

The Ends of the Earth

The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations [gentiles]. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God
 Psalm 98:2,3

Study 28a: A WARM – AND WONDER-FULL – WELCOME (28:1-10)

28:1,2,7,10 What is Luke at pains to stress?

(1) There is an interesting point here in that the Spirit of God has seen fit to take note of the fact that the barbarous people, those unlearned and ignorant people who had not the culture and refinement of many in the Roman Empire, showed to this shipwrecked company "no little kindness." God always recognizes every kindness done to His own, and so He has put it on record here. **H. Ironside** *Acts* p.636

(2) The three winter months spent at Malta were for S. Paul a time of rest and recovery and freedom from controversy. The 'barbarians' were conspicuous for their hospitality and gratitude. They justified the statement of Vergil that 'Justice when she forsook the earth left her last footsteps among the simple country-folk.' And the apostle repaid them -- not with silver and gold (iii 6) but -- with gifts of healing, which take us back to the early chapters and especially remind us of the healing of Aeneas and of the multitude from the cities round about Jerusalem (ix 32-5, v 16).

R.B. Rackham *Acts* p.493



The cloister of St. Paul's Without the Walls, completed in 1214 on the traditional grave of Paul in Rome.

28:3-6,8,9 Does the power to work wonders depend on the faith of the beneficiary? (5:12-16)

(3) When the fire grew hot a long black snake wound slowly out into our group; we must have gathered it, torpid, with the twigs. **T.E. Lawrence** (*of Arabia*) *Revolt in the Desert* p.107

(4) A trained medical man in ancient times was usually a good authority about serpents, to which great respect was paid in ancient medicine and custom. **Wm Ramsay** *Luke the Physician* p.63

(5) This is the third instance of kindness or courtesy which S. Luke marks on this journey... in the description of the cures which were wrought during the winter we can recognize, besides this spiritual method, the use of medical *treatment*. S. Luke was a doctor, and the *us* of verse 10 shews that he too had contributed to the healing of the sick. The Maltese shewed their gratitude by honouring the apostolic company with many honours ... The word is generally used in the Acts for price or value; and when the travellers resumed their voyage, as they had lost all their belongings in the shipwreck, the Maltese laded them with such things as they needed. **R. Rackham** p.494

Study 28b: DIVINE CHEER & HUMAN ENCOURAGEMENT (28:11-16)

28:11-14 Paul's good works have gone ahead of him (compare vv. 21,22)

(6) "The Twin Brothers" who formed the figurehead of this ship were Castor and Pollux, patrons of navigation and favourite objects of sailors' devotion. Their constellation, Gemini, was considered a sign of good fortune in a storm. **F.F. Bruce** *The Book of the Acts* p.525

28:15,16 Why does Paul require no more Divine visitations? (9:15,16; 18:9,10; 22:21; 23:11; 26:17,18)

(7) Paul might well thank God and take courage at the sight of these friends. He had long had a desire to visit Rome; it was three years since he wrote his letter to the church of

the capital to prepare the way for his visit and expound to them the gospel which he preached; now his prayer was granted and, in circumstances which he had not foreseen when he wrote his letter, he saw Roman Christians face to face. He probably wondered from time to time what kind of reception he would have from them; now all his misgivings were removed by the heart-warming action of those members of the Roman church who tramped out so far to bid him welcome to their midst. **F.F. Bruce** *op. cit.*, p.528

(8) So Paul at last arrives at his destination; for the last time Luke writes in the first person plural. As the text stands, it tells us that Paul was given permission to live by himself, i.e. not in a prison but in a private dwelling (verse 30), under guard by a soldier. This seems to fit with Roman practice attested at least for later times. **I.H. Marshall** *Acts* p.420



F.F. Bruce



I. Howard Marshall

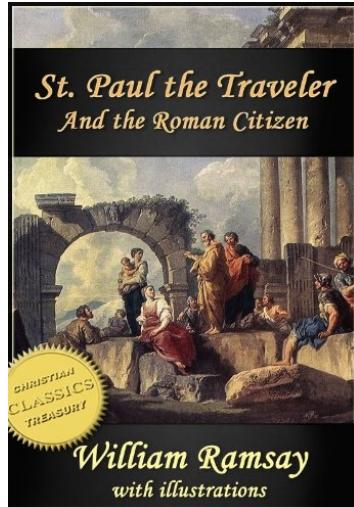
The Spirit's Sentence Stumble and Stupor

