

Spiritual Growth Resources: From Discipleship to Apostleship

Acts of the Church

Early Church Faith for Today



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A Brief overview of Acts 27:1-28:13

This chapter begins with Paul setting sail for Italy escorted by a centurion named Julius. Since Luke uses the first person plural pronoun “we,” it would seem like he was there with Paul on this journey, or Luke uses “we” as he considers himself part of Paul’s ministry team. Syria is a westward journey through the Mediterranean Sea. Storms, bad navigational decisions, and a shipwreck prolong this journey, but Paul eventually makes it to Italy. On many occasions, the crew and passengers had lost hope of life. This chapter would be like a novel for someone who likes to sail. Many navigational maneuvers employed that those of us who would rather stay on land wouldn’t understand, but maybe imagine.

Despite the treacherous conditions and his warnings, Paul was an encourager. He urged people to eat. He encouraged the passengers not to give up hope because God had told him that he would be in Rome.

After a shipwreck, the 276 passengers were safe. They land on the island of Malta, which Paul describes the people there showing “unusual kindness.” It was here that a snake bit Paul but nothing happened to him. The Maltese thought of Paul as a god. Paul healed the island’s chief official’s father, and many sick came to Paul. This journey took many months, but eventually, he arrives in Rome.

Comfortable with Discomfort

K N O W

Read Acts 27-28

1. How would it be for you to be on several boats for many months, wet, soggy, cold, sick, hungry, and shipwrecked as one of several prisoners and with 200 plus passengers on board?

2. Who is traveling on this ship with Paul? Acts 27:1-2

- A. Julius the centurion
- B. Aristarchus - Acts 19:29
- C. Other prisoners
- D. Luke - "we" should sail... Acts 27:1

3. What were the travel conditions like on this trip?

- A. Contrary winds - Acts 27:4
- B. Slow - Acts 27:7
- C. Difficult - Acts 27:8
- D. Dangerous - Acts 27:9
- E. Other.

4. Despite the treacherous travel conditions, what positive things did Paul experience along the way?

- A. Paul was treated kindly by the centurion, Julius. - Acts 27:3
- B. Paul was able to see his friends and be cared for during their stop in Sidon.
- C. An angel spoke to him, assuring him that he and all those on board will make it. - Acts 27:23-25
- D. Other.

5. Look at a biblical map and find where all of these places are.

- A. Italy
- B. Adramyttium
- C. Sidon
- D. Cyprus

- E. Coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia
- F. Myra in Lycia
- G. Cnidus
- H. Crete
- I. Salmone
- J. Fair Havens - the city of Lasea
- K. Phoenix - a harbor of Crete
- L. Cauda (small island)
- M. Syrtis
- N. Adriatic Sea
- O. Malta
- P. Syracuse
- Q. Rhegium
- R. Puteoli

6. Paul was treated "kindly" by the Roman Centurion (Acts 27:3). What does this say about the way Paul lived out his faith?

- A. Paul was not *just* a believer, he followed the example of Christ.
- B. Paul respected those in authority, even if he disagreed with them.
- C. Paul acknowledged his shortcomings and apologized when needed (i.e., after being slapped)
- D. Paul treated Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slave or free, equally.
- E. Paul didn't show evil for evil, but instead good for evil.
- F. Other.

7. What was the experience like on the island of Malta? (Acts 28:1-13)

- A. The native people of Malta treated them with "unusual kindness."
- B. The people gave the shipwrecked people food and shelter.
- C. Paul survived a snake bite, and that opened the door for other miracles to take place.
- D. Paul was able to stay with the island chief for three days.
- E. The stay in Malta totaled three months.
- F. Other.

8. Despite the "unusual kindness" of the people of Malta, what does their reaction to the snake bite say? (Acts 28:3-6)

- A. They thought Paul was a murderer who was on the run.
- B. Since Paul survived the shipwreck, the snake bite was there to finish him off.
- C. They were sure that Paul's arm would swell up and suddenly fall dead.

