

# A Practical Study of ACTS:

## Take It To Them!

### “Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

#### Study Number Twenty-Four – Acts 28:1-31

As is often the case in reading the *Our Daily Bread* booklet by M.R. DeHaan Radio Bible Class, we come across some things that fit our particular study.

#### HOW TO WEATHER THE STORMS

An old seaman said, “In fierce storms we can do but one thing. There is only one way [to survive]; we must put the ship in a certain position and keep her there.” Commenting on this idea, Richard Fuller wrote, “This, Christian, is what you must do. Sometimes, like Paul, you can see neither sun nor stars, and no small tempest lies on you. Reason cannot help you. Past experiences give you no light. Only a single course is left. You must put your soul in one position and keep it there. You must stay upon the Lord; and, come what may—winds, waves, cross seas, thunder, lightning, frowning rocks, roaring breakers—no matter what, you must lash yourself to the helm and hold fast your confidence in God’s faithfulness and His everlasting love in Christ Jesus.”

(From *Our Daily Bread*, October 11, year unknown)

And of course that's great advice to us as believers. We have seen that in the experience in our last study. The apostle Paul, in our series of studies, is heading toward Rome. Early in the studies he had a sense of desire to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome.

He knew that this was God's will for his life, even though many others had said that it was not. Now in the midst of all of that, he's faced an incredible amount of adversity and difficulty.

Just because we're facing adversity and difficulty in our life does not mean that we're not in the will of God. We have somehow preached a comfort zone theology where if we're comfortable and happy and everything is going great, we're in the middle of the will of God. And if there's the tiniest bit of adversity, we know it's obvious that God has something that He's mad at us about or we are certainly not in the will of God. And that is not biblical.

Robert Foster in his book *When the Ceiling is Zero* says:

(When the Ceiling is Zero: Daily Flight Plans for Men by Robert D. Foster)

How do you react to adversity? If your strength is small, your spirit will sink, your knees cave in, and you will come completely unglued. It would be a sign that you are not a man of any resolution, without any firmness of thought, of any consideration, of any faith, if you cannot bear up under a

negative change in your conditions.

Job had his day of adversity. The roof caved in, the bottom dropped out, the walls collapsed, and the top blew off. Joseph had his prison, Daniel his lion's den, and Paul his shipwrecks.

Did these men call it quits and faint in the day of adversity? Here is how they might tell us about their hour of trial: ...

(source unknown)

Then he quotes from the apostle Paul, Daniel and Joseph.

It was Job who said:

(When the Ceiling is Zero: Daily Flight Plans for Men by Robert D. Foster)

“I was living quietly until he broke me apart. He has taken me by the neck and dashed me to pieces, then hung me up as his target.” (Job 16:12 *Living Bible*)

This is a challenge for adaptability, flexibility. We must take care to avoid rigidity that would keep us from adapting to a variety of strange and difficult circumstances.

“I have learned to be content, whatever the circumstances may be” (Phil. 4:11, *Phillips*).

That is the apostle Paul preaching. He could go from pulpit to prison and not miss a stroke. On top or on the bottom, in poverty or in plenty, abased or abounding, in misunderstanding, criticism, and disappointment, Paul knew the value of flexibility.

The size of a man is determined by the size of the thing it

takes to get him down.  
(source unknown)

Why was Paul so successful? Why was he able to triumph victoriously? It's because his strength resided in his Savior and he was related to Him and that strength carried him through.

Now remember in our last study Paul left Caesarea for this 1,200 mile trip to Rome. He had along with him two of his faithful traveling companions—Dr. Luke, his physician, and Aristarchus, his brother and friend from Macedonia.

The three of them join 273 other people on this big grain ship that they picked up in Lisea. They'd kind of taken a milk route from Caesarea to there and then they caught the other ship. This ship set sail in the marginal season.

They did not sail on the Mediterranean Sea from September the 11th until March the 11th. If they sail from September 11th to November the 15th, they are sailing on their own and they're in a very, very dangerous period of time.

Well they got blown off course. They ended up on the south side of the island of Crete. And Paul wanted to stay there and told them so. There's going to be loss of life and ship. They said, "Nope, we can't stay at Fair Havens. There's not enough action here to winter in this place. Let's at least try to get to Phoenix."

So they all started singing onboard “By the time I get to Phoenix.” And it was only 70 miles away and everybody voted for it.

We said it was 273 votes for, 2 abstentions—because Luke and Aristarchus certainly wouldn’t get into that mess—and Paul voted against it. And they set sail.

A horrendous wind came down upon them and blew them terribly off course. And for two solid weeks they’re cast in the sea. And at that time all hope of them surviving had been gone. They knew they were going to be destroyed.

And at the end of that two weeks, it is wonderful how the Spirit of God comes at the perfect time to encourage. He comes to the apostle with these words:

#### Acts 27:24

“Stop fearing, Paul; it is necessary for you to stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.”

And so Paul gets up in front of this distraught group of individuals who’ve already given up all hope and he says:

#### Acts 27:25

“be keeping up your courage, men, for I am believing God, that it shall be exactly as I have been told.”

