

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Acts Chapter 28 — Paul Reaches Rome

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Acts Chapter 28 brings the Book of Acts to its powerful conclusion.

Paul has survived:

- Arrest.
- False accusations.
- Imprisonment.
- Political delays.
- A dangerous voyage.
- A violent storm.
- Shipwreck.

Now he and the other passengers have safely reached the island of Malta.

But Paul's difficulties are not over.

While gathering wood for a fire, a poisonous snake fastens itself to his hand.

The people immediately assume that Paul must be a murderer receiving divine judgment.

But Paul simply shakes the snake into the fire and suffers no harm.

Soon the same people who expected him to die completely change their opinion of him.

Paul then ministers on Malta.

He prays for the sick father of Publius.

The man is healed.

Other sick people come and are also healed.

After three months, Paul continues his journey toward Rome.

Along the way, believers come to meet him.

Their presence deeply encourages him.

At last Paul enters Rome—not as a free missionary traveling according to his own plans, but as a prisoner guarded by a Roman soldier.

Yet chains cannot stop the gospel.

Paul immediately begins speaking with the Jewish leaders.

Later he spends an entire day explaining the kingdom of God and showing from the Law of Moses and the Prophets that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Some believe.

Others refuse.

The Book of Acts then closes with one of the most remarkable pictures in Scripture.

Paul remains under Roman confinement, yet he continues:

Preaching the kingdom of God.

Teaching about Jesus Christ.

Speaking with complete boldness.

And doing so:

“Without hindrance!”

The central truth of Acts 28 is:

No storm, snake, prison, opposition, government, or human circumstance can stop the gospel of Jesus Christ from accomplishing God's purpose.

I. GOD BRINGS PAUL SAFELY TO MALTA

Acts 28:1 — Safe on the Island

“Once we were safely on shore, we learned that the island was called Malta.”

Acts 27 ended with a shipwreck.

The ship was destroyed.

But every person aboard survived.

God had promised Paul that the lives of those sailing with him would be preserved.

Now that promise has been fulfilled.

They discover that they have landed on Malta.

Their arrival was not accidental.

The storm had driven them there.

But behind the storm stood the providence of God.

Cross References

Acts 27:26

But we must be driven onto some island before this journey is over.

Acts 27:44

The rest were told to follow by holding onto boards or other pieces of the broken ship. In this way, everyone reached the shore safely.

Acts 27:41

The ship struck a place where two currents met and ran aground. The front of the ship became stuck and could not move, while the back of the ship began breaking apart under the force of the waves.

Spiritual Principle

God can fulfill His promises through circumstances that appear disastrous.

The ship was destroyed.

But God's promise was not.

Key Truth

What looks like a wreck may actually be part of God's route toward His appointed destination.

II. UNUSUAL KINDNESS IN A COLD PLACE

Acts 28:2 — The Islanders Welcome the Survivors

“The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.”

The survivors were exhausted.

They were soaked.

They were cold.

They had lost the ship.

Yet the people of Malta responded with compassion.

They built a fire.

They welcomed strangers.

They met an immediate practical need.

This reminds us that kindness can become a powerful ministry even when no sermon is preached.

Cross References

Matthew 5:47

If you are friendly only to your own people, what are you doing that is unusual? Even people who do not follow God do the same thing.

Hebrews 13:2

Do not forget to welcome strangers and show them hospitality, because some people have welcomed angels without knowing it.

Romans 12:13

Share what you have with God's people when they are in need, and always be willing to welcome others into your home.

Spiritual Principle

Kindness often opens doors that arguments never could.

Application

Never underestimate simple acts such as:

- Feeding someone.
- Welcoming a stranger.
- Providing warmth.
- Meeting an immediate need.
- Showing compassion.

God can use ordinary kindness in extraordinary ways.

III. A VIPER FASTENS ON PAUL

Acts 28:3 — Trouble After the Storm

“Paul gathered a pile of sticks and put them on the fire. A viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand.”

Paul had just survived a shipwreck.

Now a poisonous snake strikes him.

This demonstrates an important truth:

Escaping one difficulty does not guarantee that another difficulty will not follow.

Paul does not stand back expecting everyone else to serve him.

He gathers firewood.

While serving others, he is bitten.

Faithfulness does not make a believer immune from hardship.

Cross References

Genesis 3:15

I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel.

Mark 16:18

They will be able to handle dangerous snakes, and even if they drink something deadly, it will not destroy them. They will place their hands on sick people, and those people will recover.

Luke 10:19

Look, I have given you authority to walk over snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will ultimately overcome you.

Spiritual Principle

A new attack does not mean God abandoned you during the previous victory.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not interpret every new difficulty as proof that you are outside God's will.

Sometimes the attack comes while you are doing exactly what faithfulness requires.

IV. PEOPLE JUDGE PAUL TOO QUICKLY

Acts 28:4 — “This Man Must Be a Murderer”

“When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said, ‘This man must be a murderer. He escaped the sea, but justice will not allow him to live.’”

The people immediately form a conclusion.

Paul survived the sea.

Now a snake bites him.

Therefore, they assume:

He must be guilty.

Their theology was simple:

Bad things happen to bad people.

But Scripture repeatedly warns us against making such judgments.

Suffering does not automatically prove personal guilt.

