

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 77

### I. Exposition of Chapter Twenty Seven. (Continued).

#### A. Verses 27-29 – They Draw near Land.

##### 1. Verse 27 – “Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land.”

a. What would have been a trip of only a few hours to go only 40 miles to the harbor of Phoenix, now had taken 2 weeks due to being blown off course by the hurricane-like winds.

b. “...the Adriatic Sea...” – This was the body of water between the Island of Crete and Sicily and was considered an arm of the Mediterranean Sea. It’s not what is called the Adriatic Sea today which is the body of water between Italy and the Balkans. Warren Wiersbe writes:

**“During the two weeks they had been at sea, the ship had been driven over 500 miles off course and was now adrift in the Adrian Sea. (It is now called the Ionian Sea and must not be confused with the Adriatic Sea.)”<sup>1</sup>**

c. “...about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land.” – These men were experienced sailors so they had ways of “sensing” that land was near. Dr. Thomas Constable suggests the following:

**“The sailors may have smelled the land, which sailors can do, or they may have heard the waves breaking on shore.”<sup>2</sup>**

##### 2. Verse 28 – “And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms.” – Grant Osborne gives the best explanation of this:

**“They ‘took soundings,’ obviously not modern radar but a weighted line to the bottom of the sea, and found it 120 feet deep (twenty fathoms), which has been estimated to be at what is called Koura Point at the tip of the island. Then a short time later it registered 90 feet deep (fifteen fathoms) as they were entering St. Paul’s Bay. Needless to say, everyone is overjoyed, as God’s answer to Paul’s prayers was coming to pass.”<sup>3</sup>**

##### 3. Verse 29 – “Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come.” – Realizing the water was getting more shallow and unable to see well due to the night, they were fearful of hitting the rocks.

#### B. Verses 30-38 – Paul is a Prisoner in Charge.

1. **Verses 30-32 – Paul warns the Centurion.** – The sailors have had enough and planned to leave the ship, and everyone else, but Paul warns the Centurion that if they leave, everyone else will die. A ship needs sailors to navigate.

2. **Verses 33-38 – Paul encourages them all.** Paul takes the lead, encouraging them all to eat and reminding them “...not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.” (verse 34). Then “...in the presence of them all...” (verse 35), he gives thanks to God and eats. So all 276 people aboard, after 14 days of not eating, ate and were encouraged. In verse 38, they threw any remaining wheat overboard to, once again, lighten the load.

#### C. Verses 39-44 – They are Shipwrecked on the Island of Malta.

1. **Verses 39-41** – Now that’s it’s day, the men could see the land. They didn’t recognize the island but as they headed toward it the ship hit, and was stuck, in a sandbar. At this point, “...the violence of the waves” was destroying the back end (stern) of the ship and it was breaking apart. Regarding “...striking a place where two seas met...”, it’s understood that the current from two parts of the sea would converge here, causing the accumulation of sand and mud.<sup>4</sup>

2. **Verse 42** – “And the soldiers plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape.” – This was a case of self-preservation. If the prisoners escaped the soldiers would be held accountable and probably put to death.

3. **Verses 43-44** – The Centurion, Julius (cf. 27:1) saved Paul’s life by not allowing the soldiers to kill the prisoners. And, as Paul promised, “...they all escaped safely to land.” (verse 44).

### II. Exposition of Chapter Twenty Eight.

#### A. Verses 1-10 – Paul ministers to the People of Malta.

<sup>1</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 509.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 478.

<sup>3</sup>Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 466.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 480.

1. **Verses 1-2 – The natives welcome them to the Island of Malta.** This island is located approximately 60 miles south of Sicily. It's a small island only about eighteen miles long and eight miles wide.<sup>5</sup> The men probably thought that the natives would be hostile toward them but were, no doubt, surprised by their friendliness. The word “**natives**” is more literally translated, “**barbarians**.” This isn't meant in a negative way, it simply referred to anyone who did not speak Greek or Latin.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Stanley Horton adds:

**“After arriving safely on land they found out the island was called Malta (Phoenician or Canaanite for ‘refuge’). It was south of Sicily and its people were descended from Phoenician colonists who settled there about 1000 B.C., and who probably spoke a dialect closely related to Hebrew. Rome had conquered the island in 218 B.C.”<sup>7</sup>**

The natives showed “...unusual kindness...” – Regarding this, Grant Osborne writes:

**“The term is transliterated “philanthropy” (*philanthrōpia*) and pictures people who are quite friendly in welcoming strangers and caring for them. It was a rainy, cold day at the start of winter, so the islanders showed them hospitality by building a fire so they could rest and warm themselves after their arduous task of swimming to shore as their ship was breaking up on the rocks.”<sup>8</sup>**

2. **Verses 3-6 – Paul shakes off a Poisonous Snake.**

- a. **Verse 3** – As Paul helps collect firewood for the fire, a “**viper came out...and fastened on his hand.**” – The word “**viper**” is defined as a “**species of poisonous snakes—‘asp, cobra, viper.’**” Some skeptics bring out the fact that Malta doesn't have any poisonous snakes today. This, however, doesn't disprove that there were some on Malta around 2000 years ago. (e.g. New York State had bison and mountain lions a lot less than 2000 years ago.)

- b. **Verses 4-5** – In their superstition, the natives thought Paul must have been a murderer when they saw the snake hanging from his hand. They thought Justice, which was the name of one of their gods, was being carried out. But Paul “**...shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.**” – This is a fulfillment of the promise of Jesus as is recorded in **Mark 16:18**. Warren Wiersbe makes an important point:

**“Was the viper a weapon of Satan to get Paul out of the way? The storm did not drown him, but a hidden trap might catch him. As Christians, we must constantly be alert, for either the serpent or the lion will attack us (2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Peter 5:8). We should also keep in mind that we are being watched, and we must use every opportunity to magnify Christ.”<sup>10</sup>**

- c. **Verse 6** – After watching Paul for a long time, thinking he would swell up and die from the poison, they decided that, instead of being a murderer, he must be a god. Thomas Constable writes:

**“People had mistaken Paul for ‘a god’ previously (14:8-18). Perhaps his reaction here was the same as it had been at Lystra. Probably he used the opportunity to preach the gospel. Luke's purpose in recording this incident was probably not to supply a background for what Paul said. It was to show that God would even miraculously heal His servant, in order to enable him to fulfill God's purpose that he bear witness in Rome (cf 23:11; 27:24).”<sup>11</sup>**

3. **Verses 7-10 – Paul's Healing Ministry in Malta.**

- a. **Verse 7** – A “**leading citizen**” by the name of Publius received and entertained them for three days. The term “**leading citizen**” means; “**pertaining to being of high rank, with the implication of special prominence and status**”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 473.

<sup>6</sup>Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 287.

<sup>7</sup>Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 401.

<sup>8</sup>Osborne, 473.

<sup>9</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 46.

<sup>10</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 510.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 482.

<sup>12</sup>Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 737.

- b. **Verse 8** – Paul heals Publius’ father who was sick of fever and dysentery. Paul did what Jesus said we who believe should do as recorded in **Mark 16:18**, “**..he laid his hands on him and healed him.**”
- c. **Verse 9** – “**So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.**” Much like in Jesus’ ministry, when people heard of healings happening, they who needed healing would go to where the person ministering healing was.
- d. **Verse 10** – The people took care of Paul and the entire 276 people on board for 3 months, the entire winter.