

(Publish outline etc.) -

ROME AT LAST

Acts 28

INTRODUCTION:

We have now just completed tremendous storm which came to rest with a real sigh of relief in V. 44 - Chapter 27. "They all escaped the ship and were safe on land." Now the fact remains, as we look at it, that all of these people owed their lives to the Apostle Paul. In the closing moments of that shipwreck, the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoner. But Paul forbade the killing and so did the Centurion. Instead, all of those that were able to swim were instructed to cast themselves into the sea and swim. The rest of the crew made use of planks and pieces of the ship. And so all escaped safe to land. The ship was lost. The cargo of wheat was lost. But the prisoners, the sailors, the Roman soldiers, the Apostle Paul (the missionary), and the other passengers were all on shore.

276 safe

This brings us to Chapter 28 in which we will use two divisions that will cover this long chapter.

- ✓ First, the providences of the island. V. 1-11, and 12.
- ✓ Second, the proclamations of Rome. V. 13-31.

I. THE PROVIDENCES OF THE ISLAND - V. 1-12.
Today called Malta

+ First, a (safe landing) V. 1. And when they were escaped, they knew that the island was called Melita. When they went a shore on this island, their clothes were wet. It was cold. And evidently it was an early morning hour.

Writer in Publication "Open Window", story Big Fairbanks Flood - Radio Broadcast - Blow by Blow
 "May your mother & father be safe" "John I have your pigs at my house" - NO Time for Music "ill"

Whether she had lost everything - "No, -2- I Just Lost My Things."

A safe landing as we consider the scene of 276 people, were saved because of a promise. And Melita was the spot, and these men wondered, I imagine - what kind of reception they were going to receive when they were cast a shore.

Now this is the final chapter of the book of Acts, we are facing now the last stage of Paul's pathway of progress from the capitol of the Jewish world to that of the Gentile world.

He had been in many out posts, Antioch, Phillippi, Ephesus and others. Now he was going toward the center of the empire, Rome, Italy.

Luke wrote Acts during this period and while he was confined in Rome, the two years with Paul. Noted these events. Many people consider it an unfinished book. Because Luke would not go farther. But the work is still unfinished because the work is in your hands and my hands.

This shipwreck took place about 60 miles South of Sicily. But the first providence - a safe landing.

+ Second, sympathetic people - v. 2. Who were these island people. Luke speaks of them as Barbarians. *4 Cultures: 1. Roman, Latin speaking 2. Greek, Hellenistic Cultural Language 3. Jewish 4. Barbarians not fit in other 3 cultures -*

Jews divide people into two groups. (Jews and Gentiles.)

Catholics divide people into two groups. Catholic and heathen.

Greeks divide people into two groups. (Greek and Barbarian.)

Christians divide people into two groups. (Saved and unsaved.)

The Greeks called these non-Greeks Barbarians. Now this not in contempt. But it was to indicate the sound of an unknown tongue. People of Melita were Barbarians in a sense of the word. That they did not speak their language. The beautiful Greek language.

Another way of designating these people would simply be natives. They were natives of this island and this is a very homely, touching scene. Because these people were very sympathetic with these newcomers.

v. 2 They showed no little kindness. They kindled the fire. They received everyone - they did not discriminate against anyone.

Luke says it was cold, the rain was falling. And here was a sympathetic group of people, of natives, who first of all built the fire. To warm by. To dry out their clothes.

They welcomed Paul. And I think they prepared food and a fire. This must have been the middle of November. They did not try to take advantage of these newcomers. Who had been cast upon their island.

Now here is something of social love. And this dwells in men's hearts around the world. I think probably that even cannibals get together in tribes. Because of some love.

Livingston found hearts that were touched by sympathy. You remember in the Bible, the prodigal son, the great element in that story is the part that love played. The boy sinned, but think about the father's love.

You look at the story of the cross and it touches men's hearts even though they are as cold as clay.

Now when you contrast what these sympathetic people were doing, with what some of the people who had been on the ship - there is quite a difference. Some of them didn't trust Paul. Some of them wanted to put the prisoners to death.

It is very embarrassing to us today. Sometimes we find kindness among unchurched people and we find it lacking among our own people. Luke says we found kindness. Unusual kindness among these sympathetic people.