Cross References

Luke 13:2

Jesus answered them, “Do you think those Galileans suffered these things because they were greater sinners than all the other Galileans?”

John 9:2

His disciples asked Him, “Teacher, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Job 4:7

Think about this: when has an innocent person ever been destroyed? Where have truly upright people been completely wiped out?

Spiritual Principle

Human beings often judge circumstances without knowing the whole story.

Application

Be careful when saying:

“They are suffering because they must have done something wrong.”

Only God knows every circumstance, motive, and purpose.

V. PAUL SHAKES THE SNAKE INTO THE FIRE

Acts 28:5 — No Harm Comes to Paul

“But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no harm.”

Paul does not panic.

He does not deliver a speech.

He simply shakes the snake into the fire.

God preserves him.

Paul still has an appointment in Rome.

A snake cannot cancel what God has appointed.

Cross References

Mark 16:18

They will handle dangerous snakes, and if they drink something deadly, it will not destroy them. They will place their hands on sick people, and those people will recover.

Luke 10:19

I have given you authority to walk over snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will ultimately be able to defeat you.

Psalms 91:13

You will walk over the lion and the poisonous snake; you will trample the young lion and the serpent under your feet.

Spiritual Principle

God's servants are immortal until God's purpose for their lives is finished.

That does not mean believers should act recklessly.

It means nothing can remove them from God's providential care.

Key Truth

The snake was dangerous.

But God's purpose was greater.

VI. PUBLIC OPINION CHANGES QUICKLY

Acts 28:6 — From Murderer to “God”

“The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead. But after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.”

First they call Paul:

A murderer.

Then they call him:

A god.

Both conclusions are wrong.

This shows how unstable public opinion can be.

People can condemn you one moment and praise you the next.

Neither reaction should determine your identity.

Cross References

Acts 14:11

When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their own language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!”

Acts 14:19

Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city because they thought he was dead.

Acts 12:22

The crowd shouted, “This is the voice of a god, not the voice of a man!”

Spiritual Principle

Public opinion is a poor foundation for identity.

Application

Do not live for either:

The applause of people.

Or:

The condemnation of people.

Live for the approval of God.

VII. PUBLIUS WELCOMES PAUL

Acts 28:7 — Hospitality from the Chief Official

**“There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island.
He welcomed us and showed us hospitality for three days.”**

Publius was an important official.

Yet he personally welcomed the shipwreck survivors.

Hospitality becomes one of the major themes of Paul's experience on Malta.

God often uses people to provide for His servants at precisely the right moment.

Cross References

Hebrews 13:2

Do not forget to welcome strangers, because some people have welcomed angels without realizing whom they were receiving.

Romans 12:13

Help God's people when they are in need, and make it your practice to welcome others and care for them.

3 John 1:5

Dear friend, you are acting faithfully whenever you serve the brothers and sisters, even when they are strangers to you.

Spiritual Principle

Hospitality is not merely social courtesy.

It can be genuine Christian ministry.

VIII. PAUL PRAYS FOR PUBLIUS' FATHER

Acts 28:8 — Prayer and Healing

“His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, prayed, placed his hands on him, and healed him.”

Paul does not merely receive hospitality.

He ministers in return.

Publius had opened his home.

Now Paul enters the sickroom of Publius' father.

Notice the order.

Paul:

Prayed.

Placed his hands on him.

And the man was healed.

Paul understood that healing power belonged to God.

Cross References

Mark 1:31

Jesus went to her, took her by the hand, and helped her stand up. Immediately the fever left her, and she began serving them.

James 5:14

Is anyone among you sick? That person should call for the elders of the church. They should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Matthew 8:15

Jesus touched her hand, and the fever left her. She got up and began serving Him.

Spiritual Principle

Prayer acknowledges that the ultimate source of healing is God.

Application

When sickness enters our lives, believers should never overlook prayer.

We may seek medical help.

We may use medicine.

But we should also pray to the God who created the body and holds every life in His hands.

IX. THE SICK COME TO PAUL

Acts 28:9 — Healing Spreads Across Malta

“After this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.”

The healing of one person caused others to come.

News spread.

The shipwreck that looked like a disaster created a ministry opportunity on an island Paul had never planned to visit.

God turned:

A storm.

Into:

A mission field.

Cross References

Matthew 4:24

News about Jesus spread throughout Syria, and people brought Him everyone who was suffering from different diseases and severe pain, those troubled by demons, those having seizures, and those who were paralyzed, and He healed them.

Acts 5:16

Crowds also came from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those troubled by evil spirits, and every one of them was healed.

Luke 4:40

As the sun was setting, people brought to Jesus everyone who was sick with different diseases. He placed His hands on each one of them and healed them.

Spiritual Principle

God can transform an unwanted interruption into an unexpected ministry.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When God changes your location, ask:

“What ministry has God placed in front of me here?”

X. GOD PROVIDES THROUGH THE PEOPLE OF MALTA

Acts 28:10 — Supplied for the Journey

“They honored us in many ways, and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.”

Paul arrived on Malta with nothing.

The ship had been destroyed.

Yet when he left, his needs were supplied.

God did not send supplies from heaven.

He used people.

This is often how divine provision works.

Cross References

Philippians 4:19

My God will provide everything you truly need from His unlimited riches in glory through Christ Jesus.

3 John 1:6

They have told the church about your love. You will do well to help them continue their journey in a way that honors God.

