

# Teaching Tips

November 20  
Bible Study Guide 12

## Words You Should Know

**A. Beast** (Acts 28:4, 5) *therion* (Gk.)—A wild animal.

**B. Flux** (v. 8) *dusenteria* (Gk.)—A bowel sickness, such as dysentery.

## Teacher Preparation

**Unifying Principle—Helping One Another.** Paul's character, while shipwrecked, helped others recognize something extraordinary about him.

**A.** Pray for students and lesson clarity.

**B.** Read, study, and meditate on the entire lesson.

**C.** Bring to class recent bulletins or church announcements that highlight volunteer opportunities.

**D.** Complete the companion lesson in the *Precepts For Living*® Study Guide.

## O—Open the Lesson

**A.** Open with prayer.

**B.** Have volunteers read the Aim for Change and the Keep in Mind verse.

**C.** Invite students to briefly share how they are using their gifts to help others in the church or community.

**D.** Ask students to share times they have turned away from service projects because they were overwhelmed during crises.

**E.** Discuss the importance of helping others during difficult times.

## P—Present the Scriptures

**A.** Invite students to read the Focal Verses.

**B.** Use The People, Places, and Times, Background, Search the Scriptures, At-A-Glance outline, In Depth, and More Light on the Text sections to clarify the verses.

## E—Explore the Meaning

**A.** Have students silently read the Devotional Reading.

**B.** Discuss how it relates to today's lesson on helping one another and God's help during difficult situations.

## N—Next Steps for Application

**A.** Share the information on volunteer opportunities.

**B.** Discuss other service or ministry projects that students may know about.

**C.** Ask for prayer requests related to students' concerns about helping others or resuming ministry projects.

**D.** Close in prayer.

## Worship Guide

*For the Superintendent or Teacher*

Theme: Paul Ministers in Malta

Song: "May the Work I've  
Done Speak for Me"

Devotional Reading: Ezekiel 34:11–16

# Paul Ministers in Malta

**Bible Background • ACTS 28:1–10**

**Printed Text • ACTS 28:1–10 | Devotional Reading • EZEKIEL 34:11–16**

## Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **KNOW** how Paul helped people on the island of Malta; **APPRECIATE** the ways others minister to us; and **MINISTER** to those in need.

## In Focus

Brenda knew she was driving too fast for the poor road conditions, but she just wanted to get home after a long day. She hit a particularly rough patch and suddenly, Brenda's car spun out of control on the slick highway. She nearly missed careening into a ditch before her car skidded to a halt. Thankfully, she was not hurt, but the car would not start. She used her cell phone to call for help, but was still waiting. Then, 10 minutes later a dark car pulled up and a man jumped out, offering his help. She was afraid to talk with him until he showed her his badge: He was an undercover detective on his way home from work. Sighing with relief, Brenda allowed him to check out the car. Although he couldn't help, he stayed with her until her emergency roadside assistance service arrived.

*We sometimes forgo help from others who do not look like us or because of the situation in which we find ourselves. Helping one another becomes easier as we realize God will often send unlikely strangers to help us in our times of need. Paul was such a helper to the sick islanders.*

## Keep in Mind

“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 28:8, KJV)

## Focal Verses

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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

## The People, Places, and Times

**Barbarous people.** The people of Malta were not barbarians as they are defined today. Rather, in biblical times, Greeks used the term for anyone who didn't speak Greek and was seen as an uncultured individual.

**Malta.** Also called Melita, it was an island located near both Sicily (60 miles away) and Syracuse (90 miles) and was in a strategic location for trade. It is clear that the island had an established government system and that its chief, Publius, was wealthy. He was able to lodge the 276 ship passengers at his estate (Acts 28:7).

## Background

After surviving a brutal northeast storm, Paul and the other passengers either swam to the island of Malta or floated there on boards or pieces of the destroyed ship (Acts

27:44). The inhabitants warmly welcomed the strangers out of the rain and cold. Rather than resting with the others, Paul gathered firewood. As he did, a snake rose from the fire and bit him. When the islanders witnessed the biting, they believed it was divine payback for some perceived crime and waited for Paul to die. Paul, however, simply shook the snake off. The fact that he was not harmed changed the islanders' opinion: They now thought he was a god.

