

# ACTS

## Chapter 28

### Note from Kathy

*Prejudice is defined as, an opinion or decision of mind, formed without due examination of the facts. So often our preconceived ideas separate us. Whose plan is this do you suppose? Our enemy, the devil, longs to separate us by whatever means possible so that the gospel cannot be heard and welcomed. As believers our life should be lived in such a way that others can easily see Jesus. As you study Acts 28, be aware of the prejudice shown Paul and how he responded to it.*



### Observation

1. This chapter identifies the island where Paul and all those who had been shipwrecked along with him had taken refuge. What was the name of the island? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How were they and Paul treated by the islanders?
3. These shipwrecked men were wet and cold. It had been raining on them for two weeks. The number one priority was a fire, so they can warm themselves. What happened as Paul gathered wood?
4. What assumption or prejudice did the witnesses jump to when they saw this potentially fatal attack?
5. How did Paul respond?
6. What was the expected outcome for Paul?

#### Acts 28:3-5

*Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. <sup>4</sup> When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live."<sup>5</sup> But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects.*

Acts 28:7-11

There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days.<sup>8</sup> His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him.<sup>9</sup> When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.<sup>10</sup> They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.<sup>11</sup> After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island—it was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux.

Acts 28:14-16

There we found some brothers and sisters who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome.<sup>15</sup> The brothers and sisters there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these people Paul thanked God and was encouraged.<sup>16</sup> When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.

Acts 28:19-21

The Jews objected, so I was compelled to make an appeal to Caesar. I certainly did not intend to bring any charge against my own people.<sup>20</sup> For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.<sup>21</sup> They replied, "We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you."

7. What happened that surprised the islanders and all who were with Paul that day?
8. Publius was the governor of the island of Malta. He must have lived on a very large estate. Scripture says he welcomed them into his home. While they were there, Publius' father was gravely ill. Paul went to see him, and he prayed for the man. What was the outcome for Publius' father?
9. For the rest of their time on the island, who came to see Paul?
10. After a few months the weather improved and the centurion Julius secured their passage on an Alexandrian ship. How was the ship described? (You may want to Google this ship.)
11. Mark the stops made by this Alexandrian ship from Malta to Rome.



12. What was the reaction of the believers Paul met in Puteoli?
13. Finally, Paul arrived in Rome. Since there were no real criminal charges that could be reported and possibly even on the recommendation of Julius, what amount of freedom was Paul given?
14. Paul is in Rome, but it grieves him to take a matter such as this before a Roman court. Notice the sensitivity Paul shows to those who have opposed him so very often. He does not want his people embarrassed or put to shame before the Roman leaders. He calls for the Jewish leaders of the area to reason with them. What did these Jewish leaders say about the matter?

■ Acts 28:23-25

*They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. <sup>24</sup> Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. <sup>25</sup> They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet..."*

15. When the appointed day came for the Jewish men to hear Paul, the crowd had gotten even larger. What message did Paul share with these men? What was his purpose in sharing?
16. What was the response to Paul's message?
17. Paul witnessed to them from morning until evening using the words of the prophets to prove his point. How long did Paul stay in this rented house and welcoming his visitors?

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## Application

1. Paul and all those with him had spent weeks lost at sea in a terrible storm, and they were soaked from their swim to shore. They were met with great kindness when they reached the island of Malta. The islanders came out to help these strangers in need. How are you at seeing the needs around you?  
  
Think of the last time you met a need for someone you did not know. What was the circumstance?
2. As Paul picked up wood for the fire a snake latched onto his hand in full view of all those gathered. Immediately the islanders jumped to the conclusion that Paul must have been a murderer because fate had ruled against him. It is easy to do this same thing when we witness an event and assume we have all the facts. Paul jumped to a deadly conclusion about "believers" before Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. Take a moment to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you if you're making any assumptions or jumping to any conclusions in your life at this time, about others or yourself, or possibly even your heavenly Father. What steps can we take to ensure we do not jump to false conclusions or make incorrect assumptions about others, ourselves or God?
3. Reversing the above scenario, have others jumped to incorrect conclusions about you? How did it make you feel? How did you handle it?
4. Acts 28:7 tells us the chief official on the island welcomed Paul into his home and showed him generous hospitality for three days. What do you believe this "generous hospitality" included?

The last time you showed generous hospitality, did it require some type of sacrifice on your part?

5. While Paul was staying with Publius, the chief official's father was seriously ill. Paul went to see him and pray for him. What do you suppose Paul prayed that moved the Lord to heal him?

When you visit the sick, do you pray with them? If you do, what do you pray, and, more importantly, do you believe without doubt that your prayer to the Lord could bring the same result that Paul's did?

