

# **The Acts of the Apostles**

## **LESSON 24**

## **Paul's Voyage to Rome Begins (Acts 27:1-8)**

Paul was placed on a ship with other prisoners under the charge of a centurion named Julius (Acts 27:1). Paul was given a certain amount of liberty on the ship (Acts 27:2-3). Both Luke and Aristarchus were able to travel on the ship with him. Paul was able to take shore leave to visit with friends in Sidon. At this time he was most likely chained to a soldier or the centurion himself.

The ship sailed through some rough seas and eventually came to Myra in Lycia (See map). In Myra Paul was placed on an Alexandrian ship for the next leg of the journey (Acts 27:6). After many days of difficult sailing they arrived at a port called Fair Havens on the island of Crete (Acts 27:7-8).

## **Paul Warns of Impending Danger (Acts 27:9-12)**

*Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, 10 saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives." 11 Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. 12 And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.*

Paul advised those who operated the ship that it would be unwise to try to proceed to Rome at this time of the year. The ship owner and captain of the ship persuaded the centurion to press on hoping to winter in Phoenix.

## **Paul Goes through the Storm (Acts 27:13-38)**

Soon after they left Fair Havens a violent storm arose and blew them off course (Acts 27:13-18).

After three days in the storm they decided to take drastic measures to lighten the load and secure the ship (Acts 27:19-21). During this time they threw both cargo and much of the ship's tackle overboard. During this time they undergirded the ship with cables. Cables were put around the ships hull to keep it from breaking up. During this time they could not see the sun by day or the stars at night. During this time the men were too worried to eat (Acts 27:21). As it turned out they would not eat for fourteen days (Acts 27:33).

Paul comforted the crew by sharing his vision with them (Acts 27:22-26).

***But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. 22 And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, 24 saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ 25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. 26 However, we must run aground on a certain island.”***

After the fourteenth day the ship entered into shallow waters with the potential of running aground (Acts 27:27-30). In order to save the ship from hitting the rocks the crew dropped four anchors. In order to save themselves they lowered the skiff and were planning on abandoning the ship and the prisoners.

At this point, the prisoner Paul stepped into the situation and took charge (Acts 27:31- 36).

***Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, “Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved.” 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship’s boat and let it fall away. 33 Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing. 34 Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish.” 35 Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. 36 All of them [a]were encouraged and they themselves also took food.***

There were 276 people on board who were not ready to meet their Maker. The crew had already made a number of bad decisions, Paul was not going to sit by and let them make another one.

He told the men not to leave the ship or they would be lost (Acts 27:31-32). Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off. He urged them to eat so that they would be strong for survival. He blessed and broke bread with them to see to it that they did eat.

After eating, the crew further lightened the load by throwing the rest of the food overboard (Acts 27:38).

## **Paul Shipwrecked on Malta (Acts 27:39-44)**

***When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could. 40 And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the***

***beach. 41 But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the force of the waves. 42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would swim away and escape; 43 but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, 44 and the rest should follow, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land.***

When it was day, the crew saw a bay with a beach that would be well suited for grounding the ship (Acts 27:39). They lifted the anchors, loosed the rudder, hoisted the sail and made way for the shore (Acts 27:40). When they ran the ship aground on a sand bar in the bay, the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners so that none would escape (Acts 27:41-42). By this time the centurion was so attached to Paul that he did not allow the soldiers to kill the prisoners so that Paul would be spared (Acts 27:43). Eventually the entire 276 men made it safely to the shore (Acts 27:44).

## **Paul Ministers on Malta (Acts 28:1-10)**

After reaching land they realized that the island they had come to was Malta (Acts 28:1). The refugees from the ship were well received by the native population of Malta (Acts 28:2). As they were building a fire to keep warm, Paul was bitten by a viper (Acts 28:3-6).

***But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live." 5 But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 6 However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.***

This scene demonstrates the fickleness of people...

- One minute Paul was a desperate criminal.
- The next minute Paul was perceived to be "a god."

Paul seized the opportunity to preach the Gospel (Acts 28:7-10).

***In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. 8 And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. 9 So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. 10 They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things***

*as were necessary.*

In a sense, Paul was now beginning his fourth missionary journey. He had his faithful companion Luke. He had a boat load of soldiers and prisoners. He had a ministry team of 276 people. As they continue forward, Paul took the place of the centurion and the ship's helmsman as the man in charge.