And he told them, “We’re going to run aground on an island and nobody’s going to lose their lives. Everything’s going to be fine.” And so at midnight the ground starts getting closer—from 120 feet in the first sounding to 90 feet in the second. They throw over the grain, throw out the anchors and they wait until daylight.

About 4:00 in the morning Paul gets everybody singing the Doxology and at least eating some food. Then they throw all the grain overboard, and as daylight comes there’s a strange island. When they try to steer it by sails and cutting off the anchors, they head into a kind of a riptide where two seas come together. And all of a sudden, the front of the ship ran aground and the back began to break up because of the storm and the huge waves.

At this time Julius the centurion is really cool. He’s had his Red Cross lifesaving instruction and so he divides them between swimmers and non-swimmers. He lets the swimmers swim to shore first and then all the non-swimmers come to shore following.

And at the end of the story the text tells us they were all brought safely through. There was no loss of life. Just exactly as the Lord had said, they were brought safely through to the land.

Now we pick up on our story. Remember the storm is still blowing. It’s probably still raining. We have them on shore,

they've just had a real good dunking, and they're all soaking wet.

**v. 1 And having been brought safely through, then we recognized that the island was called Melita.**

“And having been brought safely through, then we recognized that the island was called Melita.”

Now that's the modern island of Malta. But here in the text it's “called Melita.”

Notice that little phrase that occurs for the third time:

“brought safely through,”

Now we saw that in the last two verses of our previous study:

Acts 27:43, 44

But the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and ordered those who were able to swim, having thrown themselves overboard to get first to the land. And the rest should follow, some on planks and others on various things from the ship. And thus it happened that they all were brought [WHAT?] safely through to the land.

When a phrase like that occurs three times in three verses, we want to be awfully careful to pay attention to it. For that to be fulfilled, to be “brought safely through,” means that someone

else has to do that.

In other words, we're unable to do it. They were "brought safely through" by God Himself.

We know who that someone is, don't we? And we know, that's exactly the phrase that we can apply to our heart and life today. Some are older and frightened about death. We don't like to talk about it but we know it's close for some because we're getting up in years.

Can we take a hold of this precious sentence that we're going to be "brought safely through"? Just as the doctor waited on the front end of the birth canal for our birth, so our heavenly Father is going to be waiting on the other end of the death canal to welcome us into our eternal dwelling place.

He has promised that He's gone to prepare a place for us. He has not lost one yet. He is faithful and He will bring us "safely through" in accordance to His promise.

We can have shipwrecks in the will of God. A lot of people who believe that Paul is out of the will of God can't see this other than it serves him right to have a shipwreck because he's out of the will of God.

Nope. He's in the center of the will of God. And we can have shipwrecks in the center of His will and He'll always be faithful and His promises will come to pass. He will bring us "safely through."



## Psalm 23:4

Yay though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. ...

And to the disciples in John 14 Jesus said:

## John 14:3

I am going to prepare a place, and if I go, I'm going to come again and receive you unto Myself. There where I am, there you may be also.

“having been brought safely through, then we”—that is Luke and Aristarchus and Paul—“recognized that the island was called Melita.”—or the modern Malta.

**v. 2 And the barbarians (natives) were showing us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, having kindled a fire, they received us all.**

“And the barbarians (or the natives)”—that are living there—“were showing us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, having kindled a fire, they received us all.”

Now the people on the island naturally can see a 747 approaching the island. And when they see this, they know

what's coming. They know there's going to be a wreck and there are going to be a lot of cold, shivering, wet people.

And so they do an incredible thing. They find enough dry wood to start a fire. And if we've ever tried to start a fire in a wet camp, we have a little bit of an idea of the assignment that these folks have.

And naturally, standing there on the shore in the cold, in the wet—it's been raining for over two weeks—many of them are probably suffering from all kinds of shivers and shakes. It's wonderful for them to have started a fire.

They are cold, miserable and the stress has risen to the saturation point. And they can hardly take it.

And it says, "they received us all." Now get that. It's one thing to have 4 or 5 people coming to dinner, but 276 people hitting the shore. Imagine the size of the fire that it's going to take to even get them a little bit warm. It has to be the size of a homecoming bonfire, literally.

They probably called the Red Cross and the Salvation Army and had hot soup and warm bread before very long, and blankets to take care of them. But at least they're really concerned and here is a provision of some friendly folks to take care of them.

Notice where Paul is. We can always tell the quality of a person when we make a wet camp with them, by the way.

Because under the stress, if we're sitting around griping, waiting for somebody else to do it, we aren't going to make it in life. But when we have somebody who, under stress, understands that we're under stress. They're going to get off of their duff and they're going to help bring comfort—even though they're hurting themselves. That person is going to make something out of himself in life.

When we have a stress or a set of needs and we have a group of people, the first people that get up and get involved in bringing alleviation have learned the art of servanthood and they're going to go a long way down the trail. Those that are sitting around waiting for everybody else to wait on them hand and foot are not going to make it.