+ Third, (snake bite) - V. 3-6. They had safely landed. They found sympathetic people. And V. 3, Paul was a very practical man. He made himself very useful. Here was a bond-fire that was being built, that was to be kept a fire. Paul walked around and picked up some drift wood, or maybe a bundle of sticks, over in the edge of the brush. Now here was a man who had been bruised from riding a plank to shore. And he is gathering a bundle of sticks. A viper came out of the heat and fastened to his hands. That is when Paul picked up this bundle of sticks, he picked up a snake. And when he held it over the fire, due to the coldness the snake had not moved. But when he was placed next to the fire - the viper began to move. And fastened onto his hand.

- V. 4 - The barbarians saw the snake and they said in their hearts - this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped the sea, vengeance is due him. They were superstitious. *Retribution Always follows wrong!*

Natural Man said: Job came upon tragic sorrow - Comforters visited said you suffer as great sinner! only Best men -
Tower of Sidon - fell on sinners -
Man Born Blind - did Parents sin? -
The natives concluded that probably Paul had committed a crime and they knew about justice. And they connected crime with punishment. And this feeling was that

Paul, Thome in flesh was given me - -5- My Grace is sufficient -

he must suffer for his crime. He must be punished some way. He wasn't punished by death in the sea. The viper has been sent to punish him. Now Paul will suffer shipwrecks and storms. And he is going to suffer this snake bite. He is a tremendous criminal - he deserved great punishment.

V. 5 - Paul is a very cool minded man. He doesn't upset in a hurry. He merely shook the viper off. No harm. They looked at how his hand should be swollen. Or that Paul should drop dead. But after a great while, they saw no harm, and they changed their mind. And they said - V. 6, Paul is a great god. They changed their opinion in a hurry. Now all hearts that are not founded on faith are as unstable as water. These people were looking at that which was on the surface.

Let me say there are some vipers that we need to shake off. For example, dishonesty. And an ungoverned temper. Malice. These are some of the things that bite people today. And they carry the poison of this in their hearts. And this snake Paul shook off. Paul's hand did not swell. Paul did not drop dead. And they felt somehow that only God could do this. This was a miracle. And there was no sign of him dying.

Fourth, the sick were healed - V. 7-9.

V. 7 - In that same quarter, there was a chief man of the island. Whose name was Publius. And he received Paul and gave him lodging for three days. He was very courteous to Paul. Now, V. 8 - This chief man of the island had a father that laid sick with a fever. To whom Paul entered in and prayed and laid his hands upon him. And he was healed.

The power of Christianity is here demonstrated - in the viper and in the sick man. Paul's reputation spread. And there were similar cases of healing, that took place.

Now this man of the island, must have had a villa of some size. That would accommodate if he took 276 of these people and gave them hospitality for the three days.

V. 9 - Other people came which had diseases in the island and they were healed.
People were healed, Blessed, & saved by the Gospel.

Now there are two or three ways that we might look at this. Now Paul was certainly an instrument of God. He healed the first man's father. But these other healings, it indicates to us that he may have brought in the sick. Now Luke uses two different terms here. Paul healed the father of Publius. But the people of the island who were healed were cured. Now this could have meant that there was a miracle but there was also medical application made by Doctor Luke. He was a physician, you know. And so they were healed in this way.

There is redemption and healing in the mission of the Gospel. There was a man on a dark night who rode over a steep place. He caught a bush and held on. His muscles weakened. In despair, he let go. Now the drop was only 6". There are people who work and struggle with nervous tension when all the time, they only need to let go, to find out that the ever lasting arms are beneath them.

1.10 Fifth, security is provided V. 10. We read that the natives honored Paul and Luke with many honors. They gave them provisions for, and security - as they laden them down with many presents. They had won the hearts of these people. And Paul was now going to enter another ship. Winter was over, and the sailing was safe.

So security is provided. It is another providence of the island.

Sons of Zeus + 2 stars called Castor & Pollux

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Sixth, (sailing mercies) V. 11. As the ship departed, that had wintered in the island, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. So there was a ship, and once again in the Spring Paul was leaving the island. Going out of the harbor again. Two of the favorite Gods of the seafaring folk were the heavenly twins - Castor was one. And the ship had carved images of them as the ship's figurehead. Now the voyage was very prosperous as they sailed out of port. And went on the first day of their voyage from Melita to Puteoli.

North from Malta

This was about 95 miles that they had to travel.

V. 12 - They landed at Syracuse, where they tarried for three days. And then they sailed on. Cicero said it was grandest + most beautiful of all Greek cities.

