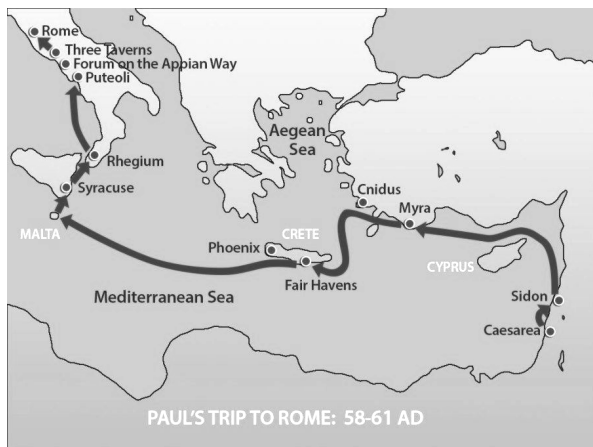


As God's people, we want to be guided by His Word and empowered by His Spirit to look more like Jesus. This Scripture Guide is based on this morning's passage to further equip you with what God's Word says.

## Scripture Guide

### Acts 28

The final chapter of Acts ends with an opportunity for the book's readers to respond to its themes. These themes of King Jesus coming into the pagan world and God bringing good news to the Gentiles are fully shown in Luke's closing remarks.



**28:1-10** Paul and company survived the storm from Acts 27 and arrived safely on Malta's island. The natives<sup>1</sup> of the isle treat them with hospitality and start a fire to warm the cold and drenched foreigners, only for a python to sneak out and bite Paul's hand (vv.1-4). The natives see the viper bite Paul's hand and assume Paul has done some evil deed since Paul escaped judgment<sup>2</sup> from the shipwreck only to die by the fangs of a snake (v.4). However, Paul simply shakes off the snake into the fire without any issues, causing the natives to proclaim him a god<sup>3</sup> (vv.5-6). A Jewish audience would see Paul be delivered from the chaotic storm waters, unaffected by a snake bite, and perhaps make the connection back to Genesis

1-3. These images allude to the idea of a new creation, with Paul introducing this new world to these people. This act of healing encourages other people nearby, including a Roman official, to seek out and be healed by Paul (vv.7-9). This healing is an ironic moment, a man in chains setting people free from their infirmities! From these acts, the native people are very generous to Paul and his companions before the company sets sail again.

**28:11-30** Paul and company set sail for Rome on a ship with the twin gods Castor and Pollux, the gods of navigation, as its figurehead. They arrive in Puteoli, where they find brothers (ἀδελφοί)<sup>4</sup> who offer them hospitality. Others hear about their arrival and come from a distance away to see them (see map). With this encouragement, Paul enters Rome (v.11-16). After a few days, Paul calls together the local leaders of the Jews, as is his custom whenever he enters a new city. Paul relates who he is and how he ended up in Rome as a prisoner, stressing his innocence of the penalty of death and stating he is wearing chains for "the hope of Israel" (vv.17-20). The Jewish leaders are curious about him as no Jew in Rome knows anything that could discredit him, but this sect is still regarded warily (vv.21-22). A few days later, the Jewish leaders came in more numbers to hear Paul testify before them about Jesus. Paul discusses how Jesus taught the kingdom of God and how the Law and the Prophets testified about Jesus (v.23). Like Jesus, many Jews believe him, but many do not. They discuss this among themselves before Paul gives a

<sup>1</sup> The word here is literally βάρβαροι (Barbarians), a word signifying that these people are not Romans and don't speak Latin or Greek.

<sup>2</sup> They reference the punishment of δίκη (Justice) a word which in this culture should be taken to refer to a deity. See NET Bible. "Acts 28." 2nd Edition. Bible.org. 2022.

<sup>3</sup> This sounds similar to Acts 14:11-19 where similar healing occurs and the Lystrains proclaim Paul a god. The apostles are so similar to Jesus in presence and power that other peoples cannot help but see the divine in them.

<sup>4</sup> Luke's use of ἀδελφοί instead of Ἰουδαίων suggests that these are Christians and not just ethnically Jewish.

**As God's people, we want to be guided by His Word and empowered by His Spirit to look more like Jesus. This Scripture Guide is based on this morning's passage to further equip you with what God's Word says.**

closing statement out of Isaiah 6:9-10 (vv.24-28).<sup>5</sup> This section of Isaiah was a section for the prophet to speak on behalf of God to the Jewish leaders. It gives a harrowing account of God's frustration with his chosen people and his forgiving love, as God knows that if the people listened and repented, he would forgive them due to his nature. Nevertheless, Paul assures the Jews that the Gentiles will listen. Luke concludes this narrative that Paul lived in Rome for another two years under arrest and gladly proclaimed Jesus to all who wished to hear him (v.30).

### **Conclusion**

Christians and historians have puzzled over how the book of Acts ends. The ending is very abrupt, leaving Paul on a cliffhanger about whether or not he will appear before Caesar and whether or not he will die in Rome. However, the end of Acts is an invitation to step into Paul's shoes and take up the patience and spirit he used to preach the gospel in a hostile environment. The Spirit will have moved from Jesus to Paul and finally to the Christians. The entirety of Paul's journey has underlaid Paul's mission to Jesus's life through his bold calls of repentance to the Gentiles. They both healed indiscriminately and commanded demons and spirits with authority. They stood before governors and kings boldly and endured prison when these confrontations went awry. They will also both die at the hands of their captors. Luke's audience will either already know about Paul's death or expect it. Paul will have survived prison, shipwreck, and the snake's bite, only to die as a witness to the faith.

Other sources give possible information surrounding Paul. The letter First Clement says that Paul made it to the "farthest bounds of the west," indicating that Paul would have been released from prison and preached for his ultimate goal of Spain.<sup>6</sup> Eusebius writes that Paul was freed from jail one time but then was imprisoned again in Rome and killed.<sup>7</sup> Paul would go on to write several letters from jail, still attempting to support the church from behind bars. Even in prison, when the rest of the world would assume that Jesus had no power, Paul would sing praises and write letters, knowing that Jesus suffered the same fate. Paul's life is an archetypal Christian life, showing a man who actively attacked the good news of Jesus to a man who would travel across the known world attempting to declare that Jesus is Lord over all.

### **Application**

Just as Paul patterned his life after Jesus so that the kingdom would go forth, the call for The Church now is to pattern their life after Jesus so that the kingdom can go forth. The testament of the early church accomplishing this through the power of the Spirit shows us that life on mission will not be easy, but it is how the kingdom will reign on earth as it is in heaven.

---

<sup>5</sup> It is worth pointing out that verse 29 has been removed from most modern bibles. It is not present in early manuscripts including Vulgate manuscripts as well as Coptic and Syriac manuscripts. For more information see <https://carm.org/king-james-onlyism/was-acts-2829-removed-from-modern-bibles>.

<sup>6</sup> See Romans 15:24

<sup>7</sup> First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. Clement of Rome. Athena Data Products. Translated by J.B. Lightfoot. 1990. And The Church History of Eusebius. Eusebius. Translated by Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, 1904.