**v. 3 Now when Paul gathered together a capacity load of dry sticks and having put them on the fire, a viper having come out from the heat fastened on his hand.**

“Now when Paul gathered together a capacity load sticks”

Is Paul wet? Are Paul's clothes soaked to the skin? Is Paul shivering? Is Paul cold? Is Paul the preacher? Nobody expects the preacher to do anything so he can hang around the fire and just be cool. After all, we don't expect him to get his hands grubby.

What's he doing? Look at that. He's out:

“gathering together a capacity load of dry sticks.”

That in itself is a miracle. After it's been raining for two weeks and it's blowing and still wet, to find dry sticks in the woods—he found some. And he comes back with a big load of them. But look what happens:

“and having put them on the fire, a viper having come out from the heat fastened on his hand.”

Now a poisonous snake, it found one of those hollow logs—the kind of a place to hibernate for the winter—and he crawled in there. It was really nice. Paul didn't see that. Besides that, his eyesight wasn't too good anyway. He grabs this big armload of wood, he comes over to the fire and with one big shove he just “Woo!” throws it on the fire. And while he has his hands out like this, something grabs him. And low and behold it's a poisonous snake.

At this point this would have been the straw that broke the camel's back. He can take a lot but to have the saints tell him he shouldn't go to Jerusalem, and then go through all the riots that he's been through with the Sanhedrin. And the thing against him in Jerusalem when they were trying to kill him, two years in a Caesarean prison, then a shipwreck, and then a swim, and then grabbed by a poisonous snake—he's probably ready to go to the house.

That is absolutely incredible. The man stands there with all of this! We wouldn't have blamed him one bit if he'd said, “That

is the last straw! I'm throwing in the towel. I can't take it anymore. That's it! I've had it! God get a new servant. I'm through." But he has that incredible capacity to rise above circumstances that come.

All of this has happened to Paul, not because he's out of the will of God, but because God is getting ready to make him fruitful in the city of Rome. And He's making him more Christlike through the experiences he's going through. Now that's biblical!

### Genesis 22:1

After these things God tested Abram and said, "Abraham," and he said, "Here I am."

He said:

### Genesis 22:2

"Take your son, the promised one you waited 25 years, and take him up and offer him as a sacrifice."

### 1 Peter 2:20, 21

For what credit is it if you sin and you are harshly treated, you endure it with patience; but if when you do well and what is right and suffer for it, you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God...

## James 1:2-4

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various kinds of trials...

The apostle Paul has learned the secret of being content in every situation.

Robert Foster talks about the fact that God always shakes us before He serves us. We see those bottles of salad dressing on the store shelf and they've been there for a long time and everything is down in the bottom. And then we turn it around and on the back it says "Shake well before you serve." Well that's the way God does. God is always going to shake us up because He has to get all the things together in order to make it good. So He shakes us before He serves us. Just plan on it. And that's what Foster talks about.

(When the Ceiling is Zero: Daily Flight Plans for Men by Robert D. Foster)

Have you ever noticed the instructions on the back of a bottle of salad dressing? "Shake well before using!"

Hand lotion, shoe polish, and floor cleaner—these and a host of other everyday items need agitation to be at their best. Without the shaking, you have nothing but a thin oil or paste.

Life is no different. There must be some shaking on the eve of usefulness. It could almost be an axiom for your life: service is in direct relation to shaking.

But we do not want to be shaken. These are days for

settling back and being at ease. Cozy and Snug are twin brothers in the successful and prosperous life image. Storms, stirrings and strife upset the well-oiled routine that most of us are seeking.

Is this a principle of the Creator with His children:  
usefulness relies upon the shakings of life?  
(source unknown)

God has got to break, God's got to shake and God's got to bring us to the roots—nip our branches—before we become productive as a servant for Him.

And Paul's going to have a fabulous ministry in Rome and for the rest of his life. And many of these things are creating the qualities of character that are going to make him into the man of God that he becomes.

**v. 4 And when the barbarians (natives) saw the creature hanging from his hand, they were saying to one another, "Certainly this man is a murderer, whom having been brought safely out of the sea, justice did not permit to continue living."**

"And when the barbarians (or the natives) saw the creature hanging from his hand, they were saying to one another, 'Certainly this man is a murderer, whom having been brought safely out of the sea, justice did not permit to continue living.'"

We immediately see their theology. Their theology is that God zaps the bad people. Bad things happen to bad folks, and

therefore he got out of the sea by a miracle—God evidently had His back turned. But God didn't get snuck up on the blind side. He had a snake jump out of the fire and grab him on the hand.

Why are they saying all that? This is a poisonous snake. They're expecting at any second this guy is going to drop dead. And so it's a foregone conclusion he's going to die. And so he stands there with a snake hanging on his hand.

They have a healthy respect for snakes on that island. They've probably seen a few of their own brothers die because of being bitten by these snakes.

They say in South America they have a two-step snake. When it bites some, they have two steps and they drop. Well that's probably what we have here—a very poisonous snake. But look at verse 5.

