

# Lesson 34 – Acts 28:1-31

## Rome at Last

We spend much of our lives in transit, going from one destination to the next. Our schedules can be broken down into a series of arrivals: we arrive at school, we arrive at our jobs, we arrive at a vacation destination after a long drive or flight. Some of these journeys are short and uneventful while others are lengthy and filled with dangers, delays, or celebrations. Oftentimes, the end of a journey brings a sense of relief.

In Acts 28, Paul makes an unexpected stop on his way to Rome. During this time, he encounters a venomous snake, helps people in need, and receives generous hospitality. His journey continues until he finally arrives at the destination God had been carefully leading him towards.

### Colossians and Philemon

These two short books of Paul are sometimes referred to as Prison Letters since they were likely written during the time he was imprisoned in Rome in the early 60s A.D.

Colossians focuses on Christ's redemptive work for us, and what that redemption looks like in the life of a believer.

Read Colossians 1:13-14. What are the two verbs used to describe our redemption?

*Rescued and transferred*

How then are we to live?

3:12 *have compassionate hearts, humble, gentle, and patient*

3:13 *forgive one another*

3:14 *put on love*

3:15 *live at peace, be thankful*

Philemon is a unique book. It is a letter to Philemon, a friend of Paul and a leader in the church in Colossae. In this letter Paul intercedes for Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave who is now with Paul in Rome and had become a believer. [TM note: Paul refers to Onesimus as "my child" (v10). They had a close relationship and Onesimus had been very helpful to Paul.]

### Into the Word: Acts 28:1-31

Imagine this forlorn group of people straggling onto the beach on the island of Malta! Wet, cold, and miserably tired from their long ordeal onboard ship, all 276 passengers survived. Paul gathered a bundle of sticks for the fire that had been started.

1. What happened next? v.3 *A viper came out of the sticks, escaping the heat of the fire, and bit Paul on the hand.*
2. At first the island people assumed Paul was a murderer being punished for his crimes. They all expected him to die, but nothing happened to Paul. What did the residents conclude about Paul? v.6 *They concluded that instead of a murderer, he must be a god.*
3. Paul and the other passengers were welcomed by a leader on the island named Publius. The Lord through Paul healed Publius' father from a recurring fever and dysentery. How did that miracle affect the rest of the island's population? How did the people honor Paul and his companions? vv.9-10
  - *People from all over the island came to be healed from their diseases.*
  - *The people showed them many marks of respect and, when it was time to set sail from Malta, they were supplied with all they needed.*
4. After spending three months wintering on the island, the passengers set sail again and worked their way north

to Rome. After imprisonment, dangerous travels, and much hardship, Paul arrived at the place God promised he would go. Believers throughout the region heard that Paul had arrived in Rome and came to meet him. What did Paul do when he saw them? v.15 *“He thanked God and took courage.”*

Remember that Paul was a prisoner—kept under guard at all times. Though a soldier lived in the same house, Paul was allowed to stay by himself and was free to receive guests (vv.16, 30).

5. There was a large population of unbelieving Jewish leaders in Rome whom Paul invited to his home. Summarize Paul’s explanation of his charges (vv.17-19). *Despite the fact he had done nothing against either the Jews or Jewish law, he was being held prisoner, and that even though the Romans had been willing to release him, he had been forced to appeal to Caesar because the Jews objected so strongly to his release.*

Even after all the relentless and unjust trouble Paul encountered from the Jews, he still hoped to bring the Gospel to the Jews so that they might believe Jesus came to be their Savior.

The Jewish leaders’ response to Paul was that they had never heard of him, either good or bad, but they were curious. They were familiar with Christianity because they had heard people speak against it.

6. Since Paul could not leave his house, a day was set when a large number of Jews came to hear Paul explain about the kingdom of God. Describe this day (vv.23-24).
  - Paul’s goal: *To persuade them to believe in Jesus*
  - Paul’s sources: *The Law of Moses and the writings of the Prophets*
  - The schedule: *Paul preached to them from morning until evening*
  - The results: *Some would not believe, but some did.*

Paul’s final words to his Jewish guests were a quote from Isaiah as recorded in Acts 28:25-27. With their dull hearts, they lacked understanding. He accused them of deliberately refusing to see and hear because they did not want to return to God. Paul’s parting words to them were that “this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles” (v.28).