Galatians 6:6

The person who is taught God's Word should share good things with the one who teaches him.

Spiritual Principle

God's provision often comes through human hands.

Key Truth

When God gives an assignment, He is able to provide what is needed to complete it.

XI. THE JOURNEY RESUMES

Acts 28:11 — Three Months on Malta

“After three months we set sail in an Alexandrian ship that had wintered on the island. The ship had figureheads of the twin gods Castor and Pollux.”

Paul remained on Malta for three months.

Eventually the sailing season improved.

Another Alexandrian ship was available.

The vessel carried pagan symbols.

But Paul was not intimidated by them.

False gods carved on a ship could not compete with the living God who had preserved him through the sea.

Cross References

Acts 27:6

There the officer found a ship from Alexandria that was sailing toward Italy, and he put us aboard it.

1 Corinthians 8:4

So then, concerning food offered to idols, we know that an idol has no real divine power and that there is only one true God.

Acts 28:13

From there we continued to Rhegium. The next day a south wind began blowing, and one day later we reached Puteoli.

Spiritual Principle

Believers can live faithfully in a culture filled with false beliefs without surrendering their allegiance to the true God.

XII. PAUL ARRIVES AT SYRACUSE

Acts 28:12 — Three Days in Syracuse

“We landed at Syracuse and stayed three days.”

Luke records the stages of the journey carefully.

Syracuse was another step toward Rome.

Not every stage contained a dramatic miracle.

Sometimes God's guidance looks like ordinary travel from one place to another.

Cross References

Acts 20:6

After the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we sailed away from Philippi and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

Acts 21:4

We found the disciples there and stayed with them for seven days. Through the Spirit they warned Paul about going on to Jerusalem.

Acts 28:13

From there we continued on to Rhegium. The next day a south wind came up, and the following day we reached Puteoli.

Spiritual Principle

God is present not only in dramatic moments but also in ordinary stages of the journey.

XIII. THE JOURNEY MOVES CLOSER TO ROME

Acts 28:13 — Rhegium and Puteoli

“From there we sailed to Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli.”

Every mile brings Paul closer to Rome.

Years earlier he had desired to preach there.

Now God's promise is becoming reality.

The route was far more difficult than Paul might have imagined.

Yet God's destination had not changed.

Cross References

Acts 27:13

When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they had received the weather they wanted. They raised anchor and sailed close along the coast of Crete.

Acts 28:12

We arrived at Syracuse and remained there for three days.

Romans 1:15

That is why I am eager to preach the good news to you who are in Rome also.

Spiritual Principle

God's promises do not guarantee an easy road.

They guarantee that God's purpose will stand.

XIV. PAUL FINDS BELIEVERS

Acts 28:14 — Fellowship at Puteoli

“There we found believers, who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome.”

Paul finds fellow Christians.

The gospel had already reached Italy before he arrived.

He spends seven days with them.

After months of storms, danger, and uncertainty, Paul experiences Christian fellowship.

Cross References

Romans 1:7

I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and called to belong to Him. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:24

I hope to visit you while I am traveling to Spain. After enjoying some time with you, I hope you will help me continue on my journey.

Acts 19:21

After these things happened, Paul decided that after traveling through Macedonia and Achaia he would go to Jerusalem. He said, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

Spiritual Principle

Christian fellowship is one of God's gifts for strengthening weary believers.

XV. PAUL IS ENCOURAGED BY OTHER CHRISTIANS

Acts 28:15 — The Forum of Appius and Three Taverns

“The brothers and sisters there had heard we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and was greatly encouraged.”

Paul was a great apostle.

But even Paul needed encouragement.

When believers traveled out to meet him, Paul responded in two ways:

He thanked God.

And:

He took courage.

Strong Christians still need encouragement.

Cross References

Romans 1:12

What I mean is that when we are together, we may encourage one another through the faith that both you and I share.

Hebrews 13:1

Keep loving one another as brothers and sisters in God's family.

Philippians 1:3

Every time I remember you, I thank my God for you.

Spiritual Principle

Encouragement is spiritual ministry.

Application

You may never know how much your presence strengthens someone.

Sometimes simply showing up says:

“You are not alone.”

XVI. PAUL ENTERS ROME AS A PRISONER

Acts 28:16 — Guarded by a Soldier

“When we arrived in Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.”

Paul has finally reached Rome.

But not in the way most people would imagine.

He enters:

Under guard.

In chains.

As a prisoner.

Yet his confinement gives him access to people he might never have met otherwise.

Cross References

Acts 24:23

Felix ordered the officer to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and to allow his friends to care for his needs.

Ephesians 6:20

I am Christ's ambassador even though I am in chains. Pray that I will speak the message boldly, just as I should.

Philippians 1:13

As a result, everyone in the imperial guard and many others now understand that I am in prison because I belong to Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Chains can restrict a servant without restricting his ministry.

Key Truth

Paul was chained.

The gospel was not.

XVII. PAUL MEETS THE JEWISH LEADERS

Acts 28:17 — Paul Explains His Situation

“Three days later he called together the local Jewish leaders. When they had assembled, Paul said: ‘Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans.’”

Paul does not waste time.

Only three days after arriving in Rome, he begins ministry.

He first contacts the Jewish leaders.

Paul explains that he has not rejected his people or deliberately attacked their heritage.