**v. 5 Now, therefore, having shaken off the creature into the fire, he suffered no harm.**

“Now, therefore, having shaken off the creature into the fire, he suffered no harm.”

They're standing around looking at their watches. “Hey he ought to be dead! Hey, are you swelling up? Do you feel okay Paul?”

“Hey man, I've never felt better. Warm fire, hot soup, warm



bread—I am great! Let me go find some more sticks.”

He hasn't even missed a beat and they can't believe it. So they decide they're going to have to change their theological position. They're going to have to come up with another explanation for this, because this guy survived it.

What is the answer to his surviving the bite of that snake? There are some people who consider charismatic theology as very sacred. It's time to say a few things here at this point, since the heart of their teaching centers in:

Mark 16:17, 18

And these signs will accompany those who have believed in My name: they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents; and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

Paul is only manifesting one of the signs of apostleship. And that sign is they will be unaffected by poisonous snakes.

We have those in the charismatic movement running around today saying, “Here's the verse that tells you that you can speak in new tongues.” We don't do that kind of exegesis in our Bible. We don't reach down and pull one little thing out of the list and say, “Hey, this is that.”

Alright, let's drink a little poison and let's let a few poisonous

snakes bite us and then come across with the signs because there's no distinction. They're all the same. And we're going to see the other sign in the passage too. Paul just heals everybody, as we go a little further.

All signs of apostleship—and with the apostle Paul the gift of apostleship died. These men were set apart with special supernatural signs for the purpose, before the Word of God was complete, to manifest the fact of the supernatural character of their ministry. And it vindicated that supernatural character.

So for him to be bitten by a snake, we know—according to Mark 16—is not a problem, because it is a sign of his apostleship.

Now verse 6 says:

**v. 6 But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly to be falling down dead. But while they were expecting this for a long time and were seeing nothing unusual happening to him, having changed their minds, they were saying that he was a god.**

“But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly to be falling down dead. But while they were expecting this for a long time and were seeing nothing unusual happening to him, having changed their minds, they were saying that he was a god.”

If he's not a criminal he must be the creator! If he didn't die as a criminal because of getting bitten by the snake, then he had to be the creator of the snake! He's a god! Certainly nobody could survive anything like this.

**v. 7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island named Publius, who having welcomed us entertained us courteously three days.**

“Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island named Publius, who having welcomed us entertained us courteously three days.”

Now this little island is 17 1/2 miles long and 9 1/2 miles wide—or a total land area of about 95 square miles. And on this little island there is a leading real estate holder. His name is Publius. He's gotten into real estate development and having island property like this everybody wants to come there to recreate.

And what he's done is he's overbuilt. He's gotten into property development and he's just overbuilt. He's built too many condominiums and townhouses and the market is slow. So he has a lot of them empty. He has to have a lot of them empty in order to take care of 276 people. But he entertains them for three days and lets them stay there. And he takes good care of them with the gift of hospitality. Now that is quite an assignment.

**v. 8 And it came about that the father of Publius was lying in bed in the grip of an intermittent fever and dysentery, to whom Paul having come and having prayed, having laid his hands on him, he healed him.**

“And it came about that the father of Publius was lying in bed in the grip of an intermittent fever and dysentery, to whom Paul having come and having prayed, having laid his hands on him, he healed him.”

Let's go back to Mark 16:18 again:

**Mark 16:18**

They will pick up serpents, if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

But notice, not only does Publius' father get well, look at verse 9:

**v. 9 Now after this happened, the rest of those in the island also having infirmities were coming and were being healed.**

“Now after this happened, the rest of those in the island also having infirmities were coming and were being healed.”

We have a 100% healing manifestation. That is a sign of apostleship. We don't have that today.

Invariably when there is an unsuccessful healing, it's easy for the professional healer to say it's our fault because we didn't have enough faith. The signs of the apostleship—had nothing to do with the faith of the recipient. It was the power—the supernatural power—in the man, the apostle Paul; a sign which had been given to him of apostleship.

The snake doesn't bother him. And in healing, he has the supernatural ability to provide healing over physical infirmities.

Now there's a great book called *Death and the Caring Community: Ministering to the Terminally Ill*. It's written by Larry Richards and Paul Johnson and in it they tell the story of Cathy, which really brings to the surface some of the atrocities that are happening in the body of Christ in the whole business of healing.

(Death and the Caring Community: Ministering to the Terminally Ill by Larry Richards and Paul Johnson, M.D.)

Cathy is only 36, [she is] a young mother and a member of a growing congregation in Spokane, Washington. She has advanced cancer of the liver; a cancer as serious as one can be. Cathy's gone through chemotherapy and radiation therapy. In the process she lost all her hair, and much strength. She dresses carefully, though, and her wig is shaped to highlight

her best features. Makeup hides everything but the strain that shows in her eyes and three tiny vertical wrinkles in the center of her forehead.