## At-A-Glance

1. Receiving Help from Strangers (Acts 28:1–2)
2. Divine Protection (vv. 3–6)
3. Ministering to Others (vv. 7–10)

## In Depth

### 1. Receiving Help from Strangers (Acts 28:1–2)

While it is true that it is “more blessed to give than to receive” (from Acts 20:35, KJV), it is equally true that believers must learn to receive help during difficult situations. Family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors are among those who assist in time of need. And as Paul discovered on the island of Malta, strangers also may provide timely assistance.

Paul and the other passengers found this to be true as they landed on Malta, wet from the sea during winter. They had no clothing to change into, no firewood or matches by which to warm themselves, and no food to eat. The islanders, quickly assessing the situation, came to their aid. They built a fire, offering exactly what the stranded strangers needed most. They later provided lodging and months later gave the ship’s passengers needed resources to continue to Rome.

During stormy seasons of life, we learn there is no such thing as a “small blessing.” Anything and everything that helps make a difficult situation easier to bear is big to the recipient. The residents of Malta built a fire. The ship’s passengers were wise enough not to devalue the islanders’ help or to reject it because of the givers’ nationality. God recruits believers and nonbelievers to help Christians in distress. Learning to receive help from nonbelievers is especially difficult for some Christians.

It is not always how much we give or even what we give but that we are willing to be used by God to aid someone in distress. Our availability goes a long way in showing recipients God’s providence and care. Using the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), Jesus taught that a neighbor is anyone in need of help, and the “good” neighbor is the person who provides help in the time of trouble. The parable teaches that we should be grateful givers and receivers.

As others rush to assist you, joyfully receive their gifts of time, talent, or treasure. If you struggle with asking or receiving help from others, ask God to make you a gracious recipient.

### 2. Divine Protection (vv. 3–6)

Soon after surviving the tumultuous storm at sea, Paul found himself shipwrecked on an island. Rather than sit back and allow the islanders to serve him, Paul also got involved in collecting firewood for the needed fire. As he began serving others, a viper came out of the fire and bit him. The islanders took this as a sign that Paul was a murderer who was about to reap a requisite punishment. What was Paul’s response? He shook off the snake and continued his activities without any ill effects. That one action, more than any words, served to remove any doubt from the islanders’ minds that Paul was a criminal.

The fact that he was able to shake off the snake is reminiscent of Jesus’ teaching after His resurrection. Jesus appeared to the 11 original disciples and gave them what is commonly called the “Great Commission.” During His discourse, He discussed the signs that would follow believers. Among these, He said, “[T]hey will pick up snakes with their hands; and ... they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well” (from Mark 16:18, NIV). Paul exhibited both of these miraculous signs while on Malta. He did not do so to benefit himself but to help others. The people recognized something different about Paul because of these signs, which was evidence of his faith in Christ.

### 3. Ministering to Others (vv. 7–10)

Paul was able to minister to others in spite of finding himself in a trying predicament. Rather than fall prey to depression and selfishness because of his circumstances, Paul continued to use his gifts and talents in executing the ministry God had given him, with signs

following. When it became known that the chief's father was sick, Paul did what he knew to do. He laid hands on the man and healed him. That ability to rise above the circumstances and continue to flow in God's anointing was critical to the islanders' perception that there was something extraordinary about Paul. His example teaches that we, too, can rise above our situations to help others in need. Further, it proves that in spite of any difficulties we encounter, God's gifts and callings can still work through us if we allow them to.

### Search the Scriptures

1. Why did the islanders believe Paul was a murderer (Acts 28:3–6)?
2. What critical help did Paul provide to Publius's father and others (vv. 8–9)?

### Discuss the Meaning

News reports are filled with stories about the dangers of helping or receiving help from strangers. What strategies have you discovered to overcome fear of danger while helping others?

### Liberating Lesson

Distrust between races makes it hard for some people to receive help from people who aren't "their kind." How can God's love help believers break down barriers to communication and care for others?