7. How did the Jews respond? v.29 *There was a great dispute among them as they left Paul’s house.*

The book of Acts ends with a status report on the last two years of Paul’s life in Rome. Paul filled those years the same way he had filled his entire life since his conversion on the Damascus road. He preached the kingdom of God, taught about Jesus, and welcomed all who would come to listen.

### **New Location:** Island of Malta

The island of Malta is located 62 miles from Sicily, 900 miles from Gibraltar, and 1,200 miles from Jerusalem. It is a small, rocky island covering about 100 square miles. Due to its location in the Mediterranean Sea, great trading nations desired control of the island. The Phoenicians, the Greeks, and the Carthaginians controlled the island before the Romans. Today the island is controlled by the British.

Malta is the island where Paul was shipwrecked. Today a small inlet on the north side of the island is named St. Paul Bay. This inlet is likely the place Paul landed as recorded in Acts 27. In Roman times the island was noted for the production of fine fabrics, probably made from native cotton.

## Memory Verse

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.  
Colossians 3:3

### Extra Memory Challenge

Colossians 3:16

*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,  
with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,  
singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

## Discussion Questions

*Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.*

1. In Acts 28:23-29, Paul used the Old Testament to teach the Jews about Jesus. Some of his listeners were persuaded while others rejected it. Before the people departed, he quoted Isaiah 6:9-10 to describe some of the Jewish listeners. Some will hear but “NOT UNDERSTAND” and see but “NOT PERCEIVE” (Acts 28:26). Sadly, their hearts were hardened against God. When your loved ones or friends seem to reject the Lord, how might Isaiah 55:11 and Matthew 23:37 encourage you?

*God’s Word is powerful and effective. That is something we can count on. Whatever the outcome may be in life, we honor God for working His purpose whether we understand it or not.*

*Paul knew the Jews would be familiar with the Old Testament writings and prophecies. In spite of the Jews’ stubborn rejection of God’s Word, Jesus reveals His great love for unbelievers in His lament over the city: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often I wanted to gather your children...but you were unwilling!” Jesus still longs to bring us all to Himself, so that not one of us would be separated from Him!*

2. Paul often expresses that he is praying for his brothers and sisters in Christ. For example, “I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers” (Philemon 1:4; note also Colossians 1:3). Paul was a man of prayer who not only prayed for himself but also for others, and specifically for his co-workers in the Gospel. How might his example affect your prayers? Consider James 5:16 in your answer.

*Paul desired that Philemon would continue to bear good fruit and bring honor to Jesus’ Name. Paul was united with others in the work of God’s kingdom. Their joys and struggles were his, and Paul prayed for them (Romans 1:9). We share in the lives of others. Our prayers matter. Students may discuss how they, too, can pray for other believers, their pastor, and missionaries to begin the list.*

## Daily Devotions

Sunday:	Psalms 20:1-9
Monday:	Psalms 21:1-13
Tuesday:	Psalms 23:1-6
Wednesday:	Psalms 27:1-14
Thursday:	Psalms 34:1-8
Friday:	Psalms 40:1-5
Saturday:	Psalms 46:1-11

## THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CHURCH YEAR

\* What is Pentecost and its connection to salvation?

The word “Pentecost” refers to the number 50, and this festival occurs approximately 50 days after Easter. On Pentecost Sunday, we remember the day the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers in Jerusalem as Jesus had promised (Acts 2). They were made bold to tell others, including people from different countries, the wonderful works of God in Christ. Many people repented, believed, and were baptized. Today the Holy Spirit continues to call people to repentance, draws them to salvation in Christ, and preserves them in the one true faith.

1. How does Acts 2:4-8 explain what “speaking in tongues” means? Why was that helpful for the disciples?  
*People from various countries could understand the disciples who were able to speak in their native languages (note: tongues and languages are the same word in Greek). Because of this, the disciples’ message was heard by many more people and spread more quickly.*

2. What does the Holy Spirit continue to do for us? (See Luther’s Explanation to the Third Article)  
*The Holy Spirit calls, enlightens, gathers, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth.*