

Shipwrecked at Malta (Acts 28:1-10)
By Pastor Jeff Alexander (July 28, 2013)

Introduction

1. Chapter 28 continues Paul's trip to Rome. Leg one:
 - a. Leaving Caesarea, Paul and other prisoners were committed to Julius, a centurion of the Augustan cohort.
 - b. Luke (*we*) and possibly others sailed with him; only Aristarchus of Macedonia is named.
 - c. They boarded a vessel of Adramyttium, an ancient port city in Mysia of Asia Minor. It was carrying grain from Egypt to Mysia.
 - d. It was a small vessel, coast-hugging and port-hopping to its destination.
2. Leg two: Lycia to Crete
 - a. At Myra of Lycia, Julius transferred his company to a larger Alexandrian ship carrying grain from Egypt to Italy. It had 276 passengers.
 - b. Soon after they left Myra, contrary weather made sailing extremely difficult. In fact, they were blown off course, forced to sail leeward of Crete, and arrived at Fair Havens after many days.
 - c. With divine insight, Paul warned that to continue the voyage would endanger the ship and its crew, the cargo, and the passengers.
3. Leg three: Crete to Malta
 - a. Ignoring Paul's warning, the majority sought to try for Phoenix on the west end of Crete because it was more suitable to winter in.
 - b. *Eurakylon*, a violent storm with supernatural implications to Greek sailors, drove the ship into the open seas, into the very danger of which Paul warned.
 - c. After fourteen days, all hope of survival was lost. They finally shipwrecked on the Island of Malta.
4. Leg four: On Malta
 - a. Malta was originally a Phoenician colony called Melita, meaning *refuge*.
 - b. It was a small island eighteen miles long and eight miles wide; however, it had several good harbors.
 - c. Luke refers to the native population as barbarians, meaning they did not speak Greek.
 - d. The unusual care and attention to the survivors was probably due to Paul's encounter with the serpent.
5. The purpose of God in these very trying times was to establish Paul to these pagan Gentiles as a man of God.

- a. The Lord revealed to Paul that no harm would come either to Paul or to any of the other people on the ship.
- b. This word from the Lord revealed that although the ship and its cargo would be lost, “not a hair was to perish from the head of any person” (27:34), either at sea or on land.

I. Episode One (vv. 1-6)

1. The shipwreck

- a. Paul’s life was in constant jeopardy.
 - 1) He could have drowned at sea in the storm.
 - 2) He could have been executed by the soldiers who feared the escape of their prisoners.
 - 3) He could be been drowned after the ship broke apart as he tried to make it to shore on whatever thing he could hold on to.
- b. In God’s grace and purpose, Paul, along with all aboard the ship, made it to shore safely.

2. A repeat of *Eurakylōn* on shore

- a. The scene: natives of Malta tended to the comfort of the survivors by starting a bonfire.
- b. The incident: Paul bit by a “poisonous beast” (sand viper) while gathering wood for the fire
- c. The conclusion: Paul was guilty and would not escape punishment. *Justice* (the daughter of Zeus and Themis) had arranged for the snake to do what Poseidon had failed to do at sea.
- d. The expectation: Paul would soon die.

3. The unexpected vindication

- a. The surprise: Paul suffered no harm.
- b. The change of opinion: Paul must be either a god in human form or an emissary of the gods (note Acts 14:11-13).
- b. The purpose of God: to open these Gentiles to the message of Christ
- c. The natural presumption: although Luke does not tell us specifically that Paul preached to them, can we doubt that he did just that?

II. Episode Two (vv. 7-10)

1. The extended hospitality

- a. Publius, a public official (the Roman governor), entertained “us” (only Paul and his associates) for three days.

- b. During this visit Paul learned that Publius' father was ill with a recurrent fever and dysentery.
 - c. Paul prayed and laid hands on the man. Publius' father was immediately healed.
2. The healing opened the opportunity to minister to many on the island.
- a. Every person on the island that had a disease came to Paul, and all were healed.
 - b. The result was that the Christians were greatly honored, and when they left the island, they were provided with all they needed.
 - c. Luke does not specifically state that any believed in Christ, but the fact that the believers were honored indicates that many were converted.

III. A Servant Used of God

1. Paul lived the truth he gave to the churches he founded—that they should “continue in the faith” because “that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).
- a. The purpose of God in Paul's life required that he suffer (Acts 9:16).
 - b. Paul recounts the occasions of his suffering (2 Cor. 11:23-29).
 - c. Paul related his attitude toward his many trials to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:24).
2. Paul's life ended when he met Christ and Christ became his life (Gal. 2:20).
- a. His hope was that Christ would be honored by his life and ministry (Phil. 1:20, 21).
 - b. He would boast only in the cross of Christ (death to self) which ended his ties to the world (Gal. 6:14).
 - c. His conscience was clear in that his life was lived by the grace of God to the glory of God (2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Cor. 15:8-10).

Application

1. Can you claim that you are truly dead to self and sin but alive unto God?
2. Do you approach your daily struggles in worldly wisdom or by the grace of God?
3. Is your purpose in life to find joy and fulfillment by pursuing your ambitions or by seeking His glory?
4. This life is a fleeting vapor; eternity is forever. Are you living only for now, or are you preparing for the next life?