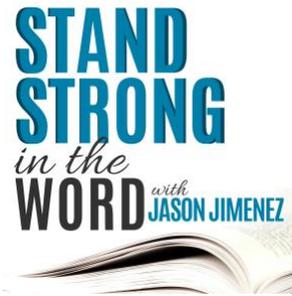


**“PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME”**  
**Acts 28:1-31**

**I. Paul is Bitten by a Poisonous Snake (28:1-6)**

1. ***After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta*** (almost 60 miles S of Sicily). <sup>2</sup> ***The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.*** The Maltans spoke Punic, not Greek and were of Carthaginian descent. *Word Studies in the New Testament*, “Even in the present day the natives of Malta have a peculiar language, termed the Maltese, which has been proved to be essentially an Arabic dialect, with an admixture of Italian (Gloag).” It’s possible a small percentage of the islanders spoke Latin.
  - A. *Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): New Testament*, “Malta is an island about 18 miles long and 8 miles wide, lying 58 miles south of Sicily and 180 miles north and east of the African coast. It had been colonized about 1000 B.C. by Phoenicians, but was captured by Rome in 218 B.C. (though it was given much local autonomy). Augustus established a Roman governor on the island and settled a number of army veterans and their families there. In Paul’s day the island was known for its prosperity and residential architecture, and its native population spoke a Phoenician dialect, though many probably knew some Latin and Greek.”
2. <sup>3</sup> ***When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened (the fangs) on his hand.*** Today, there are no poisonous snakes on the island of Malta. However, that’s not to say there weren’t any at the time Paul was shipwrecked on the island.
3. <sup>4</sup> ***When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.”*** <sup>5</sup> ***He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.*** In the ancient world, it was believed survival at sea was a sign the gods favored your life. Justice or Dike, the daughter of Zeus and Themis, was in charge of executing the fairness in the world. ***This man is a murderer***—Seeing Paul in chains causes the Maltans to infer that Justice sent a poisonous snake to kill him because he was a murderer.



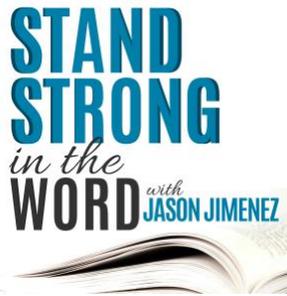
4. <sup>6</sup> *They were waiting for him to swell up* (inflammation) *or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.* God continues to grant favor and protection over Paul because his ministry wasn't over yet. **He was a god**—The other extreme inference the Maltans had was Paul was a god. After healing the crippled man in Lystra, the people believed Paul to be Hermes, the chief spokesman of Zeus (14:11-18).

## II. Paul Heals People on the Island (28:7-10)

1. <sup>7</sup> *Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man* (chief official; governor) *of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.* As an act of courtesy to Julius (a hired Roman centurion), Publius welcomes Paul, Julius, Luke, and Aristarchus and provides them with anything they need. **Chief man**—Archaeologists have uncovered inscriptions with this same title (Gk., *protos*) in Miletus.
2. <sup>8</sup> *It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him.* Many people on the island of Malta were stricken by dysentery (a gastric fever), typhoid, and malaria because of poor sanitation and from drinking goat's milk.
3. <sup>9</sup> *And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured.* <sup>10</sup> *They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.* When you take into account the many struggles Paul underwent in Caesarea for two years, the miserable months out at sea, and now being shipwrecked—Luke points out how the three-month span on the island of Malta was a refreshing time for Paul. God uses this unexpected time to strengthen Paul before arriving to Rome. **Honored us greatly**—The Maltans were overjoyed to give Paul anything he and the crew needed after he miraculously healed many of them from sickness.

## III. Paul Arrives in Rome (28:11-16)

1. <sup>11</sup> *After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods* (Castor and Pollux) *as a figurehead.* Paul, the crew, and the rest of the prisoners remained on the

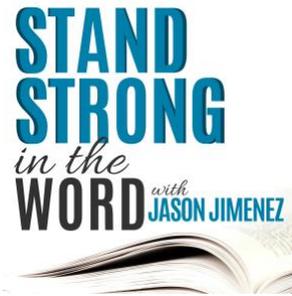


island for three months because the sailing conditions were too dangerous. Julius would have to wait until mid-February for suitable weather. ***Twin gods***—It was believed the gods, Castor and Pollux, were transformed by Zeus (represented by the constellation Gemini), and would bring protection to sailors at sea.

