

**1191 What happened to Paul in Rome and immediate future direction - Acts(27)27–(28)31
(by Whirlwind)**

First, we discussed how Paul, by faith, prevented the sailors from leaving the ship and urged everyone to eat and break bread, showing that even with God’s promise, there are situations where we still need to cooperate with God. Second, we covered the process of the ship running aground, yet everyone being saved. Third, we examined the kindness shown to them by the Maltese locals and the incident involving the venomous snake on the island. Fourth, we discussed the miracles of healing performed by Paul through prayer and the laying on of hands, and briefly touched on the principle that accepting only what is explicitly stated in Scripture and biblical concepts prevents us from altering the Bible and creating a God who is not the one described in Scripture. Fifth, we mentioned how Luke recounted their eventual arrival in Rome. The sixth section discusses Paul’s preaching to the Jews in Rome and cites a previous article to discuss a controversial words of Isaiah mentioned in the text. Finally, it addressed Paul’s ministry in Rome and the direction for the near future. The latter direction part also broadly discussed why we do not read Paul’s epistles in the order they appear in the current Bible, but instead read through them roughly in chronological order as much as possible to grasp the message they convey. It also examined the concept that “the New Testament is the reality, and the Old Testament is the shadow.”

Please note that this article is an expansion of the topicwise Bible study held on Sunday (5/24/26). Unless otherwise specified, verses refer to those in NASB95. If this article refers previous articles, they can all be found on our website, ‘<https://a-christian-voice.com/>’; click on ‘Understanding Spiritual Life’.

1. Paul, acting on faith, stopped the sailors from leaving the ship and broke bread

"But when the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching some land. They took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found it to be fifteen fathoms. Fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak. But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the ship’s boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, “Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved.” Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship’s boat and let it fall away.

Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing. Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish.” Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. All of them were encouraged and they themselves also took food. All of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy-six persons. When they had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.”(Acts 27:27-38)

We see that the sailors did what they could, yet even so, they were desperate to flee the ship. Paul saw through their attempt to escape and "...said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved.""(Acts 27:31) So we see that even with God's promise, people still need to cooperate. Common sense tells us that it is highly unlikely for everyone to be saved on a ship without sailors. Some say this is because Paul lacked faith, but this is clearly wrong, as is evident from the fact that "what God tells us through the Bible is consistent." Did we not say just a short while ago that he prophesied to the people, saying, "Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told."(Acts 27:25) Moreover, throughout the New Testament, it is consistently stated that Paul was a man of great faith, yet people have free will and can speak recklessly.

Fortunately, on this occasion they heeded Paul's words and let the small boat drift away. Since the crew had been fasting and going without food for fourteen days, Paul urged them to eat; this was indeed a matter of life and death for them, and they needed physical strength to escape. So after he broke the bread, they ate with confidence. They must have seen Paul's faith and believed what he said; otherwise, they would not have thrown the wheat into the sea to lighten the ship, for by doing so, they were certain to be saved before starving to death. We also see that a person of great faith can have their faith recognized by others.

2. The process of the ship running aground and everyone being saved

"When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could. And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach. But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the force of the waves. The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would swim away and escape; but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest should follow, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land."(Acts 27:39-44)

We see that although they did everything they could, they ultimately could not withstand the forces of nature, and the ship ran aground. Yet because the centurion sought to save Paul, God's will—that all might be saved—was thereby fulfilled. We see that God's will is often accomplished through people; this is just as salvation was accomplished through Jesus' crucifixion.

3. The kindness of the Maltese and the incident with the venomous snake

"When they had been brought safely through, then we found out that the island was called Malta. The natives showed us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and received us all. But when Paul had gathered a

bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one another, "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." However he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm. But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god."(Acts 28:1-6)

The Scripture describes the incident with the venomous snake very clearly. The locals treated them with great kindness, which was likely related to this incident. The Scripture makes it very clear that the locals were not mistaken; the snake was indeed venomous, but Paul was not harmed by it. Therefore, they finally "...changed their minds and began to say that he was a god."(Acts 28:6)

Although we discussed in "1167 Crucified, resurrected and appeared, erroneous verses – Mark(15)16–(16)20" under "7. Erroneous scriptures absent from ancient manuscripts," we discussed that Mark 16:9-20 is a mixture of truth and error and is therefore a later addition; this passage also mentions the incident with the venomous snake, which is the only example in the New Testament of the phrase "they will pick up serpents, ..." (Mark 16:18).

4. Paul performed healing miracles through prayer and the laying on of hands

"Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days. And it happened that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. After this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured. They also honored us with many marks of respect; and when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all we needed."(Acts 28:7-10)

Although the locals had initially thought Paul was a god, they must have realized by then that God had performed many miraculous healings through Paul's hands. Aside from Publius, the simple-hearted locals were also healed because of their simple believing the healings possible. No wonder "They also honored us with many marks of respect; and when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all we needed."(Acts 28:10) The text does not explicitly state that the locals were baptized simply because they saw the miracles, but their simple believing led to their healing. Consequently, some people cite these passages to argue that simple faith can lead to the manifestation of more miracles. It is good to have simple believing, but we must understand that true, simple believing cannot be merely verbal. God looks at the heart, not at outward appearances, and He has absolute sovereignty to make the final decision.

