

SLOW FOOD BIBLE STUDIES

ACTS 27-28: PAUL'S SHIPWRECK AND ARRIVAL AT ROME (13 studies)

The apostle Paul had 'appealed to Caesar' (Acts 25:11), having been previously given Christ's assurance that he would bear witness to him at Rome (23:11). It was to be two years before the Roman machinery swung into action to organise his transfer from Caesarea to Rome in AD 59 (CE). The comparatively benign conditions afforded to him may have been due to king Agrippa's conviction that Paul was innocent of any charge of sedition; nevertheless, the appeal had to stand (26:32). Luke's first-hand account is probably the most detailed historical description of a sea voyage and shipwreck that has come down to us from Roman times. The journey by sea and land started in early autumn, took several months and covered something like 2000 miles. At the same time it reminds us of God's sovereign control of apparently disaster-laden events, and of the assurance we can have of his presence with us under all circumstances. Useful commentaries: Howard Marshall (Tyndale 1980); John Stott (BST 1990); William Barclay (St Andrew 3rd ed 2003); Tom Wright (SPCK 2008). A map of 'Paul's journey to Rome' or 'Paul's 4th missionary journey' can be found in some Bibles, or a Bible Atlas or Dictionary, or on the internet.

- 27:1-8** How did different people (Luke, Aristarchus, Julius, friends at Sidon) help Paul on the first part of his journey? Can I identify with any of them? *Acts 16:11 ('we' sections begin), Col 4:14, 2 Tim 4:11 (Luke); Acts 19:29, Col 4:10 (Aristarchus); Lk 10:8, Heb 13:2, 1 Pet 4:9 (generous folk).*
- 27:9-12** When 'Spirit-inspired' and 'commonsense' advice diverge, what weight should I put upon either? *Ps 62; Isa 42:16-17; 1 Thess 5:19-22.*
- 27:13-20** 'Let go and let God.' If we have faith, will God always arrange things to our expectations? *Ps 66:8-12; Isa 43:2; Jon 1:17-2:10; Rom 8:28-30.*
- 27:21-26** How does Paul describe his relationship to God? Can I say the same? *2 Chr 29:11; Dan 3:17-18, 28; Rom 1:6; Rom 12:1 (KJV); 2 Tim 4:17-18; Rev 17:14.*
- 27:27-32** In an emergency, some people take measures for their own safety and comfort, while others act in the common interest. How likely am I to choose the latter? *Rom 15:1-3; Gal 5:13-16; Phil 2:4, 20-21.*
- 27:33-38** Paul was 'an integrated Christian, who combined spirituality with sanity, and faith with works' (Stott). Am I? *Prov 16:22-23; Prov 21:5; 1 Cor 15:10; Jas 2:14-17.*
- 27:39-44** How does God in his providence use natural and human factors to bring us safely through our ordeals? *Gen 45:8, 50:20; Ps 135:6-7; Acts 4:27-28; Rom 11:33-36.*
- 28:1-6** Can I recall any time when I have experienced a vivid demonstration of God's mercy? *Ps 91:11-13; Mk 16:17-18; 1 Tim 1:12-16.* No vipers exist on Malta today; but 'the people would not have thought the snake was poisonous if there were no poisonous snakes on the island' (Marshall).
- 28:7-10** Are my fellow-Christians and I valued in our community for the beneficial effect of our presence there? *Jer 29:7; Lk 4:38-40; Gal 6:7-10; 2 Th 3:6-13.*
- 28:11-16** 'Christians are never alone' (Barclay). What encouragements does Paul find on the final leg of his journey to Rome? *Josh 1:9; Ps 139:9-10; Mt 28:20; Rom 15:24, 30-32.*
- 28:17-22** 'The Jewish leaders seem ill-informed and unconcerned' (Wright). Is the same true of the society in which I find myself? What can I do about it? *1 Pet 2:12, 3:16, 4:14-16.*
- 28:23-28** What makes the difference between belief and unbelief? *Jer 29:13; Mk 9:24; Rom 10:9-13; Gal 3:10-14.*
- 28:30-31** 'With all boldness and without hindrance.' How is my situation like or unlike Paul's? *Isa 55:8-11; Acts 1:8; Col 4:3-4; 2 Tim 2:8-10.*