Cross References

Acts 25:8

Paul defended himself and said, “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law, against the temple, or against Caesar.”

Acts 23:1

Paul looked directly at the council and said, “Brothers, I have lived before God with a clear conscience up to this very day.”

Acts 21:28

They shouted, “Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches people everywhere against our people, our law, and this place. He has even brought Gentiles into the temple and made this holy place unclean.”

Spiritual Principle

False accusations should be answered with truth rather than bitterness.

XVIII. ROMAN AUTHORITIES FOUND NO CAPITAL CRIME

Acts 28:18 — Paul Was Not Worthy of Death

“They examined me and wanted to release me because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death.”

Paul reminds them that Roman officials had examined the charges.

The evidence did not support execution.

Again and again, Paul's innocence had become evident.

Cross References

Acts 25:25

But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. Since he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to send him.

Acts 26:31

After leaving the room, they talked with one another and said, “This man is doing nothing that deserves death or imprisonment.”

Luke 23:4

Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no reason to charge this man with a crime.”

Spiritual Principle

God's servants may be falsely accused without being truly guilty.

Application

Maintain such integrity that accusations require falsehood to survive.

XIX. PAUL APPEALED TO CAESAR

Acts 28:19 — Forced to Appeal

“But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar—not that I had any charge to bring against my own people.”

Paul explains why he came to Rome.

His appeal to Caesar was defensive.

He was not seeking revenge against the Jewish people.

He wanted a fair hearing.

Cross References

Acts 25:11

If I have done something wrong and committed a crime worthy of death, I am not refusing to die. But if these charges against me are false, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar.

Acts 25:7

When Paul entered, the Jewish leaders who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him and made many serious accusations, but they were unable to prove them.

John 18:35

Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own people and the chief priests handed You over to me. What have You done?”

Spiritual Principle

Seeking lawful protection is not the same thing as seeking revenge.

XX. PAUL IS BOUND FOR THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

Acts 28:20 — “Because of the Hope of Israel”

“For this reason, I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”

Paul identifies the real issue.

He is imprisoned because of:

“The hope of Israel.”

That hope centers ultimately in God's promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ—especially the resurrection.

Cross References

Acts 26:6

And now I stand here on trial because I have placed my hope in the promise God made to our ancestors.

Ephesians 6:20

I am an ambassador for the gospel even while wearing chains. Pray that I will speak it boldly as I should.

Acts 23:6

When Paul realized that one part of the council was made up of Sadducees and the other of Pharisees, he called out, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees. I am on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead.”

Spiritual Principle

Christian hope is not wishful thinking.

It rests upon God's promises and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

XXI. NO REPORT HAD ARRIVED FROM JUDEA

Acts 28:21 — The Leaders Had Heard Nothing Against Paul

“They replied, ‘We have not received any letters from Judea about you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you.’”

Surprisingly, the Jewish leaders in Rome had received no official accusation concerning Paul.

The controversy that had dominated Paul's life for years had apparently not followed him to Rome in the form he might have expected.

Cross References

Acts 21:21

They have been told that you teach Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or follow the customs handed down to us.

Acts 24:5

We have found this man to be a troublemaker. He stirs up disorder among Jews all over the world, and he is a leading figure in the group called the Nazarenes.

Acts 24:13

They cannot prove to you the things they are now accusing me of doing.

Spiritual Principle

Rumors may travel quickly, but they do not always survive careful examination.

XXII. THEY WANT TO HEAR ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

Acts 28:22 — “We Want to Hear Your Views”

“But we want to hear your views, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.”

The leaders know Christianity is controversial.

But instead of immediately rejecting Paul's message, they are willing to listen.

That gives Paul an opportunity to explain the gospel.

Cross References

Acts 24:14

But I freely admit this to you: I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything written in the Law and the Prophets.

Acts 24:5

We have found this man to be a troublemaker who creates unrest among Jews throughout the world, and he is a leader among the Nazarenes.

Acts 17:19

They brought Paul to the meeting of the Areopagus and asked him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?”

Spiritual Principle

Do not fear honest questions.

Questions can become doors for proclaiming truth.

XXIII. PAUL PREACHES ALL DAY

Acts 28:23 — The Kingdom of God and Jesus

“They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and many came to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God, using the Law of Moses and the Prophets to persuade them about Jesus.”

This verse gives us a remarkable picture of Paul's preaching.

From:

Morning.

Until:

Evening.

He teaches.

His subject is:

The kingdom of God.

His focus is:

Jesus.

His biblical foundation is:

The Law and the Prophets.

Paul did not present Christianity as disconnected from the Old Testament.

He showed how Scripture pointed toward Christ.

Cross References

Luke 24:27

Beginning with Moses and continuing through all the Prophets, Jesus explained to them the things written throughout the Scriptures concerning Himself.

Acts 17:2

As he normally did, Paul went into the synagogue, and for three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures.

Acts 19:8

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning with the people and trying to persuade them about the kingdom of God.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful preaching should be biblical, Christ-centered, patient, and persuasive.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not merely tell people what Christians believe.

Show them why Scripture points to Jesus Christ.

XXIV. SOME BELIEVE AND OTHERS REFUSE

Acts 28:24 — Two Responses to One Message

“Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe.”

Same preacher.

Same message.

Same Scriptures.

Same opportunity.

