

Key:

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

Paul's Promise: This Road Leads to Rome

Acts 27:39–28:16

Go ahead, church, and take your Bibles and turn with me to Acts 28. Actually our passage today begins in Acts 27:39 and we will work our way today to the middle of Acts 28 and verse 16.

We are nearing the end of our journey through the book of Acts. The last thing that God does in this great book of the Bible is promise the Apostle Paul that he will get to the city of Rome, which was the center of the ancient world in Paul's day. Paul had planned to visit Rome for some time. In fact, the apostle first announced his intention to go to Rome in Acts 19:21, "After I have been [to Jerusalem], I must also see Rome."

This desire of Paul's was recorded in the book of Romans where years before he came to Rome he wrote, "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you... I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented)... So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome" (1:11–15).

Now as you know, Paul's journey to Rome wasn't just wistful wish-fulfillment. When Paul was in prison in Jerusalem, Jesus promised Paul, "You will testify about me also in Rome" (Acts 23:11). So this wasn't just a dream of Paul's; it was a promise of God. And here's the question I want to ask you today: Does God fulfill his promises?¹

The message today is entitled "Paul's Promise: This Road Leads to Rome" and this message is about a God who always, always fulfills his promises.² And applicationally for us, this message is about trusting God through every conceivable trial, fear, and uncertainty in our lives. This message is about holding on and not giving up, and believing the promises of God even when everything in this world is conspiring to convince you that God's promises will not come true.

This message today is analogous to Abraham in the OT who despite all odds believed God and his faith was credited to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6).

Now as I look at our passage today, Acts 27:39–28:16, I see this passage unfolding in three scenes: Acts 27:39–44, Acts 28:1–10, and Acts 28:11–16. You can see that breakdown of this passage in your notes. And I want to give you a description of each of those scenes as it relates to Jesus's promise that Paul will reach Rome.

And here's the description of that first scene. Let's call this...

1) A Promise Under **Pressure** (27:39–44)

When we left the Apostle Paul last week, it was a cliffhanger. He and the rest of his party were in pretty bad shape. Paul and the 276 people that were on a ship with him had barely survived a terrifying ordeal at sea.

¹ JOHANNES BRENTZ: "You can understand now that the truth of the word and promise of God is so great that no storm of the sea, no plotting of the wicked, no adverse misfortune is so powerful as to thwart it. Therefore, from the story of this shipwreck, let us strengthen our faith in the face of all opposing storms. For this age in which we live is the sea, and the states and conditions of our life are the ship. And in this ship now we are buffeted by the dangerous blasts of wind." Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 357–8.

² Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 747: "This passage is about the details of a long journey undertaken by someone who is obeying God's will and is being protected by divine providence... The most important theme of the passage is that God can be taken at his word. God told Paul that he, the messenger, would reach Rome, and Paul did. God told Paul that no lives would be lost, and none were. And God told Paul that the ship would run aground, and it did. God's word can be trusted because God can be trusted. The only thing one does not know is when God will accomplish his will."

They were on a ship headed for Rome, and their ship had been blown off course. And they had struggled for at least fourteen days through a terrifying, a typhoon-esque storm called a “northeaster,” that had just about *ended* them at sea.

But the ship survives the storm. Paul had encouraged the men repeatedly and had displayed great leadership on the boat to keep the men from slipping into hopelessness.

And Paul had even thwarted an attempt by the sailors to abandon ship. When we find them in **verse 39**, three important things have just taken place: **1)** They had taken a sounding and found that the ocean floor was 15 fathoms (90 feet), so they knew they were approaching land fast. **2)** They had dropped anchor and waited for day to come. In fact **verse 29** says they had prayed for day to come. Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus prayed to the God of the universe. The rest of the ship prayed to whatever gods they believed in. And they all hoped that the storm would finally relent.

And thirdly, Luke tells us, **3)** Paul encouraged the passengers to take some food and promised them that not a hair on their head would perish. **“Everything’s going to be okay. God has promised me that all of you will survive.”** And then Paul prayed for the food, and they ate together. That’s how our passage from last time ended.

Well in **verse 39**, day finally dawns.

³⁹ *Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land,*

In other words, they saw land, but it wasn’t a location that any of these men were familiar with. So, that’s a little disconcerting...

but they noticed a bay with a beach,³ on which they planned if possible⁴ to run the ship ashore.

You might say, **“Yeah! They’re saved!”** Well, not so fast. They are still some distance from the land. And they can’t just jump out and swim to shore. There could be sharks in the water. There could be currents that easily take you out to sea again.

If the waves were heavy enough, the swimmers could be dashed against the rocks. That’s not better than dying or drowning at sea. And, as we’ll find out in a minute, not everyone on the ship can swim. In fact, there’s a good chance that the majority of the soldiers and the prisoners on the boat can’t swim. The ability to swim wasn’t as prevalent then, as it is in our day.

So here’s the plan. Look at **verse 40**.

⁴⁰ *So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach.*

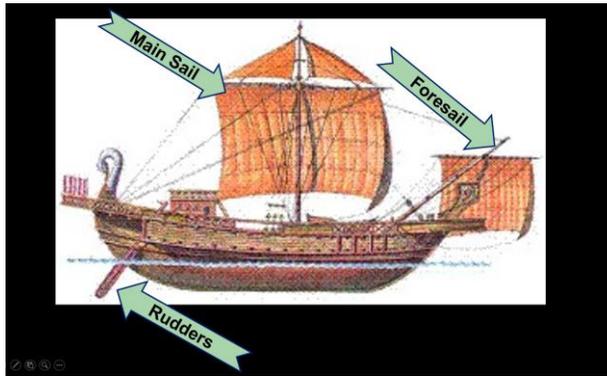
So they saw a beach in the distance. They decide to run the ship aground. They untie the rudders (or the oars) at the bottom of the boat.⁵ They hoist the foresail, which is the “jib” or the front-sail of the ship that gives them a little control.

Here’s a picture of a typical boat in this Roman era and you can see here the foresail, the rudders, and the mainsail.

³ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 740: “Literally, what is described here is a ‘fold’ (κόλπον, *kolpon*) with a beach, which would describe a bay. The sailors do not know where they are, but they know that they want to guide the ship to the beach on the bay if they are able. This indicates that the effort might be tricky.”

⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1047: “The parenthesis ‘if they could’ (εἰ δύναιτο), formulated with the optative, reveals the uncertainty of the crew as to what was likely to happen and suggests that the bay with the beach was not easily accessible.”

⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 529: “The rudders of ancient ships consisted of large paddles. In a storm these would be lifted from the water and tied down. Now, to guide the ship for the beaching, they were untied and let back down into the water.”



Now remember they've already thrown their mainsail and their other tackle and equipment overboard. So they don't have the ability to maneuver like they normally would. But at this point, they don't have a choice. This is their last chance to survive.

This plan of theirs is essentially a last-ditch effort to save themselves. The anchors are gone, the rudders are loose, the foresail is up, the mainsail is gone. And if this doesn't work, then they are finished.

So they make for the beach! They get a little closer to shore. But then they encounter another obstacle.

Look at **verse 41**.

⁴¹ *But striking a reef,⁶ they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck*

The bow is the front of the boat, and the stern is the back.

and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf.

I'm sure at this point the soldiers were like, **"Can we please get off this ship! We can't catch a break on this thing. Just get me out of here already!"**

What was happening here is that the ship's bow was stuck in the reef or a sandbar some distance from the shore, and the stern of the ship was being destroyed by the surf. Probably what was happening was that the back of the boat was being lifted by the waves and then crashing down on the sandbar. **Remember this is not a steel ship, right? This is not the USS Lexington out there.** This is a wooden ship.

And this ship that has already taken a beating in the storm for the last fourteen days. So in a short amount of time, this wooden ship would have been *splintered* and *broken apart* by the surf. That's a dangerous situation for the people on board.

And since the ship is still some distance from the beach, the soldiers start to panic. And here's what they want to do. Look at **verse 42**.

⁴² *The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners,⁷ lest any should swim away and escape.*

You might say, **"Wow, these guys really don't have faith in Paul or in Paul's God, do they?"** No, they don't. Paul said that everyone will survive, but these guys aren't taking any chances.

And you have to remember, that if these prisoners escape, then the soldiers that guarded them will have to serve their sentence. And for some that would mean capital punishment. So here's the solution: **"Let's just kill 'em all. That's the only way to get out of this predicament."**

Look at **verse 43**.

⁴³ *But the centurion, wishing to save Paul,*

That's Julius, right? The man who allowed Paul to go visit friends in Sidon. He trusts Paul. And throughout this whole ordeal, Paul was the one encouraging the men and leading with confidence. They might not have even gotten this far without Paul. So Julius doesn't want Paul to be executed.⁸

And remember, Paul is one of the prisoners.

⁶ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 741 translates "reef" here with "shoal" and says, "The sea bottom would be of hard clay and lock the ship in place."

⁷ CHRYSOSTOM: "Again the devil tries to impede the prophecy: the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, but the centurion prevented them in order to save Paul. The centurion had become a very dear friend." Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 309.

⁸ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 530: "Once again it was a Roman official who intervened to save the life of the apostle."

⁴³ But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept [the soldiers] from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land,

“You guys go. Swim to shore, if you can. Secure a place to apprehend the prisoners when they come to land.”⁹

⁴⁴ and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship.¹⁰

It’s amazing how much this ship is being pounded at this point. There are pieces of it floating everywhere! That’s probably what saved the lives of some of these men, the ones that couldn’t swim anyway. So they were able to float all the way to the beach.

⁴⁴ ...And so it was that **all** were brought safely to land.¹¹

Did God fulfill his promise? God told Paul that everyone on the ship would survive, all 276 men. Did God come through for them? Can God be trusted with his promises? God even promised, through the angel, that the ship would be destroyed. But all the people will survive (**Acts 27:22**). How was that going to happen? Luke tells us here. God’s word can always be trusted! God always follows through with his promises.¹²

You might say, “Yeah I get that, Tony. But couldn’t God have done this without all the life-threatening drama? Couldn’t he have sent a chariot of fire like Elijah that would carry them safely to land? That would have been awesome!”

Yeah, he could’ve. But you know what I think. God left enough precariousness... God left enough uncertainty and fear in this scenario to test Paul and to test these men including Luke and Aristarchus. Luke’s got to write this down later!

You know, I’ve noticed that God does that in my life. He allows precarious and fear-inducing situations in order to test me. “Do you really trust me, Tony? Will you hold fast to my promises even when everything in your life is going against you?” God does that. And his endgame is more than just fulfilling his promises; it’s making us better people along the way. It’s making us men and women of faith. It’s making us men and women of integrity, who demonstrate the character of God even in the storms of life.

Some of you might say, “Tony, I feel like those people in the boat right now. I feel like those sailors who tried to abandon ship. I feel like those soldiers who wanted to kill the prisoners. I feel more like them the Apostle Paul.”

Some of you might say, “Tony, I feel more like that ship that was getting smashed to pieces by the surf. BAM!!! BAM!!! BAM!!! That’s me! That’s my life.” Here’s my encouragement for you. Hold fast to the Lord, your anchor. Hold fast to the God of the universe. Hold fast to the God who has promised, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

Here’s great passage on endurance in faith. Put this in your mental rolodex for times of suffering: 1 Peter 5:10, “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” **Endurance by faith! That’s what God is after.**

Now back to our text here. At this point, one of God’s promises has been fulfilled. That’s the promise that Paul received on the boat that all 276 men will make it to shore safely (**Acts 27:23–26**). But there’s another

⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 530: “With the dinghy gone, there was but one way the voyagers could flee the sinking ship and safely reach land—in the water.”

¹⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 530: “The phrase translated ‘pieces of the ship’ in the NIV is ambiguous in Greek and could also be translated ‘on some people from the ship.’ The picture would be that of the nonswimmers being carried on the backs of those who could swim.”