### Application for Activation

Paul did not allow his life storm to stop him from ministering to others. Is there an area of ministry or outreach that you have given up because of pressures from a difficult situation? If so, prayerfully ask God to help you resume using your gift to help others. Then, make an appointment with the appropriate ministry leaders to see what steps you must take to resume service.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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### More Light on the Text

Acts 28:1–10

**1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. 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.**

Luke communicates his faith in God's care through his choice of two words in these verses. First, in verse 1 he adds an ending to a word that means we "were escaped" (Gk. *diasozo*, dee-as-**ODZE**-o), not "they" as in our KJV text. Secondly, Luke used a word here that meant to be rescued. That's why our text says, "we were escaped," instead of "we escaped." Luke clearly recognizes that the safe arrival on shore of every one of the ship's 276 passengers was solely the result of divine help. Although their ship became battered pieces on the shoreline's rocks, God confirmed Paul's prophecy from the

angel's nighttime visit (Acts 27:23–24). It was not a fortunate accident by human effort but the manifestation of a promised deliverance by the God that Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus trusted with their lives.

Gradually, the survivors learned they were on the island Melita (Malta), in the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily and Italy. In straight-line measurements, they were 1,200 miles from Caesarea where they first boarded and still more than 400 miles from Rome. In the past two weeks, the storm winds had driven more than 500 miles from Fair Havens, where Paul had urged them to stay through winter (Acts 27:8–10, 21, NIV).

Our text describes the people of Malta as “barbarous.” That doesn’t mean they were savage barbarians. The word simply referred to people who didn’t speak Greek. Luke marveled at the loving “kindness” (Gk. *philanthropia*, fil-an-thro-**PEE**-ah) shown repeatedly by the people of Malta. “No little kindness” means the care given went far beyond what was expected (28:2). To appreciate this incident, it is crucial to remember what the conditions were.

Because of driving wind and rain, the ship crashed on the rocks. In the midst of that storm, in weather made colder by blowing torrents, the islanders came out to the shore and managed to build a fire. Likely, they built many to accommodate 276 people. Luke notes that the island people “received us, every one.”

**3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper, and fastened on his hand. 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 escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.**

Paul was not a lazy person (Romans 12:11). Acts 28:3 says he “gathered a bundle of sticks” for the fire. One of those “sticks” could have

been several inches thick, perhaps with loose bark that a little snake could slither under to hibernate during winter or maybe with a spot that had rotted away, leaving a hole where it curled up. That suggests that Paul wasn’t making a show of working. Rather, he was putting real effort into helping build up the fire. The surviving crew members, and other prisoners and passengers would have seen this. Paul was a man whose example garnered respect for what he said in witness to his faith.

As Paul dropped his armful of firewood into the fire pit, the heat wakened the snake, which crawled out and latched onto Paul’s hand. Although there are no poisonous snakes on present-day Malta, “viper” (Gk. *echidna*, **EKH**-id-nah), usually refers to a poisonous snake. The indigenous residents saw the snake hanging from Paul’s hand. They instantly jumped to the conclusion that he must undoubtedly be the worst kind of desperate criminal, such as a “murderer” (Gk. *phoneus*, fon-**YOOCE**).

The Maltese thought that justice demanded retribution for the presumed criminal’s evil deeds. Receiving a poisonous snakebite, after just surviving a shipwreck, implied that to them. KJV translated Luke’s word here as “vengeance” (Gk. *dike*, **DEE**-kay), but both NLT and NIV present the word to mean “justice.” However, NIV capitalizes “Justice,” as a reference to the Greek goddess of justice, whose name was Dike. This goddess was a companion of Zeus, the supreme Greek god. The people of Malta may have worshiped Greek gods and saw Paul’s snakebite as her act of punishment.

**5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. 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.**

Undoubtedly Paul was wet and cold like all his shipmates. The description in verse 5 of his shaking the snake off his hand suggests determination rather than panic. “Shook off” (Gk. *apotinasso*, ap-ot-in-**AS**-o) is the same phrase Luke chose when quoting Jesus’ command to the apostles that they should shake the dust off their feet when leaving towns where their preaching of God’s kingdom was rejected (Luke 9:5).

In Acts 28, each time Paul approached the fire with more wood, the Maltese citizens watched and expected him to swell up in reaction to the snake’s poison or suddenly fall dead. Neither happened. Paul plainly “suffered no ill effects,” as 28:5, NIV words it. In verse 6 (NIV), Paul’s observers “changed” (Gk. *metaballo*, met-ab-**AL**-o) their original opinion of him. Instead, they now wrongly surmised that Paul must be a god.