What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day ... Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles ... Romans 11:7,8,11

Study 29a: TO THE JEW FIRST (28:17-23)

28:17-20 Though he is blameless under persecution, how does Paul still regard Israel? (Rom. 9:1-5)

(9) The impression conveyed is that Paul felt throughout his ministry the duty to go first to the Jews and that it was when they refused the message that he went to the Gentiles. All this fits in with the emotional expression of Paul's feelings regarding his call in Romans 9-11. It also gives a climax to the book in that the missionary programme of Acts 1:8 is now brought to a decisive point: the gospel has come to the capital city, and it is proclaimed without hindrance to the Gentiles; the church is on the brink of further expansion, with Paul's hope of reaching Spain (Rom.15:24,28) in the background and indicating the direction for further advance. The church is thus given its marching orders: Rome is a stage on the way, and not the final goal. In principle it is free to ignore the Jews, at least for the time being (Lk.21:24), and to go to the Gentiles. **I. Howard Marshall** *op. cit.*, p.421



28:21-23 What are the method and message of Paul's kingdom preaching? (19:8,10,13,17)

(10) He expounded it by proclaiming the kingdom of God and persuading them about Jesus, basing his argument on the statements of Moses and the prophets. The subject matter thus combined the themes of the preaching of Jesus and the apostolic message about him which formed a unity: the rule of God was the rule of God's agent, the Messiah, and it was Jesus who filled this role. In a discussion with Jews the Old Testament Scriptures provided the main evidence, and the debate hung on their interpretation, and whether the facts concerning Jesus could be seen as the fulfilment of prophecy. This description of Paul's message corresponds with earlier general summaries of his arguments in the synagogues (17:2f.; 18:5) and obviously reflects his normal practice. **I. Howard Marshall** *op. cit.*, p.424

Study 29b: THE DIVINE SENTENCE: BLIND, DEAF, DULL OF HEART (28:24-31)

28:24-27 As early as Isaiah, what great truth of Providence is made known? (John 6:43-45; Phil.1:6; 2:13)

28:28 Which other truth of Providence's priority does Paul find in Isaiah? (Isaiah 11:10; 42:1-7; 49:1-7)

Whether this is a final rejection of the Jews is doubtful. Paul's letters certainly indicate that he looked for a change of heart on their part in due time (Rom. 11:25-32). This may well be Luke's understanding too. But for the moment the Christian mission turns to the Gentiles. Paul no longer feels under obligation to go "to the Jews first", and Luke may well be presenting him as an example for the church generally to follow. **I. Howard Marshall** *op.cit.*, p.425

28:30,31 What symbolic significance do some find in the open ending of Paul's biography in Acts?

We may date these letters to Philemon, to Colossai, and to the Asian Churches generally (*Eph.*) near the middle of the long imprisonment; an accurate date is impossible, but for brevity's sake we may speak of their date as early in 61. **W.M. Ramsay** *St Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* p.349

The fact that Luke was with Paul when Paul wrote Second Timothy (2 Tim.4:11), raises another question, Why didn't Luke tell us at the end of Acts what happened to Paul? Obviously if he was with Paul at some time during the second imprisonment, he knew the outcome of the first. We might, of course, go even further and point out that since Luke wrote both the Gospel and Acts he must have lived on beyond 64 or even 67. Why, then, didn't he finish the story of Paul's life? The obvious answer -- obvious, but disregarded by many scholars -- is that Luke was not writing a Life of Paul. He was writing the story of the beginning of the Church, and the limits he set on the work -- as his own literary devices make clear -- are from the beginning in Jerusalem until the gospel reaches Rome. Once Paul arrived in Rome, Luke's story was concluded. **William Sanford LaSor** *Church Alive* p.387

He is not writing the history of Paul, but of the gospel, and so he does not tell us what became of Paul. For the same reason he dropped all mention of Peter and Barnabas and of the other actors prominent at the first, whenever their work ceased to be connected with the development of the church. **J.M. Stifler** *The Acts of the Apostles* p.276