¹¹ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 187: “The whole chapter, right up to the very last verse, presents us with a remarkable picture of God’s sovereignty and power. Nothing will thwart the will of God.”

¹² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1049: “While Luke does not explicitly link the rescue of crew and passengers with God’s sovereignty in v. 44, he had given several signals in the text (vv. 22–26, 31, 34) that emphasized to the readers that it was as a result of God’s providence that despite the violent storm, despite the planned flight of the crew, and despite of the soldiers’ intention to kill the prisoners, all people were saved.”

promise that still awaits fulfillment. And that's God's promise to Paul that he will testify in Rome (**Acts 23:11; 27:24**).

And unless Paul just shipwrecked off the coast of Rome (which is highly unlikely), God still has some work to do to fulfill that promise.

Write this down as the second scene in this passage. I'll just call this...

2) A Promise on **Pause** (28:1-10)

God's promise was threatened in **Acts 27**. No problem. God got them through that. But now they are shipwrecked somewhere in the middle of the Mediterranean, in the middle of the winter (by the way), and they still have a few obstacles to overcome.

Acts 28:1 says,

¹ After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta.¹³

If you look on the map you can see the island of Malta just below the "boot" of Italy.¹⁴



Paul's Journey to Rome with "Syrtis" Added¹⁵

This island is about 150 miles south of Italy; It's about 450 miles south of Rome.¹⁶ On the map you can see just how far this ship was blown westward by the storm.¹⁷ The distance from Crete to Malta is roughly 550 miles. So this ship was blown 550 miles westward in two weeks.

And they landed on an island, Malta, that is incredibly small. In fact it's only about 120 square miles (approximately 17 miles long and 9 miles wide). **Hitting this island in the middle of the Mediterranean is a bit like finding a needle in a haystack.** And astonishingly they are basically still on route to Rome. That just goes to show how God was superintending this voyage. And God has a reason for them landing on this island. Watch this!

² The native people showed us unusual kindness,¹⁸ for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.

Remember it's winter. They were cold. And the natives were kind to them.

The Greek word for "native people" here is βάρβαρος, which we derive the English word "barbarian" from. It's an onomatopoeia, meaning it sounds like what it is. People who spoke Greek would make fun of people who didn't speak Greek with the sound, "bar-bar-bar." And that later gave birth to the word "barbarian,"

¹³ For possible locations for the shipwreck, see "In Depth: The Site of the Shipwreck" in Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1048.

¹⁴ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 742: "They learn that the island they are on is called Μελίτη (*Melitē*), now known as Malta (Strabo, *Geogr.* 6.2.11; 17.3.15-16). It is located about 58 miles south of Sicily and 180 miles northeast of Africa, with a length of 18 miles and a width of 8 miles (Williams 1990: 442). The island's ancient name means 'refuge,' but Luke makes nothing of the etymology."

¹⁵ Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), January 1, 2026. Some geographical points added by author.

¹⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 531: "Somewhat miraculously they had been delivered virtually on course for their final destination of Italy."

¹⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 742: "There is a recent revival of a tenth-century view that this was Mljet, off the coast of Dubrovnik, but this depends on reading the Sea of Adria in 27:27 as the Adriatic Sea, which is a mistake (Witherington 1998: 775 notes that a northeaster would not blow the ship there; see comments above on 27:27-29 and the Adriatic Sea). Also unlikely is the locale of Kephallenia, five hundred miles south of Mljet."

¹⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 742: "The term φιλανθρωπία (*philanthrōpia*) refers to the benevolence of unconditional kindness, a love for humanity (BAGD 858; BDAG 1055-56). The term is used only twice in the NT (the other instance is Titus 3:4)."

for those who didn't speak Greek.¹⁹ But these “barbarians” are not “barbarian-like” in their treatment of these visitors.

When I was a kid, my mom used to always tell us, “Don't eat like a barbarian.” And that's because I grew up in a household where he who eats fastest, eats most. So we would often make my mom crazy with our barbarian ways. She tried to “de-barbarianize” me, but some habits are harder to break than others.

But in our passage here, the barbarians, or the “natives” of the island, did something good. They did something worthy of our imitation. They showed Paul and Luke and these sailors and soldiers and prisoners unusual kindness. They didn't try to kill them and eat them like some barbarians would. That's a real possibility on some remote island. But instead of eating them, they showed them hospitality, and they even kindled a fire for 276 people because they were cold. That's pretty hospitable.²⁰

Now just so you know “barbarian” in Paul's day essentially means non-Greek or non-Greek-speaking. So these weren't barbarians by our standards. In fact the Maltese people were quite civilized at this point in history. But they were non-Greek.²¹ They were isolated in many ways from Greek, and then later Roman, culture. And!... here's the important point... they were unevangelized. Up to this point, when Paul shipwrecked on their island, they hadn't heard the gospel. **So here's the question—could God have used all of these events (a ship, a storm, a shipwreck) to bring the gospel to these unbelievers in Malta?**

You might say, “Why did Paul have to go all this? Why didn't God just give his smooth-sailing all the way to Rome? Why not a chariot of fire taking Paul to Rome?” Well maybe this is the reason. Maybe God wanted Paul to evangelize some “barbarians” on the way.

Look, here's the point. I don't know why God makes us suffer in the ways that he does. There's not always an easy answer for it. But God's ways are higher than ours. And God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.

And there's enough evidence in Scripture to assume that God is working a good and perfect plan *in spite* of our suffering. And God is even using our suffering for his greater purposes. Even if we don't understand that.

Our job is not to discern why God is making us suffer. Our job is to suffer well with faith. Our job is to endure, and trust God.

And speaking of endurance, look at **verse 3**. Paul's not done suffering just yet.

³ *When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks*

That's great right there. Paul's not too high and mighty to pick up sticks and throw them into the fire.

³ *When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand.*

I'm sure Luke was like, “What's the deal with you, man? Everywhere we go stuff like this happens to you.” Paul's just minding his business... Paul's just trying to help out and build a fire for all the cold and wet people... and wouldn't you know it... Paul the do-gooder... gets bitten by a viper.