**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. 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.**

Near the site where the ship wrecked and those on board swam or floated to shore was the estate of “Publius” (Gk. *poplios*, **POP**-lee-os), Malta’s chief magistrate and leading citizen. The Greek term meant literally “the main one,” or as we say today, “the top guy.” Did the gracious and caring reception that the survivors encountered in their contact with the island’s residents reflect the influence of the person at the top? Publius must have been of great wealth. In verse 7, Luke says he “received us and lodged us three days courteously.” “Received” did not mean to impersonally accept people’s presence but to actively extend hospitality in welcoming

guests. The last word in verse 7, “courteously” (Gk. *philophronos*, fil-of-**RON**-oce), means “in a friendly manner.” “Us” may mean a few people such as Paul, Luke, Aristarchus, and maybe the ship’s captain, its owner, and Julius, the Roman official. Some commentators presume that all 276 stranded victims were housed. “Lodged” (Gk. *anadechomai*, an-ad-**EKH**-om-ahee) in KJV is rendered “treated us kindly” in NLT and “entertained” in NASB. The word can be interpreted in all these ways.

Luke’s point is that everyone on Malta treated the ship’s survivors with exceptional care. An important lesson here for witnessing our faith is to remember, “all have sinned,” (from Romans 3:23, KJV). However, people without Christ are not automatically bad people. That is why Paul admonishes in Colossians 4:6 (KJV): “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Peter gives similar emphasis in 1 Peter 3:15, NIV: “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,” (see also 2 Timothy 2:24). Likewise, as we saw in the previous lesson, being unapologetic and confident in sharing our faith does not mean being impolite or disrespectful.

While enjoying Publius’s generosity, Paul learned that his father lay confined to his bed by recurring bouts of fever and bloody diarrhea (Acts 28:8). Paul took the initiative to visit the man as he believed he should do to support the weak (1 Thessalonians 5:14). After entering the man’s room, Paul approached his bed, and as Jesus often did, laid his hands on the man and prayed (see Mark 6:5; Luke 4:40; 13:13). In Acts 28:8, Luke says what Paul did: he “healed him” (Gk. *iaomai*, ee-**AM**-om-ahee).

**9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: 10 Who also honoured us with many honours: and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.**

Our text, verse 9, gives no indication that Publius sought or expected Paul's miraculous intervention. It's likely that he saw his father's condition was beyond hope of recovery. The average life expectancy then was well under 40. Over half of all babies died within the first year (Barclay, 188). When word got out that Publius' desperately ill father had been healed, sick people from across the island flooded to where Paul was "and were healed" (Gk. *therapeuo*, ther-a-PYOO-o).

The immediate response to the father's healing would not be a surprise (Ezekiel 34:13). What is remarkable is that, although our text uses the same English word "healed" for both the father and the islanders, Luke used *iaomai* in Acts 28:8 and *therapeuo* in verse 9. That doesn't mean that the father was healed and the islanders weren't. Both were cured. The different words suggest a difference in how this happened. The father's healing described a miraculous, instant freedom from his ailments, whereas the basic meaning of the word for the others' healing is "to serve." When applied to sickness, it often referred to medical treatment.

Our text doesn't say the island's sick people came to Paul; it simply says they came. A number of commentators write that the second word for healing applied more accurately to Luke than to Paul. In Colossians 4:14(KJV), Luke is called "the beloved physician" and the NLT describes him as a "beloved doctor."

The different words may suggest two different forms of divine healing—through miraculous divine intervention when the condition is beyond human help and by Christian ministry. These sections of Acts 28 may describe Luke as the first Christian medical missionary. (Barclay,

189). He also notes that some medical problems are not cured either way. For example, Paul—God's instrument for healing Publius's father—suffered unrelieved torment from a "thorn in the flesh," (2 Corinthians 12:7–10; Galatians 4:13–14).

However, the Maltese people were cured. They saw loving care extended by people committed to a God who loved all people everywhere so much that He was willing to die for their sins.

Three months passed before another ship arrived to transport Paul and his other prisoners on to Rome (Acts 28:11). During those three months, in verse 10 Luke says the people showered "us," not simply Paul, "with many honours" (Gk. *timao*, tim-AH-o). This also supports the possibility that ministry by other Christians other than Paul is at work here. Although Luke's word could refer to things of material value or price, here, the word points to expression of affection, respect, and deep feeling. As Paul sailed away to trial in Rome, the islanders showed their esteem by loading the ship with things needed to insure a pleasant journey.