She talks opening of her sickness and the difficulty of imagining her children growing up without her. But there are joys, too-joys that show the value of simple hopes. For instance, one couple in the congregation anonymously contributed money so she and her husband could visit Disneyland. They'd always wanted to go. Looking forward to the trip, and savoring it, was important to her. She also tells of all she's learned about prayer. Not so much prayer for herself, but intercessory prayer, as her own anguish has made her sensitive to the suffering of others.

But one thing bothers her. Several people in her congregation have visited to urge her to "claim" healing. "If only you have faith," they tell her, "God will heal you."

One group of three laid hands on her and prayed loudly, claiming to "feel the power" flow into Cathy's body. With the prayer concluded, they announced that Cathy was healed, and insisted that she "claim the healing." "Stand up and praise God that you're healed," Cathy was urged. And all the time Cathy still felt the pain.

To Cathy, who knows that God loves her and is with her, such talk seems far removed from reality. Cathy believes that God *can* make her well. But the attempt of the healers to force her to claim something that she knew was false makes her angry.

"They're really saying that my healing depends on the strength of *my* faith, not on God's goodness or His plan." When Cathy is feeling low, their demands push her toward false

guilt. Then Cathy remembers who God is, and what He is like. She knows Him as a loving father, who suffers with her in [her] pain, and who comforts her. She knows God is not some tyrant, demanding impossible feats and withholding a good gift because His child, in the grip of human weakness, cannot achieve what He requires.

It is not wrong to hope in God.

But it is wrong to hold out false hope; a hope that does not honor God with confidence, but seeks to manipulate God by self-energized “faith.”

Others, with less faith than Cathy in God’s wisdom and love, do seek out healers or places of healing. More often than not these may be secular rather than religious. Cancer patients hear of a clinic in Miami, or Mexico, or a doctor in the Philippines. They put their trust in Laetrile or massive doses of vitamins or in special diets.

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It’s a sad, sad day. But that’s a lot of the theology that is being passed off in our generation. It is sad because this is something that has passed away with the gift of apostleship.

The apostle Paul manifests it as a matter of fact. The poison snake bites, but there’s no problem, and the apostle Paul heals everybody on the island that’s sick.

**v. 10 Who also honored us with many honors; and when we were setting sail, they put on board the things pertaining to the needs.**

“Who also honored us with many honors;”—these people, naturally grateful—“and when we were setting sail, they put on board the things pertaining to their needs.”

Now isn't that just like a bunch of appreciative Christian people? They outfit the ship for their going further. Now we're going to find out where they got the ship—verse 11.

**v. 11 Now after three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had passed the winter in the island, which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead.**

“Now after three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had passed the winter in the island, which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead.”

This is an Alexandrian ship. It's wintered here for 3 months. Imagine what it would be like to have a 3 month delay. When we have a 30 minute delay at the airport, people are clawing the walls! When there's a 3 hour delay, it's a major crisis. But 3 months delay in travel—they've been on this island.

They must have gotten there somewhere around the last part of October or first of November so they've had to stay until March, or the latter part of February—about this time before they can take off again.

And there's another Alexandrian ship that's been there. They were an Alexandrian ship so the owner, the captain and most



of the crew probably knew each other. And so they have been there together for this 3 month delay.

Julius gets them onboard this new ship to take them on to Rome, because it's a grain ship heading the same direction.

Now the ship has a figurehead on it. And yeah it's two figureheads. It is the twin sons of the Greek god Zeus, and their names are Castor and Pollux. We recognize those if we have a background in astrology, because they are the Gemini twins. Hopefully no one knows anything about that.

But in essence, that is what this is. And these were the gods of the sailors, or the gods of the sea. So they put them right up front on the mast, or right up front out on the front of the ship for a figurehead. And that's what Luke is describing here on this ship that's getting ready to sail.

Now they have a fabulous sail. Isn't that great? Sometimes they had a bad sail and sometimes they had a good one. They have a good one now. Look at this.

**v. 12 And after we put in at Syracuse, we remained there three days.**

“And after we put in at Syracuse, we remained there three days.”

Syracuse is on the tip of Sicily. It's 80 miles away from Malta, so on their first day they have a great sail.

Now, “we remained there three days.”

**v. 13 And from there having sailed around, we arrived at Rhegium, and after one day a south wind having commenced blowing, we came on the second day to Puteoli,**

“And from there having sailed around, we arrived at Rhegium,”

Now that is on the “boot” of Italy. And that is 75 miles further.

“and after one day a south wind having commenced”— they’re going northwest—“blowing, we came on the second day to Puteoli,”

It only took them 2 days to go 200 miles from Rhegium to Puteoli. Puteoli is close to modern Naples and this is the end of the sailing part of the journey. From here on they have about 108-125 (somewhere in there) miles to go over land to get to Rome. So it’s all going to be now on the ground.

**v. 14 where having found brethren, we were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome.**

“where having found brethren, we were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome.”

**v. 15 And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; whom when Paul saw, having thanked God, he took courage.**

“And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; whom when Paul saw, having thanked God, he took courage.”