¹⁹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1049: “Although the people evidently continued to speak a form of Punic, the island was Hellenized and Romanized by the first century, as is evident from Greek and Latin inscriptions and the existence of Roman villas, theaters, and baths.”

²⁰ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNCT, 360: “God requires Christians, both church leaders (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8) and all believers (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9), to show hospitality. That the pagan Maltese exhibited it illustrates an important theological truth. One aspect of God's general revelation to all people is the moral law written on their hearts. Although the specifics may vary, every culture holds some things to be right and other things to be wrong.”

²¹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 531n57: “Luke described the natives as ‘barbarians’ (βάρβαροι). The term indicates a language difference and reflects Luke's Greek bias. For a Greek, anyone speaking a language other than Greek was denoted a “barbarian.” The word is onomatopoeic, meaning that the foreign speech sounds to the Greek-speaker like “bar-bar-bar,” meaningless babbling. (Cf. Paul's use of the term in precisely this sense in 1 Cor 14:11.) Ancient Maltese was a Punic dialect, deriving from the Phoenicians who colonized the island in the first millennium B.C. Inscriptions found on Malta in both Punic and Greek would indicate that these were the main languages used there in the first century.”

I mean sure this guy is going to die. He's destined to die.²² He's not making it to Rome. This guy is snakebit! Paul is snakebit. Some kind of weird juju magic has been unleashed on Paul, and this guy can't catch a break. He's cursed.

You'll notice, that's exactly what the Maltese people think when they see this. They think this happened because Paul's got bad karma.²³

Look at **verse 4**.

⁴ When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand,

Just imagine Paul standing in front of them with this snake hanging from his hand. It's actually kind of comical. This snake could have been a *vipera ammodytes*, otherwise known as a nose-horned viper.²⁴ Or it could have been a *vipera aspis*, an asp viper. Those are two of the most venomous snakes in Europe.

Here's a picture of an asp viper.



It was probably a snake like this that fastened itself to Paul. Isn't that a beautiful creature, right there? Wouldn't you want to take that home with you as a pet?

Coincidentally venomous snakes are no longer found on the island of Malta. The increased population and development of the island pushed out those snakes. But poisonous snakes used to be found there. And this snake that bit Paul, whatever specific species it was, had a reputation.

Because look what happens when the Maltese natives saw this.²⁵ Look at **verse 4**. they said to one another, "No doubt this man²⁶ is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice

You can see "Justice" with a capital letter there.²⁷ This is probably a deity of theirs.²⁸ Justice has not allowed him to live."²⁹ [Paul], however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.³⁰

²² Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 189: "In a day when there was no anti-venom, this bite would certainly have been expected to lead to a tragic death for Paul."

²³ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 189: "This 'cause-and-effect' worldview still exists in much of the world today, and is found in notions like *karma*—do something wrong in this universe, and the universe will repay you... Christians must not draw hasty conclusions like this, for they stem from a pagan worldview and understanding of events. Paul, unlike the islanders, trusted in the providence of God and maintained his composure. He shook off the snake as though nothing had happened (v 5)."

²⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1050 calls it a "sandviper."

²⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 532: "[The natives] obviously saw the creature as venomous and expected Paul to die. Since they were native to the island and should have known their own species, their reaction probably is the best clue about how the narrative is to be taken."

²⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1050: "The locals conclude that 'this man' (ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος), whose name they do not (yet) know, must be a murderer (φονεὺς)."

²⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 743: "This is the personification of justice as a goddess, a reference to fate directing events (BAGD 198 §2; BDAG 250). She was seen as the daughter of Zeus and Themis. Of the three NT occurrences of this word, this is the only one with this sense (2 Thess. 1:9; Jude 7)."

²⁸ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1050–1: "The term translated 'Justice' (ἡ δίκη) probably refers not to justice as a general ethical or legal norm but to personified Justice (Δίκη), i.e., the goddess of justice, the favorite daughter of Zeus and Themis who 'immediately reports to Zeus all the unrighteous deeds of mankind so that people will have to pay for their crimes,' and who, as companion of the gods of the underworld (the Erinyes, the 'enforcers' of Dike), was 'a mighty and relentless deity who wrathfully wielded the weapons of revenge.' Greek mythology and Greek art associated snakes, divine justice for murder victims, and the Erinyes, and Dike is sometimes associated with the sea."

²⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 532: "In this they were reflecting a common ancient concept. The Romans, for instance, told the story of a fugitive who escaped a shipwreck but was killed by a snake that bit him as he lay recovering on the beach; and Jewish tradition told of

Paul is the terminator! Paul is the apostolic terminator in the book of **Acts**.

Jesus had actually given his disciples authority to tread on serpents and scorpions in **Luke 10:19**, so it shouldn't surprise us that Paul suffered no harm here. **For the record, I don't believe that this is a promise that is available to all of us as Christians, so that would be my response to those who think snake-handling should be normal part of Christian practice.**

This was a miracle. This was a display of Paul's authority as an apostle. This was a miracle that God used to propagate the gospel message and authenticate the gospel messenger, just like he's done before in the book of **Acts**.³¹

Because watch how these native people respond. Look at **verse 6**.

⁶ *They were waiting for him to swell up³² or suddenly fall down dead.*

They had seen snakebites like this in the past. They knew that a quick and gruesome death followed. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to [Paul], they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

“He's a god. He survives storms and shipwrecks and snakebites. He must be divine!”³³

You might remember that they did the same thing to Paul and Barnabas in Lystra (**Acts 18:8–28**). At first they thought Paul and Barnabas were Zeus and Hermes. But when they pleaded with them to turn to the real God of the universe, the disillusioned crowd stoned them and left them for dead. It just goes to show you how fickle human nature is, and how powerful superstition can influence a people's belief system.³⁴

And here's another point—only God can rescue a person from those things. Only God can free a person from the powers of ignorance and superstition.³⁵ And maybe God wants to do this with these Maltese.³⁶

Now that's not all that happens. Watch what Paul does next in **verse 7**.