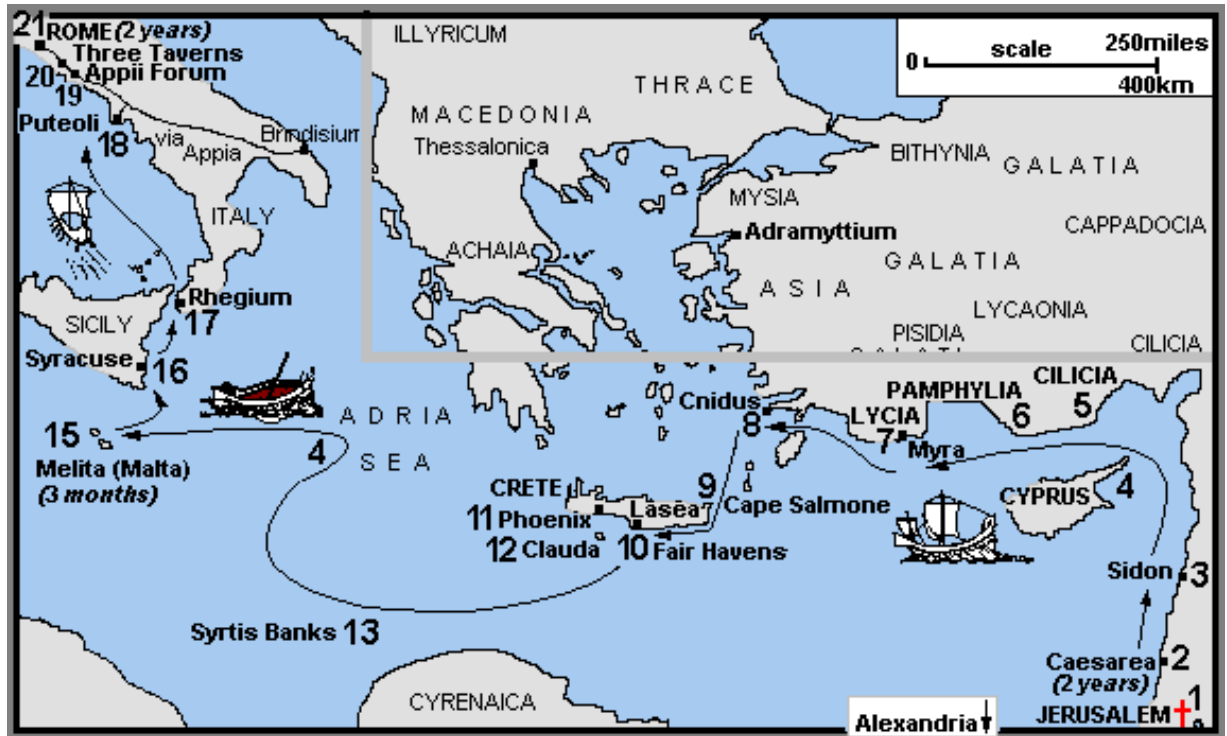
## **Paul Arrives in Rome (Acts 28:11-16)**

Paul continued on to Rome as more of a celebrity and a conqueror than a prisoner.

*After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island. 12 And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. 13 From there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli, 14 where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome. 15 And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. 16 Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.*

They travelled according to Paul's desired schedule visiting his friends along the way (Acts 28:14). Believers who were aware of Paul's coming came out to greet him (Acts 28:15). Paul had already written his letter to the Romans about five years earlier. Paul had some close friends in Rome (Rom. 16:3-16).

His friends included Aquila and Priscilla, Andronicus, Junia and a long list of others. The believers met Paul about 45 miles outside of Rome.



The above map covers Paul's journey to Rome or Fourth Missionary Journey covered in Acts 23-28.

Paul was put into a minimum security situation in Rome. Rome had three main types of custody. They put criminals into the common prison.

***This was the most severe kind of detention. Most of the jail houses in the empire were dungeons of the worst kind. Prisoners were often kept in chains or even bound in positions of torture. They were usually very damp, very dark and very unclean. Paul experienced this kind of imprisonment at Philippi and during his final imprisonment some years later (II Tim. 4:13).***

They put low risk criminals into military custody.

This was a detention that was extended to non-violent prisoners who were deemed low risk. Here the accused was placed in the custody of a soldier who was responsible with his own life for the safe keeping of his prisoner. The normal procedure was to chain the prisoner's right hand to the left hand of the soldier. Soldiers would relieve one another on this duty. Their prisoners were usually kept in their barracks but sometimes were allowed to reside in a private house under their charge. Paul was kept in this kind of custody in Caesarea and in this first Roman imprisonment (Acts 24:23). They allowed certain criminals what was termed "free custody."

This detention was more like a prisoner out on bail and was usually reserved for high ranking officials and political prisoners. Here the accused party was committed to the charge of a magistrate or senator who was responsible for his appearance on the day of trial. Paul was in

military custody. He was chained to a soldier (Acts 28:16; Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 13-14; Col. 4:3, 18; Phm.1:10, 13).

Even though this was better than being in a dungeon, for a man who was used to being on the move, it was not a pleasant experience.

The man he was chained to was no doubt a rough, tough and even crude man. He was most likely very much opposed to Jews in general and Paul in particular. Paul must have had many different such guards over a span of two years.

He had a soldier chained to him day and night no matter what he was doing (praying, writing, counseling, studying, etc.).

- He lived in his own hired house (Acts 28:30).
- He was able to entertain in this house (Acts 28:30).
- He was not able to work and needed support from his friends.

## **Paul Ministers in Rome (Acts 28:17-31)**

Paul did not dwell on what he could not do; he focused on what he could do.

He saw himself as an “ambassador in chains” (Eph. 6:20). For Paul, only one thing had changed and that was his imprisonment. He was still an apostle; He was still called by God; He was still a preacher and a teacher; He was still responsible for the churches he had birthed and he was still going to fulfill the original word over his life (Acts 9:15-16).

