

Day 136, Acts 28

by David Servant

David Servant explores the themes of God's providence, Paul's humility, and the spiritual awakening on Malta in Acts 28.

Scripture: Mark 16:18, Acts 20:28, Acts 27:23, Acts 28:8, Romans 15:24

Topics: "Humility In Service", "Gods Providence"

Description

David Servant reflects on the humility of Luke, who authored the book of Acts but never mentioned himself, emphasizing the importance of humility in serving God. Through the Malta shipwreck story, he highlights how God's providence works in our storms, turning bad situations into opportunities for spiritual awakening. Paul's unwavering faith in God's promises and his humble service exemplify the true essence of a servant leader, reminding us that greatness in God's eyes comes from serving others.

Transcript

Isn't it amazing that Luke, who was with Paul on this journey and authored the book of Acts, never mentioned himself a single time? A very humble guy indeed.

From my calculations using Google Earth, a ship being blown in a westward direction in the Mediterranean Sea has about a 1 in 17 chance of landing on Malta as it crosses the same longitude as Malta. But it would seem that providence, rather than chance, was the determining factor in the Malta shipwreck we've just read about. God was working in the storm. God is always working in your storms as well.

In this same vein, note that the spiritual awakening on Malta started as a result of something else that was bad but which God turned to good. Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake that would have killed anyone else. In this case, however, Paul had not one, and not two, but three promises from God upon which to stand. First, Jesus had promised him he would testify in Rome (23:11). Second, an angel had promised that he would testify before Caesar (27:24). Third, Jesus promised that one of the signs that would follow believers is that they would "pick up serpents" (Mark 16:18). Paul had nothing to worry about.

May I also point out that Paul, the same one who had voluntarily served food on the ship the day before (27:35-36), was also the one who helped gather sticks to build a fire to warm everyone who just came out of the sea. Poor Paul! He didn't know, as do so many modern "apostles," that apostles are too high for such humble tasks. Paul didn't know any better but to believe that in God's eyes, the greatest people are the servants!

Like every other spiritual awakening that we read about in the book of Acts, the one on Malta was spawned by Spirit-given miracles. The healing of a well-known man really got the ball rolling (28:8-9). It would seem safe to conclude that Paul left behind a congregation of believers in Malta, and he took another congregation with him on the ship to Rome. May I also point out that Paul was only on Malta for three months. When he left, he must have left behind church leaders, that is, elders/pastors/overseers. Obviously, none had spent years in Bible School or seminary. It doesn't require years of training to make disciples and oversee biblical churches.

Paul finally made it to Rome and waited for his trial before Nero. He was not "languishing in a dark, damp, Roman prison cell," as some mistakenly say when they speak of the condition under which Paul penned some of his letters from Rome. Rather, he stayed in his own rented quarters, under house arrest, where he was given liberty to preach and teach. Apparently he did have a chain attached to his leg and a single guard at all times (28:16, 20, 30). It was indeed from Rome that Paul wrote a few letters that we are scheduled to soon read, namely, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon.

True to his practice, in Rome Paul first attempted to win Jews, but as was so often the case, they rejected their own Messiah. So he turned to the Gentiles, of which there was no shortage in Rome.

It is assumed that Paul was ultimately acquitted before Nero and released around A.D. 61, as he indicates from some of his letters written from Rome that he expected to be released soon. After that, his life and ministry is mostly mystery. I think there is little doubt that he continued his travels within some of the regions where he had planted churches, and he likely also reached Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28). Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote in the fourth century, states that Paul was beheaded during the reign of Emperor Nero. This event has been dated either to the year 64, when Rome was devastated by a fire, or a few years later, to 67. Just before he died, Paul penned his final letter to Timothy and then made his final journey---to heaven. There he received his reward and is still enjoying it today!

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