- D. Their "unusual kindness" didn't show here because they didn't do anything to come to Paul's aid.
- E. They went from thinking Paul was a murderer to thinking he was a god.
- F. Other.

9. Who got word of Paul's arrival in Italy?

- A. "Brothers" in Puteoli (Acts 28:14)
- B. People from the "Forum of Appius and Three Taverns (Acts 28:15)
- C. The leaders of the Jews in Rome (Acts 28:17)
- D. Others.

10. What reputation did the Jewish leaders in Rome have of Christianity or Paul? (Acts 28:21ff)

- A. Everywhere it is spoken against (Acts 28:22)
- B. They had received no letters from Judea concerning Paul.
- C. Rome was too far to get all the information regarding Paul and this "sect."
- D. They were curious enough to allow Paul to speak to them about his teachings.
- E. Other.

11. What was the response of the Jews in Rome when Paul first met with them? Acts 28:23-30

- A. They listened the whole day to Paul.
- B. Some were convinced, and others disbelieved.
- C. The Jews had a dispute among themselves after Paul preached to them.
- D. They left after hearing Paul preach and quoting from the prophet Isaiah.
- E. Other

12. How was it like in Rome for Paul? Acts 28:29-31

- A. He lived there for two years at his own expense.
- B. He preached the gospel without hindrance.
- C. He welcomed all who came to him.
- D. Other.

G R O W

Paul's leaves the middle eastern region for the last time. These last two chapters reveal Paul's leadership capabilities in circumstances that are not necessarily spiritual. Paul can command respect amid his peers, the Roman Centurion, and the hundreds of passengers traveling in the same boat with him. Paul gives nautical advice, which the centurion and captain ignore, and he turns out to be correct. Paul is encouraging fellow passengers to eat because if not, they would die of hunger before drowning in the sea. They must have

taken his counsel seriously because they threw the rest of the food overboard to lighten the ship once they ate.

There are stops along the way where Paul can visit with local believers. His reputation and his following are admirable. Having all this knowledge, so much responsibility, a successful ministry, he doesn't seem to get a "big head" over it. Paul keeps things in perspective. God had revealed to him that he would be in Rome. Therefore Paul wasn't worried about not making it to Rome. The things that happened along the way were opportunities to increase his dependence on God.

Kindness is a theme that we hear of several times in these chapters. Julius, the Roman Centurion, escorting Paul to Italy, treated Paul kindly and allowed him to visit his friends when they landed in Sidon. The centurion trusted Paul to go off on his own and be cared for by his friends. Paul and his friends could have escaped. After all, Paul was in jail for unjust reasons, and according to Festus and King Agrippa, he could go free. The centurion is taking a huge risk in letting Paul go off on his own. At the same time, this centurion must have known Paul very well. Paul did spend two years detained in Caesarea, and it could be that this centurion was one of the guards watching Paul. Which means they had a lot of time to talk and get to know each other. Kindness isn't something you usually get from a Roman Centurion.

In another instance, during the shipwreck, fearing that the prisoners on board would swim away and escape, the soldiers wanted to kill them. Julius convinced the soldiers not to kill the prisoners because that would have meant killing Paul too. So, to preserve Paul's life, the centurion saves everyone else's life. Once again, we see kindness demonstrated by those who are supposed to be hardened soldiers.

Upon arriving on the island of Malta, Luke says that the people there treated them with "unusual kindness." Acts 28:2. It was cold and raining. The people kindled a fire for them and welcomed them all. Even the island chief, Publius, welcomed Paul and others to stay with him for three days. Paul returned that kindness by praying and laying hands on Publius' father, who was sick with fever and dysentery. He cured the man, and many others on the island came to find healing. The Maltese people honored Paul and others. After three months on Malta, they set sail again. The local people stocked up the boat with whatever the people needed and sent them off. What a great example of "unusual kindness."