Now we leave the providences of the island.

Puteoli
Pu. tē' - ō. li

II. THE PROCLAMATIONS AT ROME.

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First, the (reception in advance) - V. 13. Puteoli. When they had finally had

a South wind and came to this port which was in the bay of Naples - about 140 miles to the great commercial center of Rome. Sulphur Springs - Beautiful MTS.

Yes views across the Bay - near Explosive Volcano - 19 yr later AD 79 hot aug. night walk of warm mud covered Herculaneum with 65' deep - Pompeii with stones Bean size 1' deep & ash, Buried until 18th-19th Centuries. Today smother like locomotive, 2000 yr since that day, still smokes -

Others felt that part of this journey was as much as 210 miles, for sailing.

V. 14

And the land traveled. But they had 150 miles or so to go from this port town, and this would be made. We would say today, it was something like the distance from South Norfolk Baptist Church to Richmond, Virginia - maybe a little farther.

Wanted Paul stay 7 days, to break on Lord's Day -

That would be a pretty good walk. But Paul, a prisoner - the other prisoners and the soldiers travel and journey this way.

Appii Forum - The market place 43 miles from Rome

(3 Shops)

V. 15 - Three taverns - some of the people had heard about Paul coming. And they came out to meet them. They were met by a group of Christians at three taverns. This was about 10 miles up the road - or it could have been close to 30. For many years Paul hungered for these brethren. It was a beautiful sight.

These Roman brethren coming to meet the Apostle. And at this point, Paul saw

15 B. them - and he thanked God and took courage. *at Philippi opposed, beaten, prison, discouragement - different here -*

Is that not the way it is with your life sometimes when an old friend comes in - when you have been in the midst of a storm and when he comes, you can't help but thank God and take courage. So here was a reception in advance. Even before Paul arrived in Rome - they came to welcome him.

Read story little girl from school told mother little girl across aisle is so badly she sat at desk & cried because her mother had died - what did you say? nothing - I just sat by her side at the death & put my arm around her & cried too, can't improve on that response - Xian faith is kind, openhearted - sympathy -

They were traveling the old Appian Way. The group probably entered Rome together. *Built 300 yrs before Paul by Claudius Appian - Famous highway 100 mi long*

God has a purpose for our lives -

V. 16 - They arrive at Rome at last. Luke mentions this fact twice in V. 14 and also in V. 16. Paul had desired and determined to see Rome - Acts 19:21. And in Rome - Romans 1:11. He was there.

He was there as an uncondemned Roman who had appealed to Caesar that he might save his life from a blood thirsty crowd, in Jerusalem.

There is simply a marvelous idea here that the Christian is never alone. He has the consciousness of an unseen cloud of witnesses around him. He is also conscious that he belongs to a world-wide fellowship. Wherever he goes, God is there. And the risen Lord Jesus is with him.

His arrival in Rome is something very precious to the heart of Paul. He is allowed to live in his own house with a Roman guard and I imagine that he won many of these soldiers to Christ.

These were the days of Nero - and he was around 25 years of age - but already his hands were red with blood. And his wife had already been murdered. Paul did not go - not to Rome. He did not see Rome as one sees it today.

There was a temple to Mars - to remind all of those arriving in the city of the part that the strength of the empire was based upon the war-like character.

It was the center of paganism - vice. Within a circuit of 12 miles, two million people. One million of these were slaves.

The wealth of Rome was masked in the possessions of a very few. A tourist at that time would hear two cries. One was bread and the other, the circus.

One wanted to get bread to satisfy the hunger of the body. The other crowd wanted circuses - they wanted combat for excitement.

Thousands of people slept in the public places. Slaves were ground under the cruel heel of opposition and oppression.

Nero is said to have been one of the meanest men ever to live. That he burned Rome and blamed Christians for doing it. He killed them.

He laid off a new street with iron pillars. And chained a Christian to each pillar. And put oil and tar over these Christians and set them afire. And rode up and down the street in the light of these burning martyrs.

Now Paul was beyond 60 years of age. Perhaps he was aged more because of the hardships. As his people together, he told them while he was a prisoner.

WHAT can a Man do in Chains - Every 8 hrs. a new guard; Personal guards of Emperor, Paul, John's Stevensons said TD - wrote a friend his misdeeds for 14 yrs - I have not had a day of health - sick, in Bed, hemorrhages, Books of medicine - Great ideas born in his mind
Marcus Oods - Great Seminary Scotland - wait 5 yrs before any church call him. gifted oppositer -

Second, we review the proclamations. There are four things that Paul used in making his proclamations at Rome.

