

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 27:39-28:10 | Session 73 | Shipwrecked | A.D. 62

On a ship to Rome the apostle Paul, a prisoner became the decision maker for the entire crew, along with the ship's owner, the other prisoners, and the Roman centurions. After warning them not to set sail from Fair Havens, they began listening to Paul. A Euroclydon (hurricane) has arisen and the ship with its **two hundred threescore and sixteen souls** (27:37) is in great peril. An angel of God appeared to Paul saying **Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.** The storm raged for more than fourteen days. The ships tackle, along with the cargo (wheat; 27:38) was thrown overboard and the crew sensed land is nearby (27:27).

Verse 39-41—

Their first inclination is to ground the bow of the ship onto the shore and hopefully get to safety. **They committed themselves unto the sea.** The KJV translators added the italicized word **themselves**. It could be that the men **committed themselves unto the sea**. Or, more likely **they committed the anchors** (the four anchors they had previously cast from the stern, vs. 29) **unto the sea** after they had been **taken up** (I lean toward the latter as do most other translations, and even the Greek text). Italicized words give us options in translating a passage. Regardless, the **violence of the waves** beat against the **hinder part** (the stern or back) and the ship was **broken**. It would have been a frightening moment and this was one of three instances of being shipwrecked that Paul recalls later in his letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:25).

Verses 42-44—

If they were to **kill the prisoners**, it would have included Paul. Again, the centurion Julius (27:1-3), who had a fondness for Paul comes to his aid and every one of the **souls** onboard **escaped all safe to land**. The held on to **some boards**, and **some broken pieces** (literally *some stuff*, that is anything they could grab hold of).

**Chapter 28 | Verse 1—**

**Then they knew that the island was called Melita** (Or, Malta today). Here, most of the other translations use **Malta** which is the modern name and would not have been known by that name at the time of this writing. I believe we call this an anachronism. Here the KJV is one of the few translations that gets this right.<sup>1</sup> The crew and/or those who had sailed the Mediterranean recognized this island as **Melita**.

Verse 2—

**The barbarous people** is a transliteration of the Greek, *barbaros*. The word Barbarian in the N.T. really just means people who didn't speak Greek or whose speech was rude or rough. Most translations translate this as *the native people, or the islanders*. These *barbaros* people were kind and helpful to the stranded men.

Verses 3-4—

**There came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.** The viper must have been thrown in with a bundle of sticks and when Paul reached down to throw in his bundle the snake, driven out by **the heat**, bit him and **fastened** (only used here in the N.T.) **on his hand**. The **barbarians saw** what was happening and thought Paul was a dead man. They had a worldview of *What goes around comes around*<sup>2</sup>. They thought, since this man had escaped the sea, he had skirted the death he deserved and now *karma* was out to get him and **vengeance suffereth not to live** or, his punishment has now been executed. This is a pagan worldview, and sadly many Christians live by that worldview. They say, "I have sinned and now God is going to get me, or punish me." Does it make any sense that we would be called "Complete in Christ" (Colossians 2:10), and we have been made "the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21), or we are "His body" (Ephesians 1:23); and we think God would punish us? That is not grace, that is law. (This is not to say there are no earthly consequences from sin). Beloved, God is not "imputing *our* trespasses" or more specifically the world's trespasses. We live in the dispensation of grace in which all men and women benefit. Nevertheless, death still reigns (Romans 5:14) and the solution to everlasting life is to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31).

Verse 5—

**And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.** Paul was still able to exhibit the Kingdom miracles of an apostle. This kingdom gospel is explained in Mark 16:15-18, a passage that many disregard because they do not rightly divide. The prophet Isaiah (11:8) wrote of the kingdom when a nursing child can play near the hole of a snake (**asp**; Hebrew, *pehthen*) and not fear any harm. Today there are fringe groups who handle snakes and often die from a snake bite. That is because we do not live in the kingdom gospel dispensation. Handle a poisonous snake today and without the antivenom you will most likely die.

Verse 6—

**They said he was a god.** This is not the first time Paul has been revered for being a god. In Acts 14:8 Paul and Silas healed a man *crippled from his mother's womb* (*a man...mother's womb*: Life begins at conception, in the womb; Psalm 139:13), when they healed the man the people from Lyconia said, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." Paul and Silas made it clear they were just men (Acts 14:15). Luke doesn't record Paul setting the people straight that he was not a god, but based on prior experience he did.

Verses 7-10—

We see Paul doing apostolic miracles and while we don't have a record of him preaching the gospel, again, we can be certain that he did (1 Corinthians 1:17). Later in Romans 15:18-19 he describes his ministry which was to *fully preach the gospel of Christ*. The mighty signs and wonders Paul performed were evidence of his apostleship. These *Gentiles* on Melita were appreciative of Paul, and those traveling with him. They may have honored them for the healings, and also because of the gospel.<sup>3</sup> Later, in Paul's letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:20), we see the Acts transition more clearly where Paul leaves **Trophimus...at Miletum sick**.

<sup>1</sup> The KJV translators missed the mark in Joel 3:4 with the use of Palestine (which should be Philistia).

<sup>2</sup> Today *karma* is Hindu or Buddhist thought of one's destiny or fate, but sadly it has also crept in to the church. In Galatians 6:7,8 Paul speaks of *sowing and reaping*, but he talking about *where we plant our lives*. If

we plant to the flesh, we will reap that which the flesh can provide, for example, "Do drugs, reap the corruption which comes from drugs, etc." Sowing and reaping is not about our fate or destiny.

<sup>3</sup> The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia notes that Publius, according to *tradition was the first bishop of Malta and that he afterward became bishop of Athens*.