Paul had been to many countries, cities, towns, villages, and islands. He had met thousands upon thousands of people in his journeys. You would think that he had before this experience. He would have experienced "unusual kindness." Maybe he did, but it was only here that Luke decided to write it down for our knowledge. In those three months in Malta,

Paul didn't experience the persecution he usually receives. Those Jews would follow him from city to city to cause trouble. Paul had a three-month reprieve from the cycle of arriving, going to the synagogue, and being harassed by those who didn't like him. Malta seemed different.

To summarize how the Maltese people treated their guests

1. They kindled a fire for them.
2. They received them with open arms.
3. They gave them food and lodging for three months.
4. They honored the people.
5. They stocked their boat on their way out.

Julius demonstrated kindness because he got to know Paul.

The people of Malta showed "unusual kindness" before even knowing who Paul was.

While in Rome, Paul was under house arrest. Interestingly enough, it says that Paul lived for two years "at his own expense" (Acts 28:30). Where did Paul get money for that? Most likely, people were helping him. Either way, we find some level of "kindness" by allowing Paul to receive visitors and be able to preach the gospel without hindrance and with boldness.

Paul "welcomed all who came to him." It sounds like what happened in Malta. It was in that Roman "prison" that Paul received the visit from Timothy (Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1:1), Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21), Epaphroditus (Philippians 4:18), and Mark (Colossians 4:10). Paul also used this time to write letters to the churches. These letters are part of the New Testament today. Writing letters to encourage the church became as important as visiting the churches in person and preaching the gospel. These letters served as a means of encouragement, teaching, correcting false teachings, addressing current issues facing the churches, and knowing his current situation.

Apply:

1. As Christians, are we showing kindness or unusual kindness to fellow believers, strangers, family, and friends?
2. What kind of kindness do you demonstrate to people you meet?
3. Does it take you a long time to show kindness to someone?

G O

As we reach the end of Acts, we have seen that the driving force behind the missionary expansion throughout the world has been the direct result of the Holy Spirit empowering men and women to preach the gospel in different ways. The gift of tongues, healings, hospitality, the gift of prophecy, among many others. These same gifts are available to us today. The gifts are not for us to show off our unique "talent" or to further our careers. The gifts of the Spirit are to build up the church and to reach out to the world. We are called to be nice to people and show the love of God through acts of charity. That would be at a basic level of Christian charity. The Spirit empowers us to do that which we think we cannot do. The power of the Spirit is to go beyond our comfort zone, and then we realize that evangelizing, sharing the gospel is not out of our comfort zone. The more you do it, the more you learn, the more you spiritually grow, the more we depend on God, the more we realize how far we are from His ideal for us.

The end of the book of Acts is not the end of Paul's story. Some believe that since the book ends without Paul ever having that audience with the Caesar, Paul was released and could have a 4th missionary journey, including the possibility of that coveted trip to Spain. An observant member of my congregation brought to my attention that it is most likely true that Paul did go to Spain. The New Testament doesn't explicitly say that it happened, but church history, through the writings of Clement, hints at the possibility of him reaching Spain. (I will add in here a snippet to see how many read this sentence. Paul needed to go to Spain because he understood that speaking Spanish is a requirement to get into heaven. If you read this, send me an email or text, and I'll treat you to a taco.) 🌮

Consider these words:

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God."

Ellen Gould White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*, vol. 4, Conflict of the Ages Series (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 9.

We are the appointed agency. That's it. There's no other agency on the planet that has been entrusted with the preaching of the gospel for the salvation of mankind. This is God's plan. We didn't come up with the plan of establishing a church. The church (we) are to show forth God's glory and through us the final and full display of God's love is to be displayed.

What a great privilege and great responsibility.

We enjoy the freedom of assembly, we have still have religious liberty and freedom of speech. It is in these times that can make great advances for the cause of Christ. Paul took full advantage of his freedom to spread the message Jesus gave him. Yet, in times of captivity and death threats, Paul didn't withhold anything from those whom he disciplined. Humanity is interesting in that when things get tough for us, the best in us can come out. We remember what we stand up for and in whom we have believed. When things get relatively easy, we tend to *ease up* too.