What happens? They have moved up to 3 taverns, or “Three Inns”—the way of Appius. It’s evidently about 60 miles from Puteoli on the way to Rome and they stop at this little place called Three Taverns or “Three Inns” and all of a sudden here are all these believers. And they have made the trip 48 miles south to escort Paul into Rome.

Now does Paul need encouragement? All he knows about the will of God is what? Jerusalem and Rome—and he’s probably thinking home.

In essence that’s all the Lord said. “You are going to go to Rome and then it’s all over,”—is what he’s thinking. So this is a long trip. This could be like walking the last mile in a way.

And does he need encouragement? You bet he does.

In Acts 27:22 we read:

Acts 27:22

And yet now I am urging you to keep up your courage, for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

Okay, why'd he say that? Because the Lord had come and visited with him. Now who comes and visits with him? Some fellow Christians come and encourage him.

Ever thought about that? Maybe one of the greatest ministries that we can have is a ministry of encouragement and affirmation for those who really need it.

It's an amazing thing but God somehow brings people into our lives that have that gift and ability. And we certainly couldn't make it on our own.

Moses is there on the top of the mountain trying to hold up the staff and if it hadn't been for Aaron and Hur, Joshua and the forces would have gotten whipped in the valley. But they come along at the right time and sustain him and provide the strength so that he can continue to function in a critical way.

Isn't this great? These Christian people come down and they meet Paul so that the last 48 miles of the trip, with all these concerns, he has somebody to travel with him.

It says he thanked God and "he took courage."

**v. 16 And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.**

“And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.”

Now the reason we know that Paul is not left here indefinitely is because the last time he came to Rome he was put in the Mamertine Prison. And the Mamertine Prison is a hole in the ground. Just a great big pit and it's right next to the city sewer. And that is where he is—rat-infested—and that's when he asks Timothy to bring his coat and his parchments. And it's right there in the spring of the year, after he goes through the winter, that he's taken outside the city and beheaded by Nero.

But on this occasion, he's given a house to live in and he has a soldier who guards him. So he's been welcomed and it's easy for him. It says—verse 17:

**v. 17 And it happened that after three days he called together those who are the leading men among the Jews, and when they came together, he was saying to them: “Men, brethren, though I having done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.**

“And it happened that after three days he called together those who are the leading men among the Jews, and when

they came together, he was saying to them: ‘Men, brethren, though I having done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.’”

Isn't that interesting? He gets there and right away he calls the Jews. He starts with them always before he goes to the Gentiles, gets them together. He cannot stand just sitting around. Three days has him climbing the walls so he has to have a little session. He calls them altogether.

**v. 18 Who were such that after having examined me, were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death.**

“Who were such that after having examined me, were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death.”

**v. 19 But when the Jews were speaking against it, I was forced to appeal to Caesar; not that I was having anything of which to accuse my nation.**

“But when the Jews were speaking against it, I was forced to appeal to Caesar; not that I was having anything of which to accuse my nation.”

**v. 20 For this reason therefore, I invited you to see me and to speak with me, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel.”**

“For this reason therefore, I invited you to see me and to speak with me, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel.”

There he builds a bridge. He talks to them about the “hope of the fathers,” why he’s there and then he uses the term “hope of Israel.”

**v. 21 And they said to him: “We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor has any one of the brethren having come, reported or spoken anything bad concerning you.**

“And they said to him: ‘Well we’ve neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor has any one of the brethren, reported or spoken anything bad concerning you.’”

Paul’s saying, “Shew! That’s good.”

**v. 22 But we are desiring to hear from you what you are thinking; for indeed concerning this sect, we are knowing that it is being spoken against everywhere.”**

“But we are desiring to hear from you what you are thinking; for indeed concerning this sect,”—well at least he knows that they think it’s some kind of a cult—“we are knowing that it is being spoken against everywhere.”

“That we have a negative mindset about what you’re getting ready to talk to us about.”

**v. 23 And when they scheduled a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; to whom he was explaining, solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, trying to persuade them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from early in the morning until evening.**

“And when they scheduled a day for him,”—they scheduled an all-day seminar for him—“they came to him at his lodging in large numbers;”— the word got out—“to whom he was explaining, solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, trying to persuade them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from early in the morning until the evening.”

He just makes it an all-day affair. And he explains to them the “kingdom,” talks to them about Jesus, from the “Law of Moses and the Prophets.”

**v. 24 And some indeed were being persuaded by the things being spoken, but others were not believing.**

“And some indeed were being persuaded by the things being spoken, but others were not believing.”

Thinking back there to when he was in prison and he didn’t



get any converts. Remember? Felix, Drusilla, Festus, Agrippa, Bernice—none of them!

Did he get any converts on the ship? Some believers probably did come out of that thing, certainly during the 3 month delay while they were on the island of Malta. Somebody must have believed after all that happened and the healings that took place and everything. There must have been some fruit.

But now there's a lot of it. We have some people who are "being persuaded" but there are others who are not. And that's always the way it is.