Two major lessons stand out. One concerns our attitude toward those around us who may not share our knowledge or faith in God and His revelation in Christ. While all people are sinners, that doesn't mean they cannot do commendable deeds. The image of God that we possessed in ourselves at creation has been irreparably distorted by sin but not completely blotted out. Our marred instinct toward a God-like goodness waits to be restored by our decision to trust in God's power to repair our universal spiritual brokenness.

Another lesson is the importance for each Christian to consistently make God's love visible in order to give our verbal witness an attractive credibility. It is inconceivable that Paul, the great missionary-evangelist, would allow the

opportunity with such a receptive audience to slip by him. In Acts 28, Luke illustrates how making God's love real through our actions can add convicting power to what we say about God's love through Christ.

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## Say It Correctly

Melita. muh-LEE-tuh.  
Publius. POOB-lee-uhs.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

The Failure to Minister  
(Ezekiel 34:1–6)

### TUESDAY

God's Ministry to the Flock  
(Ezekiel 34:11–16)

### WEDNESDAY

God's Judgment of the Privileged  
(Ezekiel 34:17–22)

### THURSDAY

Extend Hospitality to Strangers  
(Romans 12:9–13)

### FRIDAY

Ready for Every Good Work  
(2 Timothy 2:20–26)

### SATURDAY

Do Good to All  
(1 Thessalonians 5:12–22)

### SUNDAY

Ministering to the Sick  
(Acts 28:1–10)

## Notes

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# Teaching Tips

November 27  
Bible Study Guide 13

## Words You Should Know

**A. Expounded** (Acts 28:23) *ektithemi* (Gk.)—Set forth (used in explaining the way of God).

**B. Persuading** (v. 23) *peitho* (Gk.)—Prevailing upon or winning over.

## Teacher Preparation

**Unifying Principle—Spread the News.** Even though there were many who refused to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul persevered in faith, preaching the Gospel and bringing salvation's message to those who would listen.

**A.** Pray for your class.

**B.** Read and study the entire lesson, underlining salient points.

**C.** Reflect on what “commitment” means and prepare to discuss it.

**D.** Complete the companion lesson in the *Precepts For Living*® Study Guide.

## O—Open the Lesson

**A.** Open with prayer.

**B.** Read the Aim for Change and Focal Verses. Explain why Paul thought his imprisonment was to serve the cause of Christ.

**C.** Review the Background and The People, Places, and Times sections and discuss Paul's life and commitment.

## P—Present the Scriptures

**A.** Read the At-A-Glance outline, and use the Search the Scriptures and Discuss the Meaning questions to expound on the Focal Verses.

**B.** Refer the students to the Words You Should Know section as the vocabulary words arise.

## E—Explore the Meaning

**A.** Ask a student to volunteer to read the In Focus story.

**B.** Discuss Ruth's difficulties and how they correlate with Paul's circumstances.

**C.** Highlight the Liberating Lesson section.

## N—Next Steps for Application

**A.** Remind the students that we find strength by looking at Jesus as our example of how to keep our commitments: God called and sustained Him through the pain and humiliation of the Cross.

**B.** Close with prayer.

## Worship Guide

*For the Superintendent or Teacher*

Theme: Paul Evangelizes in Rome

Song: “Trust and Obey”

Devotional Reading:

Deuteronomy 4:32–40

# Paul Evangelizes in Rome

**Bible Background • ACTS 28:16–31**

**Printed Text • ACTS 28:23–31 | Devotional Reading • DEUTERONOMY 4:32–40**

## Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: SUMMARIZE the points of Paul's Gospel message; BE CONFIDENT in our ability to use Scripture to bring others to knowledge of Christ; and IDENTIFY ways we can tell resistant listeners about Christ.

## In Focus

During the past year, Monique started recognizing that her grandma Jean was becoming more and more forgetful. Jean started to forget where she placed items in the house. She would start teaching and get so confused the students could not understand what she was saying. She would get in her car to run an errand, but not remember where she was going. She also frequently put food on the stove and forgot about it. The house almost caught fire numerous times.