Jesus said, "We must work the works of him who sent me **while it is day**; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." - John 9:4-5

It is still daytime in our world. Let us continue the work that God gave mankind. The mission that Jesus gave us with the gifts the Holy Spirit has given us and empowered us with.

We are the appointed agency. That's it. There's no other agency on planet earth entrusted with preaching the gospel for the salvation of humanity. This is God's plan for the church. We didn't come up with the plan of establishing a church. The church (we) are to show forth God's glory, and through us, the final and full display of God's love is to be displayed.

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We enjoy the freedom of assembly. We have still have religious liberty and freedom of speech. It is in these times that we can make significant advances for the cause of Christ. Paul took full advantage of his freedom to spread the message Jesus gave him. Yet, in times of captivity and death threats, Paul didn't withhold anything from those whom he disciplined. Humanity is interesting in that when things get tough for us, the best in us can come out. We remember what we stand up for and in whom we have believed. When things get relatively easy, we tend to *ease up* too.

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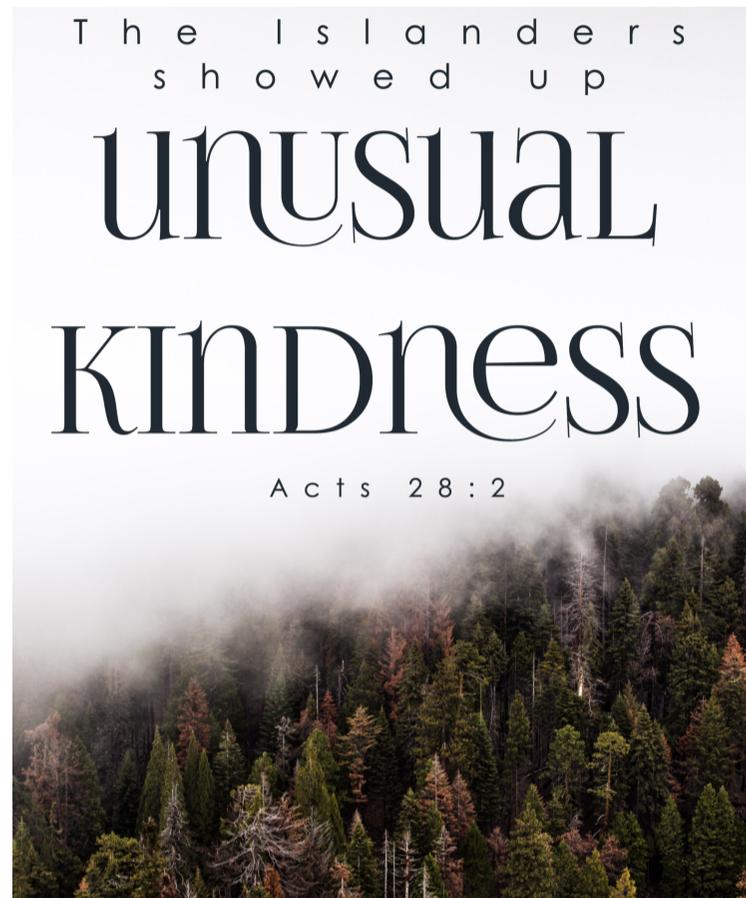
It is still daytime in our world. Let us continue the work God gave us. The mission that Jesus gave us with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Apply

1. How have we been inspired by the life of the first apostles, specifically the ministry of Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Philip, Stephan, and others?
2. These stories have different characters and personalities: Religious leaders, new believers, Romans, sick people, advancers of the cause, and detractors of the cause. Which one do you identify with the most right now?
3. Has this series helped you to see ministry differently than you have before?
4. Would you like to be part of a class to learn how to share your faith? (Contact Pastor Pedro at ptrinidad@carmsda.org).

Scripture Memorization for this Week

The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. Acts 28:2



Acts 28:2

Praise & Worship in Song