Billy Graham said, "To pray in faith means that I believe God can, and I believe God will, insofar as it's consistent with His glory, because God is good." Another example of this kind of unquestioning faith is found in John 2, when Mary, the mother of Jesus, who had not seen Jesus work any miracles at this point, turned to the servants and said, "Do whatever he asks you to do." This is a good word for us today. Do you have a need? Take it to the Lord in prayer believing, then go and do whatever he asks you to do.

That question prompted me to stop just now and pray with boldness and authority. I am asking God to move in the heart of one I care very much about. I am asking for a miraculous healing. Perhaps you would like to take a minute to pray to God for a miraculous physical, mental or spiritual healing for someone. Our Father is listening.

#### Exodus 15:22-26

*Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water.*

*<sup>23</sup> When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) <sup>24</sup> So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" <sup>25</sup> Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink. There the LORD issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test. <sup>26</sup> He said, "If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."*

#### James 5:16

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

6. The Jews had many names for God. Jehova-Rapha means "the Lord heals." God's names reveal his character. Read Exodus 15:22-26. What are the conditions and the promise given to his children the Israelites in this passage?

What do you believe God is trying to teach them?

Has God changed?

What do you believe God desires of his children today?

7. James 5:16 reminds us that, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." Our most powerful resource is prayer. Our God is able to do more than we could ever imagine. Prayer should be a believers first option. Why do you believe we so often try everything else first?

Go back and read James 5:16. What is our part?

What does God require of us?

8. This time the sailors used a bit more common sense. They stayed three months in Malta and then boarded an Alexandrian ship headed to Rome. They did not resume their journey until the weather was better for the voyage. Do you think the figurehead on the ship had anything

to do with why they chose this ship?

As believers placing our confidence and hope in anything other than God is called \_\_\_\_\_. Trusting in anything other than the sovereign God of the universe shows a lack of knowledge of God. Be prepared to discuss in your small groups what you know about God that qualifies him as the one worthy of our confidence and hope.

9. As Paul continues his journey to Rome he meets some believers and once again he is offered gracious hospitality. How do you think Paul feels meeting with these fellow believers?

Have you ever visited a church while on a trip and been met by amazing brothers and sisters in the faith?

Were you surprised?

Where were you, and why was it surprising?

10. Paul finally arrived in Rome. Instead of being taken to the prison he was permitted to live by himself in a rented home with one soldier watching him. Share with your group a time you experienced a bit more freedom than you had expected, simply because of the way you have lived your life before others?

Do you think your personal values gained favor for you from those in authority over you? If yes, which values do you believe garnered their favor—integrity, honesty, loyalty, respectfulness, humility, responsibility, compassion, fairness, authenticity, courage, generosity, perseverance, kindness, reliability, self-discipline or something else?

11. Despite the horrific treatment by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, Paul did not want his Jewish brothers and sisters to be portrayed negatively or disgraced in front of the Romans. He tried to reason with the Jewish leaders in Rome. He told them he had committed no crimes against the Jewish customs or law. It was within the power of the Jews in Jerusalem to drop the charges if they were so inclined. Think of the last time you were treated unfairly. To what lengths would you go to spare your accusers? If the opportunity presented itself, would you retaliate or continue to reason in order to work things out?

■ Romans 12:17-19

*Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.<sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

■ 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.<sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.<sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.<sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

■ Proverbs 20:22

*Do not say, "I'll pay you back for this wrong!" Wait for the LORD, and he will avenge you.*

12. As a child of God, we should know what his word says about dealing with others. Read Romans 12:17-19, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and Proverbs 20:22 in the sidebar. These are just a few of the verses we could recall in order to have a Christ-like response to harassment and persecution. Write a brief paragraph expressing your desire to be obedient to God in this area. Jot down any other verses that speak to this subject.

13. Paul's words did not fall on deaf ears. Some were convinced but others would not believe. The final blow came in verse 25 when he mentioned God's great love for and inclusion of the Gentiles for salvation. Sadly, some prejudices are difficult to move past. Paul did not get angry. The scripture said he was there for two full years and welcomed everyone who came to see him. How are you at handling prejudice?

When faced with an unreasonable prejudice do you get angry and write the person or persons off, or are you able to welcome them back and try to help them see the truth about Jesus?

Are you willing to live in such a way that others can see the difference Jesus has made in your heart?

Matthew 16:25 tells us, "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

Discuss in your small group how we can be more successful at obeying Matthew 16:25. All change is a process. Christian author Jan Johnson suggests in an article that we start simple and, "Ask God how you might deny yourself a little every day."