As for why Paul did not want them to think of him as a god, we can only speculate that it was likely related to the same incident that occurred during Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey, where "Even saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them."(Acts 14:18). But we can never be certain of this,

because the Bible does not explicitly state it. Some have told me that my stance—accepting only what the Bible explicitly states and the concepts found within it—makes it difficult for me to accept revelation, especially revelation regarding matters not addressed in the Bible. I later realized that those who told me this were altering certain passages of Scripture. I believe that this perspective, at the very least, avoids changing the words of Scripture and thereby creating a God who is not the God described in the Bible. To illustrate this point, we can cite an example: Mormonism, which claims to have received revelation, is a very clear example of altering the Bible.

Regarding faith, we also see the Lord Jesus saying to the Jews, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you."(Matthew 11:21-22) The hearts of the Jews were so hardened that, though the Gentiles did not believe in the Lord, their judgment at the Last Judgment would be far easier!

5. Luke describes how they finally arrived in Rome

"At the end of three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, and which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead. After we put in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium, and a day later a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. There we found some brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome. And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage."(Acts 28:11-15)

We see that Luke, with his characteristic historical precision, records how they finally arrived in Rome. His observations were so meticulous that he even noted the sign of the Twin Brothers for its figurehead, thereby knowing that the ship had wintered on that island. We also see that when Paul met the brothers who had come to welcome them, he gave thanks to God and was encouraged. The encouragement mentioned here shows us that no matter how spiritual a person may be, they still need the support of others.

6. Paul's preaching to the Jews in Rome

"When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

After three days Paul called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they came together, he began saying to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death. But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, not that I had any accusation against my nation. For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the

sake of the hope of Israel.” They said to him, “We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you. But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere.” When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, “The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, saying, ‘Go to this people and say, “You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes; Otherwise they might see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.”’ Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen.” [When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]”(Acts 28:16-29)

We see that Paul spent only three days in Rome, during which he explained to the Jews that he had appealed to Caesar out of necessity and that he was in chains because he had the hope of the people of Israel. We have discussed this before: in the past, people would go to other cities to incite the crowds to accuse him, as in "...the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds."(Acts 17:13) Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem was also because "...the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him."(Acts 21:27) Now that he had arrived in Rome, which was too far away, no one came to stir up trouble anymore. But the Jews expressed a willingness to hear him preach; yet because their hearts were hardened, he declared himself to be an apostle to the Gentiles, and all the Gentiles who had ears to hear received his message. Prior to this, Paul quoted the words of Isaiah. Since these words would provoke some controversy, we previously discussed their true meaning in "1117 Truly truly, logic, truth, and hardness – John (5) 19-47" under "4. How hard is the human heart!" Please refer to that article.

7. Paul’s ministry in Rome and the direction for the near future

"And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."(Acts 28:30-31)

We see that no one hindered Paul’s preaching in Rome, just as the Lord had promised: "...Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."(Acts 23:11) His preaching was indeed effective; one example is found in the passage where he says, "I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my imprisonment."(Philemon 1:10) He also knew that his time of death was approaching, for he stated clearly, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of

my departure has come."(2 Timothy 4:6) It is the same today; some very spiritual people can know the time of their death, just as Paul did.

Some say that after his brief release in Rome, he went to Spain, but the Bible offers no direct evidence of this; it only mentions his desire in the text: "but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—"(Romans 15:23-24)

As for the direction in the near future, we have now basically gone through the New Testament—the three Gospels other than the Book of Matthew and the Book of Acts—and in the Old Testament, we have only read the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis, seeing the will of God in His plan. In short, we will first cover the New Testament in its entirety before moving on to the Old Testament, because we now live in the New Testament era. Apart from a few prophecies yet to be fulfilled, the Old Testament consists of events that have already occurred and can be used to support the narrative of the New Testament. In other words, our next step will be to study Paul's thirteen epistles. In order, the New Testament books are: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

Some may have noticed that the order of these thirteen books is basically arranged according to their length, but they are divided into two categories: first are the epistles addressed to the entire church, and the last four are addressed to individuals.

If one reads the Bible in its current order, one cannot see Paul's growth process at all. Although he makes it very clear that the gospel he preached did indeed come from revelation, he says, "For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."(Galatians 1:11-12) He also says, "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!"(2 Corinthians 12:7) But revelation is not a one-time event; when God opens our eyes, revelation grows.

Please do not forget that God is infinite, while man is finite; He can open our eyes at any time and in any place—sovereignty belongs to Him. Since we do not know the exact dates when each book was written, we can only find some information in the New Testament; for the rest, we must speculate as much as possible on their order and possible reasons. However, we must recognize that the message is more important than the order; at the very least, we can read through the messages approximately conveyed in Paul's epistles in their entirety.

Finally, we must emphasize why we examine the New Testament first: because "the New Testament is the reality, and the Old Testament is the shadow." When there are discrepancies between what the Old Testament says and the New Testament, the New Testament takes precedence. For example, "But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one

flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.””(Mark 10:5-9) Therefore, Moses’ law regarding divorce existed only because of their hardness of heart; it was not God’s original intention. Moreover, not every married couple is one that God has joined together, but those whom God has joined together, no one may separate.

Although this exact phrase is not found in the Bible, the concept is certainly present, just as the term “Trinity” is not found in the Bible, yet the concept exists. For example, a foreshadowing in the Old Testament is the office of the high priest: "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."(Hebrews 5:1) "And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was."(Hebrews 5:4) The reality in the New Testament is described as follows: Jesus was "...designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek."(Hebrews 5:10)

Another example is the bronze serpent, which foreshadowed Jesus and served as a shadow (cf. Numbers 21:4-9). At that time, "...Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived."(Numbers 21:9) Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life."(John 3:14-15) Therefore, Jesus is the reality. Of course, there are many other examples, but I will not go into them here.