Different responses.

Some believe.

Others refuse.

The preacher's responsibility is faithfulness.

The hearer's responsibility is response.

Cross References

Acts 17:4

Some of the people were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas. A large number of God-fearing Greeks also believed, along with quite a few prominent women.

Acts 14:4

The people of the city were divided. Some sided with the Jews, while others sided with the apostles.

John 12:37

Even though Jesus had performed so many miraculous signs in front of them, they still refused to believe in Him.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel demands a response.

Neutrality toward Christ cannot continue forever.

XXV. THE HOLY SPIRIT SPOKE THROUGH ISAIAH

Acts 28:25 — Scripture Is the Voice of God

“They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul made this final statement: ‘The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through the prophet Isaiah.’”

Paul says:

The Holy Spirit spoke.

And He spoke:

Through Isaiah.

This is an important statement about biblical inspiration.

Isaiah was the human prophet.

The Holy Spirit was the divine source.

Cross References

Isaiah 6:9

God said, “Go and tell these people: You will keep hearing, but you will not understand. You will keep seeing, but you will not truly recognize what you see.”

2 Peter 1:21

Prophecy never came simply because a person decided to speak on his own. Instead, men spoke from God as the Holy Spirit guided and carried them along.

Hebrews 3:7

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, if you hear God's voice, do not harden your hearts.”

Spiritual Principle

The Bible is not merely human religious reflection.

God spoke through human authors.

XXVI. HEARING WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING

Acts 28:26 — Spiritual Deafness

“Go to this people and say, You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”

A person can hear Scripture repeatedly and remain spiritually unmoved.

Physical hearing does not guarantee spiritual understanding.

Exposure to truth does not guarantee acceptance of truth.

Cross References

Isaiah 6:9

Go and tell these people, “You will continue hearing, but you will not understand. You will continue looking, but you will not truly see what is in front of you.”

Matthew 13:14

Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them: “You will keep hearing but will not understand, and you will keep looking but will not truly see.”

Mark 4:12

They may keep looking but not truly recognize what they see, and they may keep hearing but not understand, otherwise they might turn back and be forgiven.

Spiritual Principle

Repeated exposure to truth can either soften the heart or, when continually rejected, reveal increasing hardness.

XXVII. THE DANGER OF A HARD HEART

Acts 28:27 — Eyes Closed and Hearts Hardened

“For this people's heart has grown hard; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them.”

The problem was not lack of evidence alone.

The deeper problem was the heart.

They:

Closed their eyes.

Resisted hearing.

Refused understanding.

Spiritual blindness can involve deliberate resistance to truth.

Cross References

Isaiah 6:10

Make the hearts of these people insensitive. Let their ears become dull and their eyes become closed, so they do not see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, turn back to Me, and be healed.

John 12:40

He has allowed their eyes to remain blind and their hearts to become hard so that they do not see with their eyes, understand with their hearts, turn back to Me, and receive healing.

Matthew 13:15

The hearts of these people have become dull. Their ears hardly listen, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, turn back to Me, and I would heal them.

Spiritual Warning

Every time truth is rejected, the heart is in danger of becoming harder.

Application

When God speaks through His Word:

Listen.

Respond.

Obey.

Do not continually postpone surrender.

XXVIII. SALVATION GOES TO THE GENTILES

Acts 28:28 — “They Will Listen”

“Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!”

Paul announces that the gospel is going outward to the Gentiles.

This theme has appeared throughout Acts.

God's saving purpose was never intended to remain confined to one nation.

The gospel is for the world.

Cross References

Romans 11:11

So I ask, did Israel stumble so badly that there is no recovery? Certainly not. Instead, because of their rejection, salvation has gone to the Gentiles, and this is intended to stir Israel to desire what God is doing.

Isaiah 49:6

God says, “It is too small a task for you only to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back the people of Israel I have preserved. I will also make you a light for the nations so that My salvation may reach to the farthest parts of the earth.”

Acts 13:46

Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly and said, “It was necessary for God's message to be spoken to you first. But since you reject it and show that you do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles.”

Spiritual Principle

The gospel crosses every:

- National boundary.
- Racial boundary.
- Cultural boundary.
- Social boundary.

Jesus Christ is Savior for all who believe.

XXIX. DISAGREEMENT CONTINUES

Acts 28:29 — The Jews Depart Arguing

“After he said this, the Jews left, arguing vigorously among themselves.”

Paul's message produced debate.

Some had believed.

Others rejected.

Now disagreement continues among them.

Truth often divides because people respond differently to it.

Cross References

Acts 19:9

But some became stubborn and refused to believe, speaking badly about the Way in front of everyone. So Paul left them, took the disciples with him, and continued teaching daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.

John 9:16

Some of the Pharisees said, “This man cannot be from God because He does not keep the Sabbath the way we think He should.” But others said, “How could a sinful man perform signs like these?” So they were divided.

Acts 23:7

As soon as Paul said this, an argument broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the whole group became divided.

Spiritual Principle

Division over truth is not always proof that truth has failed.

Sometimes division reveals the different conditions of people's hearts.

XXX. TWO YEARS OF HOUSE ARREST

Acts 28:30 — Paul Welcomes Everyone

“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him.”

Paul's circumstances are restricted.

His attitude is not.

For two years he receives visitors.

His rented house becomes a ministry center.

