

SHAKE IT OFF - ACTS 28

ICE BREAKER: What is the most fun/dangerous/unusual thing that happened to you while you were traveling?

This chapter wraps up the book of Acts. The gospel has been spread throughout the Mediterranean. The disciples have shared the gospel, raised up disciples and established churches everywhere they went. They have experienced hardships, but God has continued to provide for his people. Even though the disciples have been on the job, fulfilling the Great Commission, (Matthew 28:19-20) they have not had smooth sailing or a life free of pain and suffering. God has brought them through the trials. We have this same promise from God, that we will have troubles in this world (John 16:33). We also have the same mission; the Great Commission applies to us as well as it applied to the disciples. The question for us is whether or not we will be on mission, and trust God for the troubles.

Paul Ashore on Malta

28 *1 Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. 2 The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. 3 Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. 4 When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live." 5 But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. 6 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.*

7 There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. 8 His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. 9 When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. 10 They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

1. It seems that in every change of audience, God causes something to happen that focuses the spotlight on Paul. Understanding that nothing is in the Bible by chance, how did God use Paul getting bitten by a viper in front of everyone, after just surviving a shipwreck? Why do you suppose that the people changed from “Paul must be a really bad man, to he is a god”, so quickly?
2. What does Paul’s demeanor, while being snake bit, say about his faith and confidence in God?
3. How does our reaction to trials about our faith affect our testimony to the world? Do you have a story of a positive or negative reaction to a trial that affected your testimony?
4. Paul appears to be serving the welfare of everyone from before the shipwreck to the time that they are ready to leave, (three months later (verse 11). (Mark 10:45) How do you suppose this affects his gospel presentation and testimony? In what ways can we serve those around us to further our testimony and gospel presentation?

Paul’s Arrival at Rome

11 After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island—it was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. **12** We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. **13** From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. **14** There we found some brothers and sisters who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome. **15** The brothers and sisters there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these people Paul thanked God and was encouraged. **16** When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.

5. So, under God's plan, the ship had to wait at the island for 3 months. What do you suppose was God's plan for Paul and his crew's time on the island? Why do you suppose God would do this?
6. How was Paul encouraged when he came to Rome even though he faced a trial in front of Caesar?
7. When were you encouraged by fellow Christians during a stressful time? How has or can this circle group encourage one another?

Paul Preaches at Rome Under Guard

17 Three days later he called together the local Jewish leaders. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: "My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. **18** They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. **19** The Jews objected, so I was compelled to make an appeal to Caesar. I certainly did not intend to bring any charge against my own people. **20** 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."

21 They replied, "We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. **22** But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect."

23 They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. **24** Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. **25** They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

26 *“Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.” 27 For this people’s heart has become calloused; 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.’[a]*

28 *“Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” [29][b]*

30 *For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. 31 He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!*

8. Paul called the local Jewish leaders together and told them his situation. Why did he do this? What would be his purpose?

9. From this chapter, how do you see God providing for Paul’s needs? How do you see the Great Commission being fulfilled?

10. Paul met with the Jewish leaders and shared the gospel with them from morning to evening. What would you share from the Old Testament to lead other people to the knowledge of Christ?

11. Paul shared with the Jewish leaders. Some came to Christ, and some would not. Paul quoted to them the prophesy in Isaiah. (vs 23-28) Why do you suppose he would do this? What are some of the determining factors in whether or not people come to faith in Christ? (Matthew 13:3-15, 37-43)

12. What is God’s purpose in taking the gospel to the Gentiles? Paul says, “and they will listen.” (Ephesians 2:14-16) What does this tell us about God?

13. In Pastor Dave's "Here is why you need this sermon", he says, "Storms can kill your faith, or they will build your faith". How is this world working to destroy our faith? What can we do to ensure that our storms build our faith?

14. Pastor Dave's third point in his sermon, is that we are to, "Shake Off Those Who Refuse The Gospel." Why do we struggle when we share the gospel and people say they don't believe? What is our responsibility in sharing our faith? (1 Corthinians 3:7-9)

15. God gave Paul two years in his own home in Rome, where he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about Jesus. (v 30) What do you suppose was the purpose of this, or what was the outcome?