***But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.”***

Paul was able to do this because he was a man of determination who did not let negative circumstances keep him from fulfilling his assignment from the Lord. Too often we take negative circumstances as a sign that God does not want us to do something. If the apostles had had this attitude, they never would have accomplished anything worthwhile.

Paul had a way of seeing the opportunity in everything. He was able to do this because he received everything in his life as coming from the Lord. He could do this because he believed in God and he believed that God was in control of his life. Because of this he was able to see God in everything. Paul knew how to turn obstacles into opportunities.

- In the Philippian jail he ministered in the prison.
- After his arrest in Jerusalem he preached to the mob.
- When he was under arrest in Caesarea he witnessed to governors.

- When he was on the slave ship he ministered to the crew.
- When he was on Malta he ministered to the islanders.
- Now that he was in Rome he continued his ministry from his hired house.

Paul never once referred to himself as a prisoner of Rome; he was a prisoner of the Lord or a prisoner of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:1).

He went to the Jew first even in Rome (Acts 28:17-29). He had the same results that he always had.

- Some believed what he said (Acts 28:24).
- Some did not believe (Acts 28:25, 29).
- When rejected by the Jews, Paul changed his focus to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28).

He received people and ministered to them (Acts 28:30). Paul had many visitors while he was in Rome. The clues to these visits are found in the Prison Epistles. Some of his visitors included:

#### **Timothy (Phil. 1:1; 2:19-23; Col. 1:1; Phm. 1:1)**

Timothy was not only Paul's son in the faith and disciple, he was a personal assistant and agent to function in Paul's behalf in relation to the churches. He also helped Paul in the writing of most of his letters from prison.

#### **Epaphras (Col. 1:3-8; 4:12-13; Phm. 1:23)**

Epaphras was an apostolic ministry in relation to the church at Colossae. He had come to Paul both to encourage him and to get his advice and help in sorting out some of the problems in the Colossian church. He spent enough time with Paul for Paul to have referred to him as a "fellow prisoner."

#### **Onesimus**

Onesimus was a runaway slave that Paul led to the Lord and then discipled. In the process he assisted him in the process of restitution with his master Philemon. The book of Philemon is the letter that Paul wrote when he sent Onesimus back to his master.

#### **Tychicus (Acts 20:2; Eph. 6:21; II Tim. 4:12; Tit. 3:12)**

Tychicus was one of Paul's disciples who delivered Paul's prison epistles to the various churches (Eph. 6:21). He may have even read them to the congregations in behalf of Paul. He had accompanied Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem.

#### **Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, Justus (Col. 4:10-11, 14; Phm. 1:24)**

The Marcus in this list is most likely John Mark. Many of these individuals were life-long friends. Some of them stayed with him for extended periods of time during his imprisonment.



## **Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-30; 4:18-22)**

Epaphroditus brought the offering from the Philippians church that had been raised in Paul's behalf (Phil. 2:25-30; 4:18-22). He also served Paul tirelessly for a season in practical ways.

He led Onesimus to the Lord and disciplined him (Philemon). He witnessed to the soldiers (Phil. 1:13).

***But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Philippians 1:12-14***

He made inroads into Caesar's household (Phil. 1:13; 4:22).

***All the saints greet you, especially those who are of Caesar's household. Philippians 4:22***

He wrote letters to churches including Ephesus, Philippi and Colossae.

## **What do we know about Paul after the Book of Acts closes?**

Paul was eventually released without ever going to trial. Nero was the emperor at this time and was known to be a very unorganized man. Under him such delays were common. Nero conducted much official business purely on the basis of his whims. Paul may have gone to Spain or other regions (Rom. 15:24).

***But now I have finished my work in these regions, and after all these long years of waiting, I am eager to visit you. 24 I am planning to go to Spain, and when I do, I will stop off in Rome. And after I have enjoyed your fellowship for a little while, you can send me on my way again. 25 But before I come, I must go down to Jerusalem to take a gift to the Christians there. 26 For you see, the believers in Greece have eagerly taken up an offering for the Christians in Jerusalem, who are going through such hard times. 27 They were very glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the wonderful spiritual blessings of the Good News from the Jewish Christians, they feel the least they can do in return is help them financially. 28 As soon as I have delivered this money and completed this good deed of theirs, I will come to see you on my way to Spain. 29 And I am sure that when I come, Christ will give me a great blessing for you. Romans 15:23-29, NLT***

Paul wrote I Timothy, Titus and possibly Hebrews during his release period. Paul returned to Rome where he was arrested along with Peter under the reign of Nero. Nero had blamed the great fire of Rome on Christians even though history attributes the fire to Nero himself. In any case he

moved against two great Christian leaders to serve as scapegoats to this incident.

Paul was placed in a common prison. Paul wrote II Timothy from prison knowing that he was about to die (II Tim. 4:6-8). He was at peace with this season of his life because he knew that he had done what God had asked him to do.

***For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.***

Paul was beheaded by the Romans. Peter being a Jew was crucified. Paul because he was a Roman citizen could not be crucified.