Paul cannot freely travel through Rome.

So God brings Rome to Paul.

Cross References

Philippians 1:13

Because of my imprisonment, everyone in the imperial guard and many other people have come to understand that I am in chains because I serve Christ.

Ephesians 3:1

For this reason, I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ Jesus because of my ministry to you Gentiles.

2 Timothy 4:17

But the Lord stood beside me and gave me strength so that through me the message could be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles could hear it. And I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

Spiritual Principle

When one ministry door closes, look for the door God has left open.

Application

Paul could have said:

“I cannot travel, so my ministry is finished.”

Instead he effectively said:

“If I cannot go to people, I will preach to everyone God sends to me.”

XXXI. THE GOSPEL CANNOT BE CHAINED

Acts 28:31 — “With Complete Boldness and Without Hindrance”

“He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with complete boldness and without hindrance!”

This is how Acts ends.

Not with Paul's death.

Not with Caesar's decision.

Not with a prison door.

But with preaching.

Paul proclaimed:

The kingdom of God.

He taught:

The Lord Jesus Christ.

He spoke:

With complete boldness.

And Luke's final emphasis is:

“Without hindrance!”

Paul is guarded.

Yet the Word moves freely.

Paul is confined.

Yet the gospel expands.

Rome may chain the messenger.

Rome cannot chain the message.

Cross References

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and all the way to the farthest parts of the earth.

Acts 4:29

And now, Lord, look at their threats and give Your servants the courage to speak Your Word with complete boldness.

Matthew 24:14

This good news about God's kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to every nation, and then the end will come.

Spiritual Principle

Governments can imprison Christians.

They cannot imprison Christ.

Enemies can oppose preaching.

They cannot cancel God's Word.

Key Truth

Acts begins with Jesus saying:

“You will be My witnesses.”

Acts ends with His witness reaching Rome.

The mission is continuing.

XXXII. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ACTS 28

1. God's Promises Survive Every Storm

Paul reached land safely just as God promised.

The ship broke apart.

God's promise did not.

Principle:

Circumstances can collapse without God's faithfulness collapsing.

2. God Can Turn Trouble into Ministry

Paul never planned a missionary visit to Malta.

A storm brought him there.

Then God used him to minister to the people of the island.

Principle:

An interruption in your plans may become an appointment in God's plan.

3. Human Judgment Is Often Wrong

The islanders first called Paul:

A murderer.

Then:

A god.

Both judgments were mistaken.

Principle:

Never build your identity on the changing opinions of people.

4. Christian Encouragement Matters

When Paul saw the believers coming to meet him near Rome:

“He thanked God and took courage.”

Principle:

Even strong believers need encouragement.

5. Chains Cannot Stop Christian Witness

Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner.

Yet he immediately began teaching.

Principle:

Your circumstances may limit your freedom without eliminating your usefulness.

6. The Gospel Produces Different Responses

Some believed Paul's message.

Others rejected it.

Principle:

Our responsibility is faithful proclamation.

The hearer must respond to the truth.

7. The Mission Continues

Acts ends:

“Without hindrance.”

Principle:

The Book of Acts ends, but the mission of Acts does not.

The church still carries the gospel to the world.

XXXIII. WHAT ACTS 28 TEACHES ABOUT GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Acts 28 demonstrates God's providence repeatedly.

God Controlled the Destination

The storm drove Paul toward Malta.

God Preserved Paul's Life

The shipwreck could not kill him.

The viper could not kill him.

God Provided Through Other People

The islanders provided warmth.

Publius provided hospitality.

The people supplied provisions.

Believers provided encouragement.

God Opened Ministry Opportunities

Paul ministered on Malta.

He witnessed along the road.

He preached in Rome.

God Fulfilled His Promise

Paul reached Rome.

Key Truth

Providence means that God's purpose continues even when circumstances appear chaotic.

XXXIV. WHAT ACTS 28 TEACHES ABOUT CHRISTIAN WITNESS

Paul's circumstances changed continually.

His mission did not.

On Malta:

He ministered.

On the journey:

He encouraged and was encouraged.

In Rome:

He preached.

Under guard:

He preached.

In a rented house:

He preached.

To Jewish leaders:

He preached.

To everyone who came:

He preached.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A faithful witness does not ask only:

“Are my circumstances ideal?”

He asks:

“Who has God placed in front of me?”

XXXV. WHAT ACTS 28 TEACHES ABOUT THE GOSPEL

The gospel is:

Biblical

Paul reasoned from Moses and the Prophets.

Christ-Centered

He persuaded people concerning Jesus.

Kingdom-Focused

He proclaimed the kingdom of God.

Universal

The message went to Jews and Gentiles.

Powerful

Some were persuaded and believed.

Rejected by Some

Others refused to believe.

Unstoppable

Acts closes with the gospel being preached:

“Without hindrance.”

Key Truth

The gospel does not depend upon favorable circumstances for its power.

XXXVI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What does Paul's safe arrival on Malta teach us about God's promises?

God had promised that Paul and the others aboard the ship would survive.

Acts 28 begins by showing that this promise was fulfilled.

The ship was destroyed, but every person reached shore.

This teaches us that difficult circumstances cannot cancel what God has determined to accomplish.

Question 2

What can we learn from the kindness of the people of Malta?

They saw cold, wet, exhausted strangers and immediately responded with compassion.