**v. 25 And when they were not agreeing with one another, they were leaving after Paul spoke one parting word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,**

"And when they were not agreeing with one another, they were leaving after Paul spoke one parting word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly"

This is so great. Paul knows it. If they're going to go away arguing and fighting and resisting Him, he's going to hit them with Isaiah—their favorite prophet. And so he does. He says:

"The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,"

**v. 26 saying, ‘Go to this people and say, “By means of your sense of hearing you will hear and will not understand; and while seeing, you will see and will not perceive.**

“saying, “Go to this people and say, ‘By means of your sense of hearing you will hear and will not understand; and while seeing, you will see and will not perceive.”

**v. 27 For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they heard with difficulty, and their eyes they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn again and I should heal them.”**

“For the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they heard with difficulty, and their eyes they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn again and I should heal them.””

**v. 28 Let it be known to you, therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they themselves will also hear it.”**

“Let it be known to you, therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they themselves will also hear it.”“

And that didn't set too well with them as we've seen earlier.

**v. 29 [And when he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]**

“[And when he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]”

They're DIVIDED and now they're DISPUTING.

**v. 30 And he stayed two whole years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all those who were coming to him,**

“And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all those who were coming to him,”

Where did he get his rent? Most likely it came out of the Philippian church. It came out of people who cared for him. We don't find Paul mounting the podium and begging for funds. We find people who are concerned, knowing that he just doesn't make something go like that without it being taken care of. And in very quiet and wonderful ways, needs are being met.

And Paul's needs have been met. He's able to rent a house for two solid years and carry on a ministry. He's in the middle of God's will and this is the place where—what happens? He is “welcoming all those who are coming to him.”

The whole book of Acts has been Paul taking it to them. Three big missionary journeys! He's been out there just getting them. But now in the latter part of his life, they're coming to him. Isn't that good?

God now allows him the privilege of sitting there and letting them come to him.

**v. 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.**

And he's "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered."

He doesn't have any problems at all—he can be open. He's ministering, he's effective and God's using him for the glory of God. What a way to see the last picture of him! We kind of wish we could see the rest of the story.

There are many writers who have deduced a number of different things about him, but basically he was released after two years. He spent some time in Asia Minor—maybe in Spain—but then he was apprehended again, brought back, put in the Mamertine Prison, and Nero one day decided that he would end his life. And he was beheaded outside the gates of the city of Rome—probably somewhere in 67 A.D.

Now we have a number of lessons. Let's go over them as we

wrap up our time together.

Lesson #1: God is going to bring us safely through unto His eternal kingdom.

Let that be a comfort.

We're going to find Him there waiting to take us safely through to a take the He's prepared for us.

Lesson #2: The unselfish servant will always be revealed in a time of stress.

Paul blesses us, doesn't he? Cold, wet and shivering; grabs the dry wood to help alleviate the suffering of others.

Lesson #3: God tests Paul with regard to His will by means of:

the SAINTS,

the SHIP,

the SWIM and

the SNAKE,

Out of that is the development of Christlike character that explains the fruitfulness in the end of the passage.

Lesson #4: God is faithful to protect His own in fulfillment of

His promises.

He told Paul, “You’re going to Jerusalem—you’re going to Rome!” We saw God do it.

Lesson #5: The snake and the healing are signs of Paul’s apostleship.

Lesson #6: The apostle immediately begins a ministry in Rome three days after he gets there.

Lesson #7: When you preach the gospel, there will be some who respond and some who will not.

Lesson #8: The salvation of God is to go to the whole world.

The salvation of God is to go to the whole world—John 3:16.

It would be great if we could sing a hymn together. The words of this hymn would epitomize the apostle Paul as we say farewell:

Oft times the day seems long,  
Our trials hard to bear.  
We’re tempted to complain,  
To murmur and despair.

But Christ will soon appear  
To catch His bride away.  
All tears forever over

In God's eternal day.

Sometimes the sky looks dark  
With not a ray of light.  
We're tossed and driven on,  
No human help in sight.

But there is One in heaven  
Who knows our deepest care.  
Let Jesus solve your problem.  
Just go to Him in prayer.

Life's day will soon be o'er,  
All storms forever past.  
For crossed the Great Divide  
To glory safe at last.

We'll share the joys of heaven,  
A harp, a home, a crown.  
The tempter will be banished  
We'll lay our burden down.

It will be worth it all  
When we see Jesus.  
Life's trials will seem so small.  
When we see Christ.

One glimpse of His dear face  
All sorrow will erase.  
So bravely run the race,

'Til we see Christ.  
(source unknown)

There are three passages of Scripture which epitomize this man that we say farewell to:

Acts 20:24

But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

Philippians 3:13, 14

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: I'm forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 4:7, 8

I have fought a good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith. In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all those who have loved His appearing.