⁷ *Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius,³⁷ who received us and entertained us³⁸ hospitably for three days.*

Notice how there more hospitality demonstrated on this little island.³⁹ More common grace elements displayed in this culture. These aren't believers. They don't know Christ... not yet. But they are men and women made in the image of God. And they show that through their actions here.

the murderer who got his just deserts from the fangs of a viper. But this was not the case with Paul. He simply shook the snake into the fire and suffered no ill effects from its bite (v. 5). Justice was not catching up with Paul. Quite the contrary—providence was *preserving* him.”

³⁰ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 743: “The situation appears not to concern Paul because he has been assured that he will reach Rome (*Acts* 27:24).”

³¹ MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNCT, 362: “As always in *Acts*, God used this miracle to authenticate His message and His messenger.”

³² Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 743: “There is no swelling on Paul, nor does he die. Πίμπρημι (*pimprēmi*, swell up), an NT hapax, is a medical term for inflammation.”

³³ For some reason that I can't agree with Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 744 thinks, “Paul is not seen as a ‘divine man’ here but as one whom even pagans recognize as being in close contact with God. The next scene, with Paul seeking God's help by praying for the healing of others, shows that Paul is not portrayed as a divine man.”

³⁴ JOHN CALVIN: “As human reason always wrongly rushes to extremes, they suddenly make Paul a god instead of a vicious murderer; but if it was necessary to choose one or the other, it was better to be regarded a murderer than a god. Paul would certainly have preferred not only to be condemned for one crime but also to be loaded with infamy of every kind and be plunged into the depths of the underworld rather than appropriate the glory of God to himself.” Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 362.

³⁵ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 190: “Luke does not provide much information about the miracles at Malta. In other passages where crowds believed Paul to be a god, Luke tells us exactly how Paul handled the situation and stewarded such opportunities toward declaring the gospel. Here, however, Luke includes no such details. We can, however, deduce that God used these events and worked through them to his glory. Paul would not have performed any miracles except by the power of God working in and through him. If at any point Paul had begun to dignify the islanders' belief in his divinity, God would surely have removed his hand from Paul and his ministry. The presence of God with Paul on Malta, therefore, points to the gospel and the power of God at work among the inhabitants of Malta and the shipwrecked crew.”

³⁶ JOHN CALVIN: “Let us learn from this how prone the world is to superstition.” Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 362.

³⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 744: “Paul often establishes a relationship with leading figures in a locale (*Acts* 13:7; 16:22; 17:19; 18:12; 19:31).”

³⁸ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 533: “Just who the ‘us’ included is not clear. It may be that it concerned only the Christian group and not the entire 276 who were aboard ship.”

Look at verse 8.

⁸ It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever⁴⁰ and dysentery.⁴¹ And Paul visited him and prayed,⁴² and putting his hands on him⁴³ healed him. ⁹ And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured.⁴⁴

“This guy Paul can heal you. Let’s go see him! This guy Paul is sent from God, let’s go see him. This guy survives shipwrecks and snakebites, and he can heal you.”

What’s God doing on this island? What’s God replicating here? God is essentially doing the same thing that he did in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria years before. God is using miracles and healing to blaze new paths for the gospel.⁴⁵ God is propagating the gospel message and authenticating the gospel messenger by these miracles.

And you might say, “I’ve never seen God do things like this in my lifetime.” Well I’m not so sure that God intended this to be something normative in every lifetime.

You might be surprised to hear that some of the church fathers made that same observation just a few centuries after Paul. They tried to figure out why miracles were so commonplace in Paul’s day (during this apostolic era), whereas in their day they were less frequent.

And here’s what they concluded. They surmised that *God will often use a surge of miracles in a pagan context to spread the gospel quickly, whereas in a culture that is already evangelized, miracles are less prevalent.*⁴⁶ And you know what I think there’s something to that. I don’t know if I’d take a bullet for that theory. I’m not sure that their observation is true in *every* circumstance. But in general, I think they are right.

And once again, as always, God moves in mysterious ways his wonders too perform. Who can know the mind of God (**Isa 40:13; Rom 11:34**)?

I say this, because as a pastor, I’ve seen God do amazing things in the lives of his people. I’ve seen phenomenal answers to prayer throughout my time in ministry. But I’ve also done a lot of funerals. I’ve seen unanswered prayers that led to death.

Several years ago, when Sanja and I were in Croatia, we went to visit with Sanja’s dear friend named Ana. Ana was one of Sanja’s few Christian friends in Croatia. And they had been friends since high school. And Ana had been battling cancer for years. And she was young. She was married, with two small kids. And we (Sanja, her brother, her mom and me) prayed for her so fervently. We prayed and we pleaded with God to spare her life and free her body from cancer.

And we knew, without a doubt, that God could, if he chose to, heal her. But he didn’t. She passed away. Her battle with cancer didn’t end the way that we wanted. But we praise God that it’s over, and that Ana never has to deal with that again.

³⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 534: “It is the same sort of hospitality (*philanthrōpōs*) shown by the *Christians* of Sidon (27:3). Perhaps in this manner Luke was drawing attention to the fact that simple pagan “barbarians” like the Maltese have a genuine potential for becoming Christians. Their hospitality would in any event be in stark contrast with the reception Paul found from the Jews of Rome.”

⁴⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 533–4: “It may well be that this involved a sort of gastric fever caused by a microbe in goat’s milk which was at one time so common on the island that the disorder was named ‘Malta fever.’”

⁴¹ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1052: “The ancient medical texts offer three explanations for the illness: dysentery involves an imbalance of fluids of black bile, the swellings of the body, and fever. As regards the combination of fever and dysentery, Hippocrates asserts, “dysenteries, if accompanied by fever, by variegated stools, or by inflammation of the liver, hypochondrium or belly, or if they are painful, or spoil the appetite or provoke thirst, are all troublesome, and whichever patient has most of these evils dies the soonest, whereas the one who has least of such things has the greatest chances of recovery.”

⁴² JOHN CALVIN: “By praying Paul makes it plain that he is not the one responsible for the miracle, but only the minister, so that God may not be defrauded of his glory.” Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 364.