They built a fire.

They welcomed them.

Their kindness reminds believers that practical acts of compassion can become meaningful ministry.

Question 3

Why is the snakebite important?

Paul had survived the sea only to face another danger.

Yet God preserved him again.

The snakebite demonstrated that God's purpose for Paul had not changed.

He still had to reach Rome.

Question 4

What mistake did the islanders make when Paul was bitten?

They assumed his suffering proved he was guilty of terrible sin.

They judged his spiritual condition from his circumstances.

Scripture warns us not to assume that every tragedy is direct punishment for a particular sin.

Question 5

What does the changing opinion of the islanders teach us?

At first they thought Paul was a murderer.

Then they thought he was a god.

Their opinions changed completely within a short time.

This teaches us not to base our identity or faithfulness upon human praise or criticism.

Question 6

How did God use Paul's unexpected stay on Malta?

God turned the island into a place of ministry.

Publius' father was healed.

Other sick people came.

Paul was able to serve people he never would have met if the storm had not changed his journey.

Key Phrase:

“God can turn an interruption into an assignment.”

Question 7

Why was Paul encouraged when believers came to meet him?

Paul had endured years of hardship.

Seeing fellow Christians reminded him that he was not alone.

Their effort to meet him strengthened his heart.

This teaches us that Christian fellowship and encouragement are important even for mature spiritual leaders.

Question 8

How could Paul's imprisonment actually advance the gospel?

Because Paul was confined in Rome, soldiers guarded him and visitors came to him.

His imprisonment created opportunities to speak with people he might otherwise never have reached.

Paul's chains became part of his mission field.

Question 9

How did Paul explain Jesus to the Jewish leaders?

He used:

- The Law of Moses.
- The Prophets.
- The message of God's kingdom.

He demonstrated from Scripture that Jesus fulfilled God's redemptive promises.

Question 10

Why did some believe while others rejected Paul's message?

The same truth was presented to everyone, but hearts responded differently.

Some were persuaded.

Others refused to believe.

This demonstrates that hearing the gospel does not automatically produce faith.

A person must respond to God's truth.

Question 11

What warning does Acts 28 give about hardening the heart?

Paul quoted Isaiah's warning about people who heard but refused to understand.

Repeated rejection of truth can produce greater spiritual hardness.

We should respond to God's Word when He confronts us rather than continually resisting Him.

Question 12

Why are the final words “without hindrance” so important?

Paul was a prisoner.

Rome was the center of imperial power.

Christianity faced opposition.

Yet the gospel continued to be proclaimed freely.

The final message of Acts is that God's mission cannot ultimately be stopped.

XXXVII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Acts 28 asks several important questions.

Am I Trusting God When My Plans Change?

Paul planned to reach Rome.

He did not plan to spend three months on Malta.

Yet God worked through the interruption.

Do I Judge People Too Quickly?

The islanders reached an immediate conclusion about Paul.

Am I making assumptions about people without knowing their entire story?

Am I Serving Where God Has Placed Me?

Paul did not spend three months complaining about Malta.

He ministered there.

What opportunities are immediately around me?

Do I Encourage Other Believers?

The Christians who traveled to meet Paul strengthened him.

Who needs encouragement from me?

Am I Allowing Circumstances to Silence My Witness?

Paul preached while imprisoned.

What excuse am I using for not speaking about Christ?

Is My Witness Rooted in Scripture?

Paul reasoned from Moses and the Prophets.

Can I explain why I believe what I believe from God's Word?

Is My Heart Soft Toward Truth?

Am I merely hearing Scripture?

Or am I allowing it to change me?

Do I Believe the Gospel Is Still Unstoppable?

Acts ends with bold preaching.

Am I living as though God's mission is still continuing today?

XXXVIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“You May Be Chained, but the Gospel Is Not”

Paul finally reached Rome.

But he arrived wearing chains.

From a human viewpoint this looked like defeat.

The great missionary was restricted.

His travel was limited.

A soldier guarded him.

Yet those chains became part of God's strategy.

Paul could still:

Teach.

Witness.

Receive visitors.

Explain Scripture.

Proclaim Christ.

Speak about the kingdom.

The government controlled where Paul lived.

It did not control what Paul believed.

The soldier could guard Paul's body.

He could not keep Paul from proclaiming Christ.

Rome could confine the messenger.

It could not confine the message.

Principle:

Do not measure the power of your ministry merely by the freedom of your circumstances. God can accomplish extraordinary spiritual work through very restricted conditions.

XXXIX. THE BOOK OF ACTS ENDS—BUT THE MISSION DOES NOT

Acts begins with Jesus saying:

“You will be My witnesses.”

The disciples begin in Jerusalem.

Then the gospel moves into Judea.

Then Samaria.

Then farther outward.

Peter preaches.

Stephen testifies.

Philip evangelizes.

Saul is converted.

Paul becomes a missionary.

Churches are planted.

The gospel crosses cultures.

Gentiles believe.

Missionaries travel through the Roman world.

Opposition grows.

Prisons cannot stop them.

Riots cannot stop them.

False accusations cannot stop them.

Storms cannot stop them.

Shipwreck cannot stop them.

A snake cannot stop them.

And eventually:

The gospel reaches Rome.

But Luke does not end Acts by saying:

“The mission was completed.”