At Monique's urging, Jean went to the doctor, who examined her and ran some tests. A few weeks later, the results of the tests came back. Jean was in the early stages of dementia. He told her the condition would progressively get worse over time. Jean felt devastated by the news. How long could she continue teaching? She had served as the church's Sunday School Superintendent for more than 25 years. She was a faithful and committed worker. She wondered whether to stop now or wait until things got worse.

*Sometimes challenging circumstances can make it difficult to carry out our commitments. At such times, we may need to persevere in faith in spite of the difficulties we experience. In today's lesson, Paul is imprisoned but keeps his commitment to share the Gospel, which leads to souls coming to Christ.*

## Keep in Mind

"Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."  
(Acts 28:28, KJV)

## Focal Verses

**KJV** 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.

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

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,

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

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.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

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

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Rome.** Rome was the capital city of the Roman Empire. Its population exceeded one million people. The city was wealthy, literate, and artistic. The Romans worshiped many pagan gods and even some of the emperors.

Jews who had come to believe apparently started the Roman church during Pentecost (Acts 2:41–47). They spread the Gospel on their return to Rome and the church grew. While in Corinth, Paul wrote a letter to the Romans to encourage the believers. After taking money to Jerusalem for the poor Christians there, he desired to visit the Roman believers on his way to Spain (Romans 15:23–28), but his visit did not happen as he had planned. Years later, Paul was taken to Rome as a prisoner.

## Background

Finally, after a 2,000-mile journey that started in Caesarea, Paul arrived in Rome.

He was permitted to live in his own quarters under house arrest or with a light chain. This fairly good treatment resulted from a favorable report from a Roman official, Porcius Festus, and the goodwill of the centurion (Acts 24:23). This proves God can grant us favor even with our enemies.

Paul called together Rome's Jewish leaders. The Jews were back; the decree of Claudius expelling them from the city had expired (18:2). Paul addressed the leaders as "my brothers" to acknowledge the common Jewish blood he shared with them (from 28:17, NIV). Paul wanted the leaders to feel connected to him. In doing so, they may have enough compassion toward him to try to understand the ordeal that created his unjust imprisonment. He explained to them that he was bound because of the hope of Israel, which is the Messiah. He grabbed their attention because they wanted to know more about Jesus. There was a great dispute about

Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. They agreed to listen to Paul's presentation of the Gospel.

The Jewish leaders' agreement to hear the Gospel was in fulfillment of Paul's calling to share the Good News with the world, starting in Jerusalem (9:13, 28). God planned that through the seed of Abraham, He would send the Messiah into the world. Now that the Messiah had arrived in the person of Jesus Christ, the entire world needed to know about Him. That is why Paul traveled on missionary journeys during his lifetime. He wanted everyone to have the opportunity to receive Jesus Christ. In spite of the way he arrived in Rome, Paul knew God had a purpose for his imprisonment. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28, KJV). Therefore, what was intended for evil, God worked it into good in Paul's life and ministry.

## At-A-Glance

1. Paul Shares the Gospel with the Jews (Acts 28:23–25a)
2. The Jews Turn Away (vv. 25b–27)
3. Paul Preaches to the Gentiles (vv. 28–31)

## In Depth

### 1. Paul Shares the Gospel with the Jews (Acts 28:23–25a)

On the agreed-upon day, the Jewish leaders came back to the place where Paul resided with an even larger group than expected. Paul testified and taught them about the kingdom of God all day into the evening. He tried to persuade them that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied about in the Old Testament (Acts 28:23). Romans, written some years earlier,

reveals Paul's ongoing dialogue with the Jews in Rome.

Some of the Jews were persuaded while others were not. Everyone has to make a choice to either accept or reject the Gospel. The most important fact is that we share the Gospel with people no matter the circumstances in which we find ourselves. God was faithful in preserving Paul's life so he could share the Gospel in Rome. He was imprisoned but did not complain. He used the opportunity to keep his commitment to spreading the Word.

### 2. The Jews Turn Away (vv. 25b–27)

Verses 26 and 27 are quoted from Isaiah 6:9, 10. They are also quoted by Jesus in Matthew 13:14, 15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; and John 12:40. We can picture in these verses people covering their eyes and ears so they can't perceive or hear because they are so adamantly against the message and will do what they think will stop the message from getting through. It was predicted that the majority of the Jews would not accept their Messiah, but they are also responsible because they are refusing to look and listen. But don't forget the significant number of Jews who believe, including Paul and the apostles.