⁴³ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1053n3126: “This is the only passage in Acts where the laying on of hands is linked with prayer and healing. For the laying on of hands and healing, cf. Mark 5:23; 6:5; 8:23, 25; Acts 9:12, 17; also James 5:13–14.”

⁴⁴ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 744: “Paul the prisoner is still a blessing to those around him, even as he is held unjustly.”

⁴⁵ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 744: “This kind of healing summary recalls descriptions of Jesus (Luke 4:38–44). This is the fifth occurrence of the verb *θεραπεύω* (*therapeuō*) in Acts (4:14; 5:16; 8:7; 17:25). Peter, John, and Philip are the others who heal in Acts.”

⁴⁶ Examples include Justin Martyr (second century), John Chrysostom (fourth century), Augustine (late fourth–early fifth century), and Gregory (sixth century). See also the comments below by later commentators: Bede (eighth century) and Ammonius (late fifth–sixth century).

Now why do I tell you that story? I tell you because “healing” is a very important thing to understand in the Christian life. And we need to be able to discern what’s *descriptive* and *prescriptive* in Scripture. When Paul went to Malta, God did incredible miracles through him. It was like the ministry of Jesus all over again. It was like the early chapters of Acts all over again... People getting healed... Paul gets bit by a viper and survives. HALLELUJAH!!! IT’S AWESOME. And we should celebrate how awesome this is.

But does that mean that God has *prescribed* in his Word that every person we pray for in this world will get healed? No, it doesn’t! Is God promising in this text that we will survive every snakebite and heal every person we pray for, just like Paul did in Malta? I don’t think so. This passage is *descriptive*. It happened. Not *prescriptive*.⁴⁷

You know what helps me with this issue, is reading Paul’s letters. Because there were times when Paul couldn’t heal. The Apostle Paul! I think we like to think of Paul as this guy who could heal on demand. But he told Timothy once to take a little wine to help his stomach issue (1 Tim 5:23). “Why don’t you just heal him, Paul? Come on, man!”

According to **Philippians 2:19–30**, Paul’s friend, Epaphroditus, was sick, and Paul didn’t heal him. Paul even had his own “thorn in the flesh” that he couldn’t heal. “Just heal, yourself, Paul, come on.” It doesn’t work that way.⁴⁸

The reason is this—God’s endgame is not our physical healing or our own personal comfort. That’s not God’s highest goal on planet earth. His highest goal is his own glory. And he’ll use physical healing to attain that goal, especially (it would seem) when that goal involves the salvation of an unsaved people group.⁴⁹

But God is not obligated to heal. In fact, there are times when a “lack of healing” is used to bring glory to God and to bring his saints closer to him. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord (**Job 1:21**).

Now should we pray for healing? Absolutely! And there’s even a provision for that in Scripture. **James 5:14** says, “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” But we don’t present requests for healing to the Lord as ultimatums. We believe that God can heal; we call on him to do that in light of his Word, and then we pray not my will be done but yours, Lord (**Luke 22:42**).⁵⁰

Now let’s get back to the narrative and talk about what happens here with Paul. And as we do that, let me ask the question, “Why would God do so many incredible things through Paul in Malta?” And here’s my answer. Even though the text doesn’t say for sure, my guess is that God used these miracles on this island-nation to save the souls of these natives. These barbarians!

I mean, these islanders thought Paul was a god! They probably rejoiced every day that this guy shipwrecked on their island. And it gave Paul the perfect opportunity to say, “No, I’m not a god. I’m a human

⁴⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1057: “Christians do not always survive storms at sea, or shipwrecks, or snakebites.

But Christians can rest assured that God’s control over history, seen here in the survival of Paul, is a reality with which they can reckon in their own lives, knowing that God will surely fulfill his purposes—whether through rescue from life-threatening situations, through the ability to persevere in suffering, or through the provision of courage to face death. Paul knows that no matter what happens in the lives of believers who trust God and his son Jesus Christ, they can rest assured that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Rom 8:28).”

⁴⁸ BEDE: “Why did [Paul] heal a sick unbeliever by prayer, when he restored Timothy, one of the sick believers, by the art of medicine, and Trophimus, another sick believer, he left entirely? Was it not because this outsider had to be healed by a miracle since he was not inwardly alive, while those who were living with inner health had no need [of healing]?” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 313–4.

⁴⁹ AMMONIUS: “Dysentery is a difficult disease to cure. He, who received healing from Paul, led many to faith. Therefore miracles are mostly performed among and for unbelievers.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 314.

⁵⁰ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1057: “Through his depiction of the perils of the sea journey with the storm and the shipwreck and the snake attack, Luke may have wanted his readers to recognize the perils of their own situation as Christian believers surrounded by enemies both in Jewish synagogues and in pagan society.”

being just like you. I'm a sinner just like you. But I know the *true God* of the universe. He has forgiven my sins. And you know what? You can know him too. You can have your sins forgiven too.”⁵¹

Church history would tell us that this guy Publius from Malta may have become the first pastor of the church in Malta.⁵² Church history would also tell us that the whole island of Malta eventually converted to Christianity after Paul's visit.⁵³ In fact, they still call the bay where Paul probably shipwrecked “St. Paul's Bay.” You can go and visit this place in Malta today.⁵⁴



St. Paul's Bay, Malta

In fact, I've heard that all the venomous snakes are now extinct on the island. So you don't even have to worry about venomous snakebites if you travel there. Pretty sweet, eh!

So that's what God did in Malta while his promise to Paul was *on pause*. And verse 10 says:

¹⁰ They also honored⁵⁵ us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.

And finally, here's the last scene of this passage.

3) A Promise on **Arrival** (28:11–16)

¹¹ After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods⁵⁶ as a figurehead.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Kindle Edition, chapter 40: “Perhaps many [Maltese] found Christ in those following months on Malta. Sometimes storms come so that others will look beyond us to Christ.”

⁵² MacArthur, *Acts*, vol 2, MNTC, 363: “According to tradition, the church on Malta dates from this time, with Publius as its first pastor.”