Instead Paul is still preaching.

Still teaching.

Still witnessing.

Still proclaiming Jesus.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The unfinished feeling at the end of Acts is appropriate because Christ's mission continues through His church.

The gospel must still go:

To cities.

To towns.

To neighborhoods.

To homes.

To nations.

To people who have never truly heard.

The church is still called to be Christ's witness.

XL. FINAL APPLICATION

Acts Chapter 28 is the conclusion of Luke's historical account, but it does not feel like an ending.

Paul is alive.

Paul is preaching.

The gospel is spreading.

Jesus Christ is being proclaimed in the capital city of the Roman world.

Think about the journey that brought Paul there.

He had been:

Threatened.

Beaten.

Arrested.

Falsely accused.

Imprisoned.

Delayed.

Transferred between rulers.

Placed aboard a ship.

Caught in a storm.

Shipwrecked.

Bitten by a snake.

Guarded by soldiers.

Yet none of those things stopped God's purpose.

Every apparent obstacle became another stage in the mission.

The storm brought Paul to Malta.

Malta became a mission field.

The prison brought Paul to Rome.

Rome became a pulpit.

The chains placed soldiers beside Paul.

Those soldiers became part of his audience.

The rented house restricted his movement.

But people came through its doors.

The great lesson of Acts 28 is therefore not simply:

Paul reached Rome.

The greater lesson is:

God's Word reached Rome.

And the chapter closes with a phrase that should remain in the heart of every believer:

“Without hindrance!”

Christ is still Lord.

The gospel is still powerful.

Salvation is still offered.

The Holy Spirit is still at work.

The church still has a mission.

People still need Jesus.

Therefore:

Keep preaching.

Keep teaching.

Keep witnessing.

Keep praying.

Keep serving.

Keep encouraging.

Keep opening Scripture.

Keep pointing people toward Christ.

Do not allow storms to stop you.

Do not allow criticism to stop you.

Do not allow changing circumstances to stop you.

Do not allow disappointment to stop you.

Do not allow opposition to stop you.

Do not allow limitations to convince you that God cannot use you.

Paul's circumstances were restricted.

His witness remained bold.

And until Jesus Christ returns, the church must continue the mission He gave in Acts 1:

To be His witnesses.

From where we are.

To the ends of the earth.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your faithfulness throughout the life and ministry of Paul.

Thank You that You preserved him through the storm and safely brought him to Malta.

Thank You that when the ship was destroyed, Your promise remained secure.

Teach us to trust You when circumstances around us appear to be falling apart.

Help us remember that Your purpose is greater than any storm we face.

Thank You for the kindness shown by the people of Malta.

Give us hearts that notice people who are hurting, cold, lonely, discouraged, or in need.

Teach us to show practical compassion.

Help us welcome strangers.

Help us serve people without expecting something in return.

When unexpected trouble comes, give us Paul's confidence.

When one difficulty is followed by another, keep us from assuming that You have abandoned us.

Teach us to remain faithful.

Protect us from judging other people merely by their circumstances.

Keep us from assuming that suffering always proves guilt.

Remind us that only You know every heart and every story.

Father, keep us from living for human approval.

People may criticize us one day and praise us the next.

Teach us to seek Your approval instead.

Use the unexpected places in our lives for ministry.

When our plans change, help us ask:

“Lord, what do You want me to do here?”

Thank You for Christian fellowship.

Thank You for brothers and sisters who encourage us when we are tired.

Make us people who strengthen others.

Give us eyes to see discouraged believers.

Give us words that build them up.

Thank You that Paul's chains could not stop Your gospel.

When our circumstances become restrictive, show us the opportunities that remain.

If one door closes, help us faithfully use the door that is still open.

Give us Paul's commitment to Scripture.

Teach us to open Your Word carefully and show people the truth about Jesus Christ.

Give us patience when people have questions.

Give us courage when people disagree.

Give us compassion when people reject the message.

Keep our own hearts soft toward Your truth.

Do not allow us to hear Your Word repeatedly while refusing to obey it.

Open our eyes.

Open our ears.

Open our hearts.

Lead us to repentance whenever we are wrong.

Thank You that Your salvation reaches beyond every national, cultural, racial, and social boundary.

Give us a heart for the world.

Help us remember that every person needs the gospel.

Thank You that Acts ends with Paul proclaiming Your kingdom and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ:

“With complete boldness and without hindrance.”

Give us that same boldness.

May our homes become places where Christ is proclaimed.

May our churches become places where Scripture is taught.

May our lives point people toward Jesus.

May nothing silence our witness.

Until Christ returns, help us continue the mission.

Keep us faithful.

Keep us humble.

Keep us courageous.

Keep us praying.

Keep us witnessing.

And may the gospel of Jesus Christ continue going forward:

Without hindrance.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Key Verse

“He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with complete boldness and without hindrance!” — Acts 28:31

Central Truth

God faithfully brought Paul through storms, shipwreck, danger, opposition, and imprisonment so that the gospel of Jesus Christ could reach Rome, demonstrating that no human circumstance can ultimately stop God's mission.

Acts 28 in One Sentence

Paul survives the shipwreck and the snakebite, ministers powerfully on Malta, reaches Rome under guard, boldly explains Jesus from Scripture, and continues proclaiming God's kingdom without hindrance, proving that the gospel cannot be chained.