2. ***12 Putting in at Syracuse*** (island of Sicily), ***we stayed there for three days.*** This was a 100 mile journey. ***13 And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli*** (modern day Pozzuoli). From Puteoli to Rome was another 100 miles and could take up to a week. ***Puteoli—****Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary of the New Testament*, “Puteoli, known also by its Greek name Dikearchia, was located in the Roman district of Campania on the north shore of what is today called the Gulf of Naples. The same gulf was also served by another port city, Neapolis (modern Naples), about seven and a half miles south of Puteoli. Campania had yet another port, Cumae, which was located about ten miles northwest of Neapolis. Of the three ports, Puteoli was by far the largest and of greatest significance for trade in the first century.”
3. ***14 There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome. 15 And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.*** It had been years since Paul wrote Romans and expressed his desire to visit Rome (see Rom. 15:22-24, 28-29) and fellowship with the Jews. Word had spread that Paul was due any day and so many Christian leaders made haste to welcome Paul upon his arrival in Rome.
4. ***16 And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.*** Paul was highly regarded and was given great freedom as a prisoner.

#### IV. Paul’s Final Defense Before Local Leaders (28:17-22)

1. ***17 After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. In***

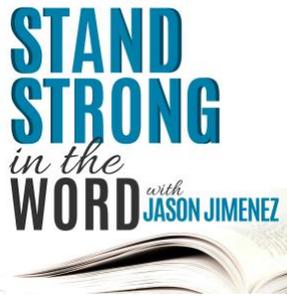


AD 49 or 50, Emperor Claudius had issued an edict expelling Jews from Rome due to the riots. It wasn't until after Claudius's death in AD 54, the Jews returned to Rome. **He called together the local leaders of the Jews**—Paul wanted to see what the Jewish leaders had heard about him and to offer up a defense. **I had done nothing against our people**—This is Paul's sixth and final defense recorded in the book of Acts (see 22:1-21; 22:30-23:10; 24:10-21; 25:1-12; 26:1-29).

- A. **<sup>18</sup> When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case.** Paul makes a strong case of innocence by arguing the Romans wanted to release him but it was the Jews who prevented that from happening.
  - B. **<sup>19</sup> But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation.** Paul is careful not to place a charge against his own people. In 25:11, Luke recorded Paul's appeal to Caesar.
  - C. **<sup>20</sup> For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.** Paul wanted to clear the air with the Jews before settling in Rome. **Hope of Israel**—Paul believed Israel's only hope is finding peace in Jesus Christ.
2. **<sup>21</sup> And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. <sup>22</sup> But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."** The Jews respond by stating they have not heard anything bad about Paul and were anxious to hear the gospel he now proclaims.

## V. Paul Explains the Gospel to the Jews (28:23-28)

1. **<sup>23</sup> When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.** Paul remained faithful to preach to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah according to the Scriptures (see 13:16-41). **Kingdom of God**—Teaching the Jews about the eschatological reign of the Messiah was a very effective way to get to their hearts.



2. <sup>24</sup> *And some were convinced* (persuaded) *by what he said, but others disbelieved* (rejected). <sup>25</sup> *And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: <sup>26</sup> " 'Go to this people, and say, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." <sup>27</sup> For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'* Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah (6:9-10) to describe the inner and spiritual blindness of many who hear the truth, and yet, reject it.
3. <sup>28</sup> *Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."* [Some manuscripts add verse 29: *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, having much dispute among themselves*]. Paul not only testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah but he also proclaimed salvation is a gift to the Gentiles (see 11:18; 13:46-47; 14:27; 15:14-17; 18:6).

## VI. Paul Remains Under House Arrest in Rome (28:30-31)

1. <sup>30</sup> *He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, <sup>31</sup> proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.* Luke ends the book rather anticlimactically but stresses that Paul remained faithful to his calling to proclaim Christ as King. It is believed during this time Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
  - A. Many scholars believe Paul was found innocent of the charges and released from prison. Between AD 62 to 65, Paul evangelized in Crete, traveled around the Aegean Sea (see Tit. 1:5; 2 Tim. 4:13, 20), and perhaps even visited Spain before being arrested after Nero began killing Christians around AD 64.