⁵³ EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA: “The apostle Paul, being one of those whom this passage prophesies, took a course through the sea on his way to Rome, and when he was shipwrecked on the island called Malta he worked a miracle of great astonishment to the inhabitants, and by healing the physically ill, he so amazed the onlookers that he plundered many and drew them to the salvific teaching.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 311.

⁵⁴ CHRYSOSTOM thinks that the Maltese leaders became Christians quickly and showed fruit of conversion before Paul left the island: “It is clear that their hosts, who afforded them such hospitality, also received the word of the preaching. For they would not have been treated so kindly for three days had their hosts not believed strongly and shown the fruits of conversion.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 314.

⁵⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 535n67: “It has been argued that the ‘honor’ (τιμὰς) heaped on the Christians (v. 10) actually consisted of honoraria, of fees paid for medical services. The word τιμὴ can certainly have the meaning of a payment or fee (cf. Acts 5:2; 1 Tim 5:17), but the emphasis is on the hospitality of the Maltese and on the divine healing ministry through Paul—not on Luke's practice of his medical profession.”

⁵⁶ MARTIN LUTHER: “Saint Paul . . . sat in a ship on which the twin gods were painted or carved. He went on board and did not bother about them at all. He did not tear them down. Why must Luke describe the twin gods at this point? Without a doubt he wanted to show that outward things can do no harm to faith, if only the heart does not cleave to them or put its trust in them. This we must preach and teach, and let the Word alone do the work, as said before.” Quoted in Chung-Kim et al., eds., *Acts*, RCS, 364.

⁵⁷ Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1054: “Luke adds the curious detail that the ship's was a representation of the Dioscuri carved on the bow, from which the ship took its name (the Dioscuri). The Dioscuri (Διόσκουροι), the ‘sons of Zeus’ (Δίος κοῦροι), the twins of Leda, were known under different names in Greek mythology. They were called upon as helpers in distress, particularly by seamen who regarded their epiphany as a stellar constellation (the Gemini Castor and Pollux) as a sign of help. Their cult was widespread, both in Greece and in Italy. Their most characteristic attribute is the horse; other attributes are lance and sword, piloi (egg-shaped, black felt skullcaps), and stars. Seen in the context of Paul's conviction that “gods made with hands are not gods” (19:26), the Dioscuri are mere wooden figures attached to the bow of the ship, not living beings capable of action, in contrast to the true and living God (θεὸς ζῶν; 14:15); they are ‘useless mythological brothers’ who ‘offered their protection to a ship that safely overwintered’ on Malta while Paul was saved by the living God.”

So Paul stayed on the island for three months healing people and witnessing. Finally they decided to start heading for Rome. So they board an Alexandrian ship and they take off.⁵⁸

¹² Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days.

You can see on the map where Syracuse is on the southeast corner of Sicily. Here's Paul's journey from Malta all the way north to Rome.



Paul's Final Leg to Rome: From Malta to Rome⁵⁹

This final leg of Paul's journey to Rome had less drama than the previous leg.

Look at **verse 13**.

¹³ And from [Syracuse] we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up,⁶⁰ and on the second day we came to Puteoli.⁶¹

Sounds very Italian, doesn't it?⁶²

¹⁴ There we found brothers⁶³ and were invited to stay with them for seven days.⁶⁴ And so we came to Rome.⁶⁵ ¹⁵ And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us.⁶⁶

"Hey Paul. Good to see you. How was your trip, man? Did you have any trouble getting here?"

"Yeah, storms, shipwrecks, and snakebites. No biggie!"

These destinations ("the Forum of Appius" and "Three Taverns") were about 40 miles south of Rome. Rome didn't have a harbor, so Paul had to walk with his entourage about 150 miles from Puteoli to Rome.⁶⁷ But

⁵⁸ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 744–5: "The critical part of the journey is the sixty miles to Sicily in open seas and then a largely protected sail along the eastern coast of Sicily and up the southwestern coast of Italy. It is a 210-mile journey to Rome from where they are starting out."

⁵⁹ Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), January 1, 2026. Some geographical points added by author.

⁶⁰ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 190: "They were able to enjoy southerly winds coming from the Sahara Desert in North Africa, which would have eliminated the threat of dangerous thunderstorms. The gentle breezes of the Mediterranean would now serve them, rather than assault them, and lead their vessel toward its final destination."

⁶¹ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT 745–6: "Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli), a port just over 200 miles northwest of Rhegium in the Bay of Naples, 8 miles northwest of Neapolis (Naples) and about 130 miles south of Rome. This was the main port for grain in the country."

⁶² Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1055: "It appears that in the late first century passengers disembarked at Puteoli and traveled overland to Rome, while the cargo of grain was taken to Portus, the new harbor at Ostia built by Claudius at the mouth of the Tiber river."

⁶³ Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 191: "How had Christianity made it to Puteoli? Here is a reminder that the advancement of the gospel did not rest upon the shoulders of Paul alone. The hero of Acts is not Paul or Peter. It is God himself, who powerfully advanced the gospel throughout the known world. God has more zeal for kingdom work than any of the greatest missionaries in Christian history. The mission of the gospel rises above any one individual. God did not need Paul. He does not need you. He does, however, summon all his people to join in the mission of salvation. Christians, by God's grace, have the glorious opportunity to join God in his kingdom work and be used by him as his ambassadors."

⁶⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 546n72: "As in Rome, Christianity may have made its first inroads in the Jewish synagogues of Puteoli. There is known to have been an extensive Jewish community there."

⁶⁵ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 537: "In a real sense v. 14b ['And so we came to Rome'] can be considered as the climax to the entire Book of Acts."