### 3. Paul Preaches to the Gentiles (vv. 28–31)

Because the Jews rejected the message of salvation, Paul turned his attention to the Gentiles. He knew the Gentiles would listen, so he spent two years teaching, preaching, counseling, and receiving visitors (Luke, Timothy, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, and Mark) while confined. During his imprisonment, Paul wrote many of his epistles: Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians. Paul did not let his imprisonment hinder him from proclaiming the Gospel. He did not worry about the outcome of his upcoming trial. Instead, he committed his life into the hands of God.

For Paul, “To live is Christ, and to die is gain” (from Philippians 1:21). His faithfulness was rewarded through souls coming to Christ.

### Search the Scriptures

1. How did Paul preach the Gospel to the Jews (Acts 28:23)?
2. What prophet foretold the Jews not listening to God’s message (v. 25)?
3. How did Paul spend his time while in prison (vv. 30–31)?

### Discuss the Meaning

1. How was God’s favor shown toward Paul in Rome?
2. How did Paul keep his commitment to God while imprisoned?
3. How was his faithfulness rewarded?

### Liberating Lesson

Commitment to ministry is sometimes hard. We have so many distractions and hindrances that can cause us to lapse in our responsibilities. Jesus also had a lot of adversity to deal with as He walked the Earth. However, He never allowed anything or anyone to stop Him from reaching the place He was destined to go, the Cross. If Jesus can remain faithful in spite of all He had to endure, surely we can, too. We must not allow family drama, workplace stress, or personal issues to hinder us from keeping our commitment to minister to others. The world may not understand how we can remain faithful, but we know God can and will sustain us.

### Application for Activation

This week, pray God will give you the strength to keep your commitments. Always remember, God is present and in control over your circumstances. Testify to others of the faithfulness of God and how He helped you keep your commitments.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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### More Light on the Text

Acts 28:23–31

**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.**

Paul finally received his opportunity to declare the Good News in Rome. At a set time, a huge number of people gathered at Paul’s house of confinement and listened as he “expounded and testified the kingdom of God” from morning until night. The word “expounded” in the Greek is *ektithemi* (ek-**TITH**-ay-mee), and means “to set forth” or “to declare.” The word “testified” (Gk. *diamarturomai*, dee-am-ar-**TOO**-rom-ahee) means “witnessed, confirmed something by testimony.” The Greek word for “kingdom” is *basileia* (bas-il-**I**-ah), which

means “dominion” or “rule.” Paul declared and taught them, confirming the reign of God and Jesus, as set forth in the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) and from the Old Testament books of the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others).

**24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.**

Some of the people “believed” (Gk. *peitho*, PIE-tho), meaning “they were persuaded of something.” In this instance, they believed in God’s Word; however, others did not. The phrase “some believed not” in the Greek is *asumphonos* (as-OOM-fo-nos), and it means they spoke to one another in disagreement.

Jesus explained the importance and significance of receiving and then believing God’s Word in the parable of the sower. As Jesus told a crowd: “A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And others fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold” (from Luke 8:5–8). The apostle Paul sowed the seed, the Word of God, amid his listeners. Some seeds did fall on good ground—“some believed” (Acts 28:24). However, some did not have confidence in the Word of God. It fell on deaf ears and hardened hearts. These people chose not to yield to the Word of God.

**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,**

Paul preached first to the Jewish people, then to Gentiles. And almost without fail, he

was persecuted by them in a variety of terrible ways. But Paul loved his people and always went to them first. This is a great example of God’s love for the Jews. A remnant would always believe, so Paul did not give up for all those years. Paul realized that in God’s infinite wisdom, the rejection of Jesus by the majority of the Jewish religious leaders opened the door for the Gentiles to believe. So although this final word from Paul seems very harsh, we know it really isn’t.

**26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 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.**

When God first ordained Isaiah to go and preach to His people, this warning was given to him (Isaiah 6:9–10). Imagine how a young preacher would feel if the Lord God spoke to them at the beginning of their ministry and told them no one would listen to their message. That is just what happened to Isaiah, and some days he got pretty discouraged. Maybe you are in a difficult ministry and are finding very little response. Well, Isaiah, Paul, and Jesus all had this very same experience. This same Scripture was quoted by Jesus in Matthew 13:14–15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; and John 12:39–40. Jesus had the same experience as Isaiah and Paul—all three of them had their message rejected by their own people.

