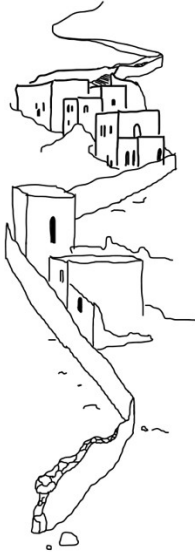




1. On what island did the shipwrecked people find refuge (1)? What do you know about this island?
2. How did the natives respond to the visitors who had been shipwrecked? Besides kindling a fire for the newcomers in the rain, what else might the “unusual kindness” they showed have included (2, 7, 10)?
3. How are believers supposed to treat strangers? What might be the impact of such actions (Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 2:12)?
4. What was Paul doing when the snake bit him (3)? What does this tell you about him (Mark 10:42-45)? How can you imitate his example in your life this week?
5. How did the natives react at first when Paul was bitten by the snake (4)? Do you think they had a true sense of justice, or were they merely superstitious? What was their reaction after Paul did not die (5-6)? How accurate was their thinking about Paul? Can you share a time when you misjudged someone who later became a help to you?
6. Who extended special hospitality to Paul and his companions (7)? How did Paul return the favor (8)? What happened as a result (9-10)? Write down the name of someone who has shown kindness/hospitality to you; how can you show this person kindness in return?
7. In Mark 16:17-18, Jesus promised His followers that certain unusual events would accompany them. Which of these took place during Paul’s time on Malta?
8. How long did Paul stay on Malta before he and his companions were able to leave (11)? How eager do you think Paul’s traveling companions were to get on another ship at that time? What promises had God given Paul earlier that may have helped them overcome their fears (23:11; 27:23-25)?
9. Skim Romans 1:8-15 and 15:22-33, from the letter Paul had written to the Romans several years before the events in Acts 28 took place. List some reasons Paul had given the Roman believers why he wanted to go to Rome and see them. Which of these were fulfilled in verses 14-16?
10. What encouraged Paul as he traveled the final stretch of his journey to Rome and arrived there (14-16)? From 2 Corinthians 1:8; 2:12-13; and 11:27, what things may have caused Paul to be discouraged in his ministry? How important is encouragement for believers? How can you personally encourage someone this week?



The Final Stretch to Rome Leader Notes for Acts 28:1-16



Chapter 28 picks up right after a shipwreck that saw 276 passengers on board brought safely to land, just as Paul had prophesied (27:22). They found themselves on a certain island (27:26) called Malta, a small Mediterranean island south of Sicily. The inhabitants of Malta were of Phoenician descent.

The Maltese people showed hospitality by meeting the needs of the shipwrecked passengers and crew, building a fire for them, and caring for them while they were there. Luke took care to mention three times how the natives were unusually kind to them (2, 7, 10). However, the superstitious nature of the islanders was evident by their reaction to a snake that had fastened itself to Paul's hand as he laid a bundle of sticks on the fire. How ironic it would have been to survive a shipwreck only to be killed by a poisonous snake bite that very day! When the natives saw this, they immediately assumed Paul must have committed a heinous crime and was about to receive God's punishment. When he suffered no harm, they changed their opinion and assumed Paul was a god with miraculous powers.

Publius, the leading man of the island, welcomed the visitors and showed kindness to them for three days. During this time, Paul had an opportunity to minister to the physical needs of Publius' father, who had been afflicted with fever and dysentery. Paul prayed and laid hands on the father and healed him, which opened the way for further ministry on the island – one more place Paul witnessed for Christ!

After the group had been on the island for three months, a ship that had wintered there took the group on board to resume their journey. The events in Malta had been yet another link in the chain that brought Paul ever closer to Rome.

When Paul finally reached Italy some miles below Rome, he was met by members of the Roman church. When he saw them, he thanked God and took courage (15). It is important for us to see that even one of the greatest Christian leaders needed encouragement. Paul was not beyond periods of discouragement, and the sight of these fellow believers gave him an enormous lift amid unfamiliar surroundings. Our mere presence in a difficult situation may be a great encouragement to a believer going through a time of difficulty. It is interesting that Paul was encouraged directly at least three times in this last portion of Acts – in 23:11; 27:23-25; and 28:15. The means of encouragement were the presence of God, the promises of God's word, and the presence of other believers.

Our passage ends with Paul entering Rome, where he was put under house arrest, but continued to testify regarding Christ and the kingdom of God. One of the most important themes of this passage is that God can be taken at His word. He told Paul that he would reach Rome, and he did. He told Paul that no lives would be lost in the shipwreck, and none were. God's word can be trusted, because God can be trusted!