

Paul Arrives in Rome at Last

(Acts 28)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Do you ever get irritated with people when they interrupt what you are doing? Maybe it's a brother or a sister and here you are engrossed in playing a video game or watching something on TV and they come in and start to talk and want to play.

I know when someone gets in my way or disrupts what I am doing, I get pretty bothered by it. But, if you are a follower of Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit living in your heart and He gives you the power to turn the interruption into a blessing. You can choose to trust that God planned that interruption for His purpose. Perhaps God wants to use you to bless that other person in some way?

This is our last lesson in the book of Acts. We've been learning about the apostle Paul and all the hardships and difficulties that he faced as he tried to accomplish what he knew God had asked him to do.

Let's briefly recap the last few years of Paul's his life.

- Where had he been for the last 2 years? (Imprisoned in Caesarea.)
- Where did God promise Paul, he would go to share the Gospel? (Rome)
- What happened as Paul set sail to Rome? (A terrible storm came and the shipwrecked.)
- How would you feel if you were living Paul's life? How would you react to his circumstances? What would be a very natural reaction to so much difficulty? (Quit)
- How was Paul able to persevere no matter what circumstance he faced? (The Holy Spirit gave him courage and power to persevere)

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to see each situation that he faced as an opportunity to share the Good News with others.

As we continue our journey with Paul to Rome, let's keep our eyes open for how he used the situation to point others to Jesus rather than throw a pity party and quit.

Opening Prayer

Father, we pray that You would give us the ability to see each and every situation we are in as an opportunity to share with others the goodness and plan of God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. (13) For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. (Philippians 1:12-13)

Lesson

The last we left Paul and the other passengers as they were frantically swimming with pieces of a broken and sinking ship. All of the passengers swam safely to the shore of an island. They survived a terrible shipwreck and were standing cold and wet on the shore of an island.

Acts 28:1

Once we were safe on shore, we learned that we were on the island of Malta.

The people living on the island must have heard the noise and cries of the people from the shipwreck. The islanders were walking in the direction of the survivors. A thought that must have crossed Paul and the rest of the survivors' minds was: "Were these people friends or enemies? Did they survive a shipwreck to be killed on an island of complete strangers?"

Knowing what you already know about Paul do you think he was afraid that he was going to be killed on this island? (Why or why not?)

Acts 28:2

The people of the island were very kind to us. It was cold and rainy, so they built a fire on the shore to welcome us.

The people of Malta welcomed everyone to their island. Immediately they began to start a fire so the survivors could get warm. Paul helped by gathering sticks to help keep the fire burning.

Acts 28:3

As Paul gathered an armful of sticks and was laying them on the fire, a poisonous snake, driven out by the heat, bit him on the hand.

As Paul threw his sticks onto the fire a viper slithered out of the sticks to avoid the burning hot flame and clamped his fangs right on the hand of Paul.

The natives of the island stood there with their eyes wide open.

Acts 28:4

The people of the island saw it hanging from his hand and said to each other, "A murderer, no doubt! Though he escaped the sea, justice will not permit him to live."

The people of Malta did not worship the One True God; they worshipped idols and they thought that because this snake had bitten Paul, he must have been a sinful man. They thought, "*That man should have died at sea, but since he didn't, the gods must have sent this poisonous snake to kill him.*"

But we all know that God had a plan for Paul, and it wasn't to die on this beach from a snake bite! God did not allow Paul to be harmed by the poisonous snake.

Acts 28:5-6

*But Paul shook off the snake into the fire and was unharmed. (6) The people waited for him to swell up or suddenly drop dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw that he wasn't harmed, they changed their minds and **decided he was a god.***

The natives stood there waiting to see Paul fall to the ground and start writhing in pain and gasping for breath. But that's not what they saw. Paul went on warming himself by the fire. So then they decided Paul must be a god!

Living on the island of Malta was the chief official of the island. He invited Paul and his friends to stay with him.

Acts 28:7

Near the shore where we landed was an estate belonging to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us and treated us kindly for three days.

While they were at Publius' house, his father became very ill. So, Paul went into his room.

Acts 28:8

As it happened, Publius's father was ill with fever and dysentery. Paul went in and prayed for him, and laying his hands on him, he healed him.

God healed Publius' father and when the news got around the island that Paul had healed him, many people who were sick came to Paul.

Acts 28:9-10

Then all the other sick people on the island came and were healed. (10) As a result we were showered with honors, and when the time came to sail, people supplied us with everything we would need for the trip.