Father, as we come to You, we ask that there would be a sweeping sense of assurance, that if this is the last time here,



we know that we'll be together over there. Because we have come under the shelter of the blood of Christ, we've received Him as Savior, experienced the forgiveness of sins—having been granted the gift of eternal life, through Jesus Christ. Father, as believers, we've been highly motivated and instructed by the apostle Paul to be those who are eager, enthusiastic, excited, and above all involved in taking the message to people. Please our Father, intensify our desires, not to just sit around and wait for people to come to us, but to be with them and build bridges to them and relate to them that they might come to know You. Help us in these critical days to remember the words of Jesus, "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day, for the night is coming when no man can work." And Father, yes, we know we're going to meet the saints that discourage us. We're going to meet the shipwrecks. We're going to have the times to swim in the icy cold water that is the cold water of human indifference, and there are going to be times when You're going to have to intervene miraculously because the snake is hanging on our hand. Help us dear Father not to question or to doubt. That in the midst of our tears, dries up with fresh courage, takes new heart and runs on with all of our might toward the goal. We love You and thank You for letting us have this precious time together. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

# A Practical Study of ACTS:

## Take It To Them!

### “Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

#### STUDY NUMBER TWENTY-FOUR – ACTS 28:1-31

#### NOTES

v. 1 And having been brought safely through, then we recognized that the island was called Melita.

v. 2 And the barbarians (natives) were showing us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, having kindled a fire, they received us all.

v. 3 Now when Paul gathered together a capacity load of dry sticks and having put them on the fire, a viper having come out from the heat fastened on his hand.

v. 4 And when the barbarians (natives) saw the creature hanging from his hand, they were saying to one another, “Certainly this man is a murderer, whom having been brought safely out of the sea, justice did not permit to continue living.”

v. 5 Now, therefore, having shaken off the creature into the fire, he suffered no harm.

v. 6 But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly to be falling down dead. But while they were expecting this for a long time and were seeing nothing unusual happening to him, having changed their minds, they were saying that he was a god.

v. 7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island named Publius, who having welcomed us entertained us courteously three days.

v. 8 And it came about that the father of Publius was lying in bed in the grip of an intermittent fever and dysentery, to whom Paul having come and having prayed, having laid his hands on him, he healed him.

## NOTES

v. 9 Now after this happened, the rest of those in the island also having infirmities were coming and were being healed.

v. 10 Who also honored us with many honors; and when we were setting sail, they put on board the things pertaining to the needs.

v. 11 Now after three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had passed the winter in the island, which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead.

v. 12 And after we put in at Syracuse, we remained there three days.

v. 13 And from there having sailed around, we arrived at Rhegium, and after one day a south wind having commenced blowing, we came on the second day to Puteoli,

v. 14 where having found brethren, we were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome.

v. 15 And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; whom when Paul saw, having thanked God, he took courage.

v. 16 And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

v. 17 And it happened that after three days he called together those who are the leading men among the Jews, and when they came together, he was saying to them: "Men, brethren, though I having done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

v. 18 Who were such that after having examined me, were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death.

v. 19 But when the Jews were speaking against it, I was forced to appeal to Caesar; not that I was having anything of which to accuse my nation.

v. 20 For this reason therefore, I invited you to see me and to speak with me, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel."

v. 21 And they said to him: "We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor has any one of the brethren having come, reported or spoken anything bad concerning you.

v. 22 But we are desiring to hear from you what you are thinking; for indeed concerning this sect, we are knowing that it is being spoken against everywhere."

## NOTES

v. 23 And when they scheduled a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; to whom he was explaining, solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, trying to persuade them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from early in the morning until evening.

v. 24 And some indeed were being persuaded by the things being spoken, but others were not believing.

v. 25 And when they were not agreeing with one another, they were leaving after Paul spoke one parting word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,

v. 26 saying, 'Go to this people and say, "By means of your sense of hearing you will hear and will not understand; and while seeing, you will see and will not perceive.

v. 27 For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they heard with difficulty, and their eyes they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn again and I should heal them.'"

v. 28 Let it be known to you, therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they themselves will also hear it."

v. 29 [And when he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]

v. 30 And he stayed two whole years in his own rented quarters, and was welcoming all those who were coming to him,

v. 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Read Acts 28:1-31 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. How were they treated by the natives of the island of Melita?

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3. What happened to Paul, according to verse 3?

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4. What did Paul do for the father of Publius, according to verse 8?

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5. Describe the initial reception in Rome, according to verse 15.

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6. What did Paul do right away after he got to Rome, according to verse 17?

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7. What kind of response did Paul get to his invitation, according to verse 23?

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8. What prophet does Paul refer to when he makes his final statement, according to verse 25?

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9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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## **LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: God is going to bring us safely through unto His eternal kingdom.

LESSON #2: The unselfish servant will always be revealed in a time of stress.

LESSON #3: God tests Paul with regard to His will by means of: the saints, the ship, the swim, and the snake.

LESSON #4: God is faithful to protect His own in fulfillment of His promises. Saints are immortal until their work on earth is done.

LESSON #5: The snake and the healing are signs of Paul's apostleship.

LESSON #6: The apostle immediately begins a ministry in Rome three days after he arrives.

LESSON #7: When you preach the Gospel, there will be some who respond and some who will not.

LESSON #8: The salvation of God is to go to the whole world.