⁶⁶ Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Kindle Edition, chapter 41: "From there they walked the 140 miles to Rome. About forty-three miles outside Rome the most wonderful thing happened — Christian brothers and sisters came out to greet him at the Market of Appius. Another ten miles closer, at 'the Three Taverns,' yet others greeted him. A joyous throng marched the remaining distance along the Appian Way to the so-called Eternal City."

these “brothers” from Rome, these Christians who are anxiously anticipating Paul’s visit travel down 40 miles, a two days’ journey at least, to meet him near Three Taverns.⁶⁸ That’s quite a journey! But as you know, Paul was quite a man! And he was beloved by these churches, even though they had never met him before!⁶⁹

And the end of **verse 15** sums up all of the emotion and all of the exhilaration that Paul would have felt after finally getting to Rome after all these years.⁷⁰

*On seeing them [the brothers who came down from Rome], Paul thanked God and took courage.*⁷¹

Paul’s been trying to get to Rome for years. Paul wrote the book of **Romans** at least three years before this event. And three years is nothing compared to Abraham. Abraham and Sarah had to wait twenty-five years for the birth of Isaac (see **Gen 12:4; 21:5**)!

But now, it’s finally happening for Paul. And Paul thanked God and took courage.

¹⁶ *And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.*⁷²

Paul’s journeys in the book of **Acts** finally come to an end. He’s been on the move since his conversion in Damascus. And even before that when he was persecution Christians! But now, at long last, he’s reached his final destination in this book.⁷³ He’s finally made it to Rome.

A promise threatened, a promise delayed, and finally a promised realized. God gets it done. It may have been more difficult and delayed than Paul would have liked. But God gets it done. God always gets it done!

Is God faithful with his promises, church? Does God follow through on his promises? The whole world may pass away. Every single thing in your life may seem like it’s conspiring against God and his promises. Every single person in your life may cast aspersion on the God whom you serve. But God will get done what he has promised to get done.

John Macarthur said this once: “Governments make promises and break them. Nations make promises and break them. Advertisers make promises and break them. Politicians make promises and break them. Preachers make promises and break them... husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, moms, dads, uncles, aunts, friends, enemies, everybody.”⁷⁴ Let’s face it. You and me, we’ve all made promises ourselves and didn’t keep them. Right? But there is *One* who makes promises and never, never breaks them. And he is the Lord.

You might say, “Well what are some of his promises, Tony?” Well I shared a few of them with you last time, but let me add a few more to that list:

1) Comfort in the midst of affliction (2 Cor 1:3–4; Ps 34:18)

⁶⁷ Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 746: “They are now a five-day walk from Rome by means of two well-traveled roads, the Campanian Way and the Appian Way. The latter route, which entered Rome from the south next to the Circus Maximus, was where many Jews lived in ancient Rome (Juvenal, *Satires* 3.10–16). Known as an area of light forest, the end of this route later became the location of the Christian catacombs, where persecuted Christians were buried in underground graves.”

⁶⁸ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 537: “Probably there were several house churches in Rome, and the two groups represented different congregations. This is the only mention of the Roman Christians in Acts.”

⁶⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 536: “The edict of Claudius, to which Luke referred in 18:2, dealt with a dispute in the Jewish community of Rome that seems to have involved Christ and is evidence that the gospel had already reached Italy by A.D. 49.”

⁷⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 536: “It is remarkable how completely Julius and Paul’s Roman guards have disappeared from the narrative since the end of chap. 27. Perhaps this indicates the great amount of freedom Paul enjoyed under his privileged custody and the high degree of trust he had established with his Roman guards.”

⁷¹ CHRYSOSTOM: “Observe, if you please, how Paul himself was affected in a human way. ‘On seeing them,’ it says, ‘he took courage.’ In spite of all the miracles he had worked, the sight of the brothers still afforded him assistance. From this we learn that he received comfort and its opposite as other people do.” Quoted in Martin and Smith, eds., *Acts*, ACCS, 315.

⁷² Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 535: “From his Damascus conversion on, Paul is depicted in Acts as continually on the move. In this passage his travels finally came to an end.”

⁷³ This is not Paul’s final destination in life, though. He continues to travel. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 747: “The book of Acts ends without telling us how the hearing before Nero turned out. Good evidence exists for the fact that Paul was released at this point and headed west. Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist.* 2.22.1–7) says that Paul was twice imprisoned in Rome and was martyred after the second imprisonment (1 Clem. 5.5–7). This may have included an “exile” to the west.”

⁷⁴ From his sermon on Ephesians 1:11–14, “Divine Promises Guaranteed,” Grace to You, 02-05-78:

www.gty.org/resources/sermons/1905/divine-promises-guaranteed

2 Corinthians 1:3–4 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” **Psalm 34:19** says also, “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted.”

2) Salvation by faith (Rom 10:9)

Romans 10:9 says, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

3) Our completion and sanctification (Phil 1:6)

God promises that he will complete the work he started in us (namely our sanctification).

Philippians 1:6 says, “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

4) The daily forgiveness of our sins (1 John 1:9)

1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

5) To hears our prayers (Heb 4:14–16; 1 John 5:14–15)

The Apostle John writes in 1 John 5:14–15, “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”

The author of Hebrews writes that since Jesus is our great high priest, “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

6) Rest for weary souls

Matthew 11:28–29 says, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

And one more. I could on, but I’ll stop here. You guys add to this list on your own.

7) Imperishable bodies to come

1 Corinthians 15:50–55 says, “I tell you this, brothers... We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye... For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’

‘O death, where is your victory?’

O death, where is your sting?’”

You might say, “That’s great Tony. I can’t wait for that day. But what do I do in the meantime?” “What do I do right now while I’m waiting on those promises to be fulfilled?” Listen! Hear me on this. You just hold on. You just endure. You claim the promises of God and serve him and wait on him. And you trust him. Just like Paul did all the way to Rome.

There’s an old proverbial chestnut that goes like this: “The next mile is the only one a person really has to make.” Don’t worry about the whole voyage... just get through the next mile. Don’t worry about next week, just make it through this week.

By the way, my goal in preaching, by the way, isn’t for you to get enough to last the next year or two. My goal is really more modest than that. I’m just hoping to encourage you through God’s Word for the next week. And then we’ll come back here together next Sunday and we’ll get fed and well get fired up for the next week. That’s what endurance looks like. That’s it.

So, church, you just go this week and trust God and hold fast to his promises. Serve him faithfully. And I’ll see you here next week and we’ll do this again. Amen? Alright, let’s pray together.