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to use this opportunity to point the people of Malta to Jesus. They were blessed and treated Paul kindly and supplied his needs when they left.

Acts 28:11-12

It was three months after the shipwreck that we set sail on another ship that had wintered at the island—an Alexandrian ship with the twin gods as its figurehead. (12) Our first stop was Syracuse, where we stayed three days.

After staying on Malta for three months, they set sail for the city of Rome.

Acts 28:15

The brothers and sisters in Rome had heard we were coming, and they came to meet us at the Forum on the Appian Way. Others joined us at The Three Taverns. When Paul saw them, he was encouraged and thanked God.

When Paul arrived in Rome, many believers came out to welcome him. This must have greatly encouraged Paul.

Acts 28:16

When we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to have his own private lodging, though he was guarded by a soldier.

Now before you think that Paul had it easy, remember, he was not living in luxury. He was not free to come and go as he pleased. This was called “house arrest”. He was kept in a rented house at his own expense. While it was better than being in a dungeon, he was kept chained to a Roman soldier who was to keep guard over him.

He did have certain privileges, however. He was able to receive visitors, continue to preach, and write letters [Teacher, show the students their Table of Contents and point out which letters Paul wrote.]

Three days after he got there, Paul called the local Jewish religious leaders to meet with him. Let’s read what Paul said to them.

Acts 28:23-24

So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul’s lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening. (24) Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe.

All these years the Jewish people had been waiting for God to send the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Now they had heard the truth that God has sent Jesus who was this promised Messiah.

Some people believed what Paul was saying but others did not believe. They began to argue among themselves back and forth.

The Holy Spirit allowed Paul to preach the gospel for the next two years.

Acts 28:30-31

For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, (31) boldly proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him.

Every time someone came to visit him, he freely taught them the Good News. The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to use whatever situation he was in to point others to Jesus.

Think about it. Paul was under “house arrest”. He was unjustly imprisoned, not knowing what his future held for him, and yet, instead of being angry or wringing his hands in worry, he took every opportunity he had to preach the Good News to people. He heart’s desire was that everyone might understand who God is and what His plan and purpose was for each of us!

We see how the Holy Spirit enabled Paul to use whatever situation he was in to point others to Jesus.

He didn't waste any time feeling sorry for himself. He wasn't bitter, angry or resentful towards God or others who were responsible for his imprisonment. The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to trust God and walk with Him no matter what his circumstances were.

As a result of Paul's willingness to use each opportunity that God gave him to point others to Jesus many people believed in Jesus.

Paul lived over 2,000 years ago. I don't think we could ever know until we get to heaven how many people have become believers because Paul was obedient to the job God had given him to do. He allowed the Holy Spirit to empower him to do whatever God told Him. Even as we read about Paul's life the Holy Spirit can use his example to cause people to believe in the Lord Jesus.

Today believers have the same exciting privilege and responsibility to obey God and do what He tells us to do. Each of us has been placed in our situations so we can share the Good News about Jesus with those we come in contact with. The Holy Spirit will empower believers to do whatever God asks him/her to do.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, what a great example Paul was to us. He used every opportunity he had to share the gospel with others. Help us to remember that every situation we find ourselves in is part of Your plan for our lives. We ask you to forgive us when we are impatient and bothered by people who interrupt us. Help us to see those as "God moments" when we can share how good You are. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Use the following questions in a game or discussion.

1. What is the name of the Island the survivors landed on? (Vs 1. Malta.)
2. How did the people of Malta treat the survivors? (Vs 2. Kindly.)
3. Why did the people think Paul was a murderer? (Vs 5. Paul didn't die from the snake bite.)
4. How did God use Paul on the island of Malta to help others learn about God? (Vs 8. Paul healed Publius.)
5. When Paul was in Rome what were his living conditions like? (Vs 16. He was permitted to have his own private lodging.)
6. What happened when Paul taught the Jews about the Scriptures and how Jesus is the Savior? (Vs 24. Some believed; some didn't.)
7. How long did Paul teach anyone who visited his house about Jesus? (Vs 30. Two years.)
8. The people on Malta were very kind to Paul. How can you show kindness to someone this week?
9. The believers who met Paul when he arrived in Rome encouraged him. How can you encourage another believer this week?
10. For believers: What is hindering you from boldly sharing the Gospel with others?
11. For unbelievers: Have you heard the Good News and have chosen not to believe? Today you can be saved. Each day you put off believing that Jesus died for your sins, was buried and rose again you are closing your heart and mind to the Truth making it harder for you to be saved.