about 18 miles long and 8 miles wide. The natives there were very kind beginning with building a fire to warm the travelers from the rain and cold.

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.

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.

Acts 28:5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

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.

Paul had gathered some sticks to help keep the fire going. Suddenly, a poisonous snake trying to escape the fire bit Paul on the hand and wouldn't let go. When the natives saw this, they decided that Paul must be a murderer since he had escaped such an awful storm only to be bitten by such a snake. They thought he was receiving due justice for his actions. Paul finally shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects from the bite. The natives couldn't believe it; they thought he should have swollen or fallen down dead. After observing him for a while and seeing that nothing bad happened to him, they changed their minds and decided that he must be a god.

JFB notes that these islanders "believed in a *Supreme, Resistless, Avenging Eye and Hand*, however vague their notions of *where* it resided."

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.

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.

Acts 28:9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

Acts 28:10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded *us* with such things as were necessary.

Publius, the chief ruler of the island nation, lived in the area nearby and generously offered lodging to "us" for three days. I would assume the "us" to be

referencing Paul and his companions, but I guess it could have included all the stranded passengers. During that time, they became aware that the father of Publius was sick with fever and dysentery (from Greek for “bloody flux”). Paul went in to lay hands on him and pray for him, and the man was healed. Once this became known, others on the island suffering from diseases came to Paul and were healed. The natives honored the missionaries liberally; and when they departed, they supplied them with all the things they needed.

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.

Acts 28:12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days.

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:

Acts 28:14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

After three months, the traveling entourage under the supervision of Commander Julius departed Malta in a ship from Alexandria that had wintered in Malta. The ship’s figurehead was of “Castor and Pollux,” the twin gods. The NIV Commentary explains that these gods were “considered by sailors a sign of good fortune in a storm.”

The first stop on this part of the journey was at Syracuse (the ancient capital of Sicily) where they stayed for three days. The next stop was at Rhegium; one day later they came to Puteoli (on the bay of Naples) with the help of a south wind.

At Puteoli they found some fellow believers who invited them to stay for the week with them. We do not know whether Julius had a reason for staying in this city for a week or just wanted to grant Paul favor in light of all he had done. Finally, they headed toward Rome. McGarvey notes that the rest of the journey was over land.

Acts 28:15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

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.

Word had evidently gotten around about Paul’s arrival during their stay in Puteoli, and believers came as far as the Appian Market (about 41 miles from Rome) and The Three Taverns (about 30 miles from Rome) to meet them. This really encouraged Paul, and he thanked God for their support and encouragement.

The NIV Commentary again added some insight: “Paul and company took the Via Domitiana from Puteoli to Neapolis, turning northwest to travel to Rome on the Via Appia—that oldest, straightest, and most perfectly made of all the Roman roads.”

When they finally arrived in the city of Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard. JFB notes that this man was known as the Praetorian Prefect and was the highest military authority in the city.

As in Caesarea, Paul was allowed to stay by himself under guard. Verse 30 tells us that he stayed in a house he personally rented.

David Guzik provides some interesting information about Rome: “When Paul came to Rome, the city had existed for almost 800 years. The famous Coliseum was not yet built; but the prominent buildings were the temple of Jupiter, the palaces of Caesar, and a temple to Mars (the god of war). At the time, Rome had a population of about two million - a million slaves, and a million free. Society was divided into roughly three classes: A small upper class, a large class of the poor, and slaves.”

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.

Acts 28:18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death in me.

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.

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.

Three days after arriving in Rome Paul called a meeting of the Jewish leaders in the city. He explained to them that though he was a prisoner in Rome, he had done nothing to deserve being imprisoned. He had done nothing to harm anyone nor had he done anything against the customs of the Jewish people. Still, the religious leaders in Jerusalem had pressed charges against him; and he had ended up in the prison there. He further related that the Roman governing authorities that had examined him would have let him go because they too found him not guilty of any of the charges made against him. However, because the Jewish religious leaders refused to accept their decision, he feared for his life and felt his only recourse was to appeal to Caesar. He had no desire to make accusations against the Jewish people in general; he only wanted to save his life. Paul wanted them to know that it was for his love of Israel that he was bound with a prison chain. It was his desire for them to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, but they wanted none of that.

Acts 28:21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

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.

The Jewish leaders replied that they had received no news from Judea about Paul, neither had any travelers from there reported anything bad about him. They acknowledged that they would like to hear more about “this sect” with which Paul identified. They had only heard negative things about it.

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.

Acts 28:24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

Evidently realizing that there were many more who would be interested in Paul’s testimony, they made an appointment to meet at another time at his house. Paul took a whole day (from morning till evening) to teach from the law of Moses and from the prophets about the kingdom of God and how these prophecies pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. Some believed him, and some 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,

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:

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.

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.

Acts 28:29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

At the end of the day, the people departed in obvious disagreement with one another. Before they left, however, Paul had one last thing to say; and he quoted from the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 6:9–10 “And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 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.”

He was obviously making an application to those to whom he had just spoken as well as those who had turned on him in Israel. It is because the Jews rejected Jesus that “the salvation of God was being given to the Gentiles” to spread throughout the world. God knew that many of the Gentiles would hear His word and believe it; while in comparison, most Jews would reject it. Paul explained this sad truth in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 11:25 "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

After this, the Jews departed still arguing among themselves.

**Acts 28:30 ¶ And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,
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.**

Luke closed his letter by telling Theophilus that Paul lived for two whole years in his rented home and shared the gospel of the kingdom of God with all who came to see him. During that time, he was allowed to freely and boldly preach and teach the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ and His coming kingdom.

David Guzik offers the following thought: "Probably, Luke did not record Paul's appearance before Caesar because the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were written to give the Roman court the background and facts of Paul's case in his trial before Caesar."

Obviously, Paul's story didn't end here. We know that during this time Paul wrote the epistles known as Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.

According to JFB, "the appeal which brought him to Rome issued in his liberation, that he was at large for some years thereafter and took some wide missionary circuits, and that he was again arrested, carried to Rome, and then executed — was the undisputed belief of the early Church, as expressed by CHRYSOSTOM, JEROME, and EUSEBIUS, in the fourth century, up to CLEMENT OF ROME, the "fellow laborer" of the apostle himself (Philippians 4:3), in the first century."