Demosthenes - Stuttering, Stammering - put pebbles in his mouth & stood by the roaring sea in order to learn how to speak loudly & eloquently -

Lincoln Born in absolute poverty. his little girl's Christmas gift gave him a poem: "When the night before Christmas when all through the house not a creature was stirring - not even a mouse -"
+ First, (conferences.) V. 17-21

He gathered the people together and he told them why he was a prisoner. He called the chief Jews and the men and the brethren. And had a conference about why he was there and what had happened to him as a prisoner.

V. 18 - He proclaims and reviews his trial. And the verdict.

V. 19 - He said I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar.

V. 20 - He said, for this purpose I have called you together, that really for the hope of Israel, what Israel hoped for in the Messiah - I am bound with this chain. I have this chain on my hands. An impressing convert in claiming Jesus the Messiah, this must have been. *Eph. 6:20 Ambassador in Bonds.*

V. 21 - These people admitted that they had not received any complaints against

Paul from anywhere. So his proclamation first of all was through a conference.

+ Second teaching. V. 22-29.

V. 22 - These people said we desire to hear about this group in Jerusalem and also what you know and what has been spoken against you. At this point, Paul has the opportunity to proclaim by teaching.

V. 23 - He set aside a day. Now in V. 30 - he tells us he lives in a hired house. He invites these people to come to his lodging where he can expound and teach the kingdom of God and persuading them concerning Jesus Christ. He started back with the law of Moses and he started through the Bible with the prophets.

And this must have been a wonderful opportunity because he taught from morning until evening. This was a long period of time - that Paul spent going over God's kingdom and his divine reign over the Jewish nation. And then the Old Testament. I imagine that he pointed out Daniel 7:13-14.

Isa. 9:7.

He taught them about the hope of Israel.

And then he taught them about the salvation of God in V. 28. That salvation was of God.

And then he took the prophet Isaiah in V. 25-27, and quoted from the old prophet.

Paul started with the economy of God, with the priest nation. Ex. 19:6.

He talked about the true worship, of God. That they were to obey God's covenant and they were going to be a particular, peculiar people for him.

And he told about when the Messiah came.

Now Luke tells us that some people believe and begin to be persuaded. And there were others who continued to disbelieve. As Paul taught them this wonderful message.

V. 25 - He quotes Isa. 6:9-10. To our ears the words may sound harsh and judgemental. But Paul is giving here to his kinsmen the real challenge of God as he quotes this from the prophet. And the Jews should hear this with understanding. Their hearts were heavy, their ears were dull, their eyes were closed. As Paul makes his appeal to them in V. 28-29.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan reminds us that the words from Isaiah are quoted by Jesus - Matt. 13:14, John 12:40. And they are quoted here by Paul. They are pronouncements of doom. They rejected the light of the Gospel. In this sense, they had closed their own eyes and refused to see. Hardened their own hearts.

We need to let this be a warning to our own hearts. While you can still see and hear and respond, I would invite you to do so. If there is a conviction in your heart of sin.

+ Third, writing - V. 30. Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house.

Now how did he spend these months and this time in his hired house. Well, we pick up some ideas about this in other places. There was a constant ministry going on that was not limited to where he was imprisoned or the house. There was a constant coming and going of fellow workers. With news and messages of the churches.

There were several letters which Paul sent out at this time.

First, Eph. 6:21, 3:1-6.

Paul wrote this letter which we know as Ephesians - as a circular letter some believe to all the churches in Asia. If so, it may be that this is the same one that Paul mentions in Col. 4:16. Or in Eph. 6:21. This must have happened about the middle of Paul's two year stay in Rome.

Phil. 2:19, 30, 1, 12, 14. He wrote this letter and he thanked them for the gifts they had sent to him.

Epaphroditus - a member of the church at Phillippi had brought a gift to Paul and then had been taken deathly sick at Rome. Phil. 2:25-27. News of his illness had gotten back to Phillippi. Chapter 2:26.

Timothy was with Paul when he wrote the letter - Phil. 1:1. And so were other unnamed brethren. Col. 4:10-14. The church at Colossae, which had never seen Paul's face - Chapter 2:1, had problems. Some involved the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote this letter and sent it. Col. 4:7. He mentioned some names in Col. 4:10-14.