

Introduction

We do not know if Paul was a good swimmer but along with the sailors, the soldiers, passengers and the other prisoners he had to jump into the raging sea and make it to land as best they could. So it was that all were brought safely to land (**Acts 27:43-44**). At every step of the perilous journey, the Lord had ensured that nothing would stand in the way of His promise that Paul would arrive safely in Rome.

Summary

In Acts 28:1-10, the inhabitants of the island of Malta showed remarkable kindness to the castaways and Paul, in turn, extended the healing power of Christ to those in need.

1. God's Promise vs. 1a

Luke begins the final chapter of Acts by recalling what he had written at the close of the previous chapter (**Acts 27:44; 28:1**). God had kept his word. His promise to Paul was trustworthy. God is to be trusted, no matter what the circumstances may be.

Paul was given a specific promise made in a specific situation. No such a promise is given to us if we ever find ourselves in a life-threatening situation.

Nevertheless, all believers have been given the following promises: I will never leave you nor forsake you. (**Heb. 13:5**) Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved? (**Acts 16:31**) For those who love God, all things work together for good. (**Rom. 8:28**).

These promises and many more are true for every Christian.

God did promise to save Paul, however, showing us that when God makes such a promise, he will keep it-no matter what happens. Behind this truth lies another: the time of our death is appointed by God (**Heb. 9:27**). Our lives are in God's hands, and that is surely a calming thought if only we fully believe it.

Learning to trust God's Word in every circumstance, good and bad, is the way to Christian maturity

2. Hospitable Islanders vv. 1b-6

The inhabitants of Malta responded quickly to meet the needs of the unexpected guests. They built a bonfire and kindly welcomed the soggy castaways to warm themselves from the chill and rain.

Paul, pitched in by gathering fuel to feed the blaze. One of the branches' in a bundle he tossed on the fire turned out to be a viper which fastened itself on Paul's hand.

The Maltese believed that evil-doers could not mock justice and evade the gods' vengeance for past crimes (**Acts 28:4**). Like them, we often think that when bad things happen, it must be because we deserve them.

When nothing untoward happened to Paul, they reversed their opinion completely. Invincible against storm and snake, he must be a god in human disguise (**Acts 28:5-6**) Paul was no more a god than a murderer but he was God's servant. Jesus had assured his messengers that they shared in his victory over Satan (**Luke 10:19**). That spiritual authority received visible expression in Paul's encounter with the viper.

Question: Is all suffering divine judgment and retribution?

This question is not an easy one to address for many reasons not least because of the emotions connected with the circumstances in which the question is asked.

There are many reasons why believers find themselves in trouble.

First, we live in a fallen world (**Rom. 8:19-23**).

Secondly, we may need some course correction (**Heb. 12:7-8**).

Thirdly, we need to grow into maturity (**Rom. 5:3-4**).

Fourth, we need to exercise faith (**Isa. 55:8-9**)

3. Visiting Healer vv. 7-10

After the incident with the viper, Paul was invited with others to enjoy the hospitality of Publius, the Chief Man of the island (**Acts 28:7**).

When they arrived at his estate, the Official's father was bedridden with fever and dysentery. Paul went in and prayed, laying his hands on the man, and healed him. When the word of this healing spread, crowds of sick folk from all over the island flocked to Paul.

They too experienced the healing power of the Jesus whom Paul served.

They, in turn, expressed their gratitude in respectful gifts brought for Paul and his colleagues; Luke and Aristarchus (**Acts 28:10**). Once more, the Lord provided for all that was needed to ensure that Paul was brought safely to Rome.

Luke's amount of the castaways' stay at Malta highlights unexpected kindness flowing in two directions.

When Christians gratefully receive the extraordinary hospitality of unbelievers, we may have opportunity to invite them into the extraordinary hospitality of God, who welcomes all sorts of people to his banquet.

Luke describes Paul's stay in Malta as a time of extraordinary blessing and a welcome change from the two years of incarceration that he had previously known, not to mention what lay ahead of him upon arrival in Rome.

Despite the shipwreck and the fact that Paul was still a prisoner, God refreshed Paul's spirit, preparing him for what lay ahead in Rome. The three months in Malta were a welcome break in what had otherwise been a time of enormous frustration. Such was the Lord's kindness in the midst of the ongoing trial.