**28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.**

God brought His great “salvation” (Gk. *soterion*, so-**TAY**-ree-on), which means “rescue, safety, deliverance,” first to His chosen people, the Jews. However, when many of them did not choose to accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah, His salvation then went to the Gentiles. Paul said in the affirmative that the Gentiles “will hear it.” In other words, they will accept their salvation and be “grafted in” (Romans 11:17, KJV).

The apostle Paul explained the concept of the Gentiles being “grafted” into this great salvation with this metaphor: “But some of these branches from Abraham’s tree—some of the people of Israel—have been broken off. And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God’s special olive tree.” (Romans 11:17–20, NLT).

In the verses following the above passage from Romans, Paul explained to Gentile Christians that they should not feel superior to the Jews because some of the Jews were rejected. Their unbelief caused them to be rejected. He explained that Abraham’s faith was like the roots of a productive tree, and the Jewish people, are the natural branches of that tree. Because of their unbelief, some of the Jews have been broken off from this fruitful tree. Gentile believers, whom he compared to branches from a wild olive tree, were “grafted in.” These Gentiles were added to the family of believers based on their faith in God, and therefore they could share in the faith community’s spiritual nourishment. Both the Jews and the Gentiles, then, are saved according to their faith and not because of their culture or heritage. The only way to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

Thus, when Paul gave the Word to local Jewish leaders in Rome and some chose not to believe, they chose damnation. Those who

believe become recipients of salvation—eternal life.

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

After Paul spoke in Acts 28:28 of the salvation of the Gentiles, whom the Jews considered to be “dogs” or “heathens,” they “departed, and had great reasoning among themselves” (v. 29). In the Greek, the word “reasoning” (Gk. *suzetesis*, sood-**ZAY**-tay-sis), means “mutual questioning, discussion.” In essence, they left to ponder, consider, or think over among themselves the things that the apostle Paul had told them.

**30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.**

Paul preached the Good News of the Gospel in his own “hired house” (Gk. *misthoma*, **MIS**-tho-mah), which means “rented building,” under house arrest for two years. However, he did not spend these years in idleness. He kept on freely preaching the kingdom of God and teaching God’s Word with all “confidence” (Gk. *parrhesia*, par-rhay-**SEE**-ah), which means “freedom in speaking, outspoken, frankness, or bluntness.” He spoke with authority, under the power of the Holy Spirit, bluntly telling lost humanity what they must do to be saved from damnation.

Some biblical scholars tell us that after being released from house arrest in Rome, Paul set off on a fourth missionary journey. They support this assertion with the following facts: “(1) Luke, who was such a meticulous chronicler, did not give details of Paul’s trial before the Emperor Caesar; (2) the prosecutors had two

years to bring Paul's case to trial and time may have just expired; (3) Paul implied in his letter to the Philippians, which was written while he was in prison in Rome, that he would soon be released and would do further travels; (4) Paul gave further information on his intended travels—places that he had not mentioned during his first three missionary journeys; and (5) early Christian literature informs of other travels of Paul" (*Life Application Study Bible*, 2211).

Paul was indeed committed to the cause of Christ, his Lord and Savior. He even used his imprisonment to bring glory to his God and to serve that cause. Because even his negative circumstances proved to be a positive witness of his faithfulness to Christ in the midst of struggles, his life was truly an example of successful Christian living.

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## Say It Correctly

Esaias. eh-sah-EE-as.  
 Expounded. ik-SPOUND-ed.

## Daily Bible Readings

### MONDAY

Will They Listen to Me?  
 (Exodus 6:6–13)

### TUESDAY

I Told You So!  
 (Deuteronomy 1:41–45)

### WEDNESDAY

Charged to Teach  
 (Deuteronomy 4:5–14)

### THURSDAY

The Voice of Discipline  
 (Deuteronomy 4:32–40)

### FRIDAY

The Word Is Very Near  
 (Deuteronomy 30:6–14)

### SATURDAY

We Would Like to Hear  
 (Acts 28:16–22)

### SUNDAY

Teaching Boldly and without Hindrance  
 (Acts 28:23–31)