

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

by

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CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

AMONG BARBARIANS AND ON TO ROME

(Acts 28:1-16)

OUTLINE

Key verse - 28

On the island of Melita - treated kindly - bitten by a viper - Publius' father healed - Paul honored - they sail toward Rome - with brethren in Puteoli - trusted in Rome.

1. The mysterious manner in which God awakens men from their superstition.
2. God brings His own into favor.
3. Christ rewards those who honor His disciples.
4. The value of encouragement by brethren in the hour of need.
5. The mystery of God's providential guidance.

After the shipwreck Paul and his fellow voyagers spent the winter in the island of Melita. It was a little over three months after they were cast upon the island before they reached Rome. There can be little doubt that the island upon which they landed is now known as Malta. It fills the conditions accurately. In the storm the sailors were not able to discern their location until after they had landed.

TREATED KINDLY

Though escaping only with their lives and witnessing the destruction of their ship, they were glad to be on firm land again. The storm continued after they had reached the land and the rain still poured from the sky. They were wet and cold. They were too badly worn from the voyage to spend much time watching the breakers lash the ship and tear her to pieces. They wanted to get warmed and dried. That natives were called barbarians because they spoke a different language. They did not act like barbarians. The natives, though unacquainted with these mariners, would likely recognize the sign upon their ship and the costume of the sailors and soldiers and know whence they came. At any rate they showed them a place where they would find shelter and kindled a fire for them. Paul was soon at work gathering sticks as he had no doubt done of many occasions when on his journeys that he might warm himself by a fire. They must have been chilled to the bone. The soldiers had likely taken the chains off the prisoners so that they could swim to the shore and it is not probable that they were bound at this time.

Paul would show them that he was still seeing their welfare and they need have no fear because he was loose. He was, as through all his Christian life, ministering to others and not sparing himself.

BITTEN BY A VIPER

Paul seemed to suffer on this occasion for his efforts. As he threw a bundle of sticks on the fire, a viper, roused at once by the heat, leaped out and struck at his hand. So deeply were its fangs imbedded in his flesh that it hung from his hand until he shook it back into the fire.

A REBEL! NO, A GOD!

The natives were superstitious. There were likely guards watching the men who were prisoners. Perhaps the clothing of the men would indicate who were prisoners. The people watched Paul closely to see the result. They said among themselves, **“No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live”** (Acts 28:4). They thought the god of justice was pursuing him. They expected to see the swelling begin in his arm and spread over his body, or that the poison would take effect so suddenly that he would fall down dead. But for this they looked in vain. After they had looked a long while and found no harm came to Paul they concluded that he was a god.

WHY DISCREDIT THE RECORD?

Some modern writers have discredited this part of the record because they say there are no snakes now found in Malta. But today Malta is a densely populated island. It is said there are few places, except in our great cities, where there are so many people according to the area. One might, therefore, as well deny that there were ever Indians in New York, or wolves in Seattle, because there are none there today. Civilization makes vast changes in every land.

Here we have the fulfillment, in one instance, of the promise which Christ made to His disciples, as a mark of their faith:

“They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:18).

PUBLIUS' HOSPITALITY

Near where the wreck occurred, Publius, the governor of the island, had possessions. Malta was regarded as a part of the province of Sicily and was governed by a man appointed by the praetor of Sicily. This man was hospitable to the shipwrecked mariners. He received some of them into his own house and entertained them for three days. After the fearful weeks of tempest and fasting, the rest and food which they received in the quiet of Publius' house would be greatly welcomed.

HIS FATHER HEALED

Again Paul was ready to lend a helping hand. The father of Publius was very ill of a fever and dysentery. Paul went to the side of the old man and spoke kindly to him. He could likely understand what Paul said. Publius could certainly understand Paul, for both, being Romans, must have spoken the Latin language. Paul kneeled down by the side of the father of Publius, prayed, and laying his hands on him healed him. Publius and his father would be astonished to find that the fever and the disease had left at once. The natives and the sailors saw another proof of God's power. Paul would explain that it was not through his own power that he was able to cure diseases, but that it was by the power of Jesus Christ. The news would soon spread over the whole island concerning this great healer, and others who had diseases came and were healed.

PAUL HONORED

Paul was honored, as a result of these miracles, and all those who were with him. Not only while they remained on the island, but when they sailed they were given abundance for their wants. The sailors had lost their cargo, the soldiers had probably lost their gold; but Paul had not lost his faith, and through the exercise of it all other things were supplied.

BLESSING IN DELAY

God had some object in this delay. In the day when the Books are opened it will probably be revealed that there were those among these sailors and soldiers whom God had revealed Himself, and their enforced stay with Paul for three months would enable Him to demonstrate by miracle, and convince by teaching, that Jesus Christ was Lord and Saviour to a lost world. They, as messengers who traveled up and down through the world, would have an opportunity to carry the Gospel to various parts of the world. The name of Paul and the Gospel which he preached would not soon be forgotten in this far off island, and very likely many would be won to Christ from their midst. Thus God had a mission for Paul on the way to Rome.

It is quite possible that Paul put in part of his time in helping make and repair sails in the harbor, as ships which lay in winter quarters were preparing to sail again in the spring. He may have earned money in this way which he used to hire a house when he reached Rome.

SAIL ON THE CASTOR AND POLLUX

As Haman, who after the defeat of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) at Salamis, where he thought Zeus had protected Athens by her wooden walls, would not instigate another attack, even against a small enemy, without first casting the lot and finding a day, as he supposed, that was propitious according to the will of the gods; so the shipwrecked sailors on Melita would not undertake another voyage, though it should be short, except under the direct patronage of Castor and Pollux, the Dioscuri, or Twin Gods of the Sea. The centurion chose, as the vessel on which they were to complete their voyage, a ship which had painted on her prow, "The Twin Brothers,"

Castor and Pollux. The sailors held to the superstition that if these gods came on board a ship she would weather any storm and come safely into harbor. Epictetus, a Roman philosopher, who was born about this time, said later, "Be mindful of God, call him to be thy helper and defender, as men call upon the Dioscuri in a storm" (*Epictetus Enchiridion*, 33).

TO PUTEOLI

It was a short sail from Malta to Syracuse, on the coast of Sicily, where they landed and remained for three days. Paul would probably find an opportunity to preach to the Jews there during that time. They may have been waiting for a favorable wind at Syracuse, but as it did not arise they sailed, and after much tacking arrived at Rhegium, which is upon the "toe" of Italy. After one day a south wind blew, and, under full sail, the ship plowed through the sea and the next day entered the bay of Naples, the most splendid bay of the Roman world. As they turned into this bay, in which lay the city and harbor of Puteoli, there appeared before them a magnificent scene. Right before them stood the mountain of Vesuvius. It presented a very different scene than that which it does today, for up the side of the mountain almost to its summit there stretched vineyard after vineyard. To the right lay the city of Pompeii with its beautiful streets, and to the left the elegant villas of Herculanium. The white temples which gleamed in the sun, rather than offering protection to these wealthy cities, were centers of vice. Within thirty years they would know the vengeance of a Greater than the Roman gods, when they lay covered with ashes and lava which poured from the burning mountain.

ON LAND AGAIN

As they sailed on northward past Herculaneum, rounded the promontory and swung into the harbor of Puteoli, Paul could see what interested him more than even the great Vesuvius and the cities which lay at its base, namely, the gleam of the paved road which wound up over the hills leading to Rome. When the soldiers and their prisoners stepped off the ship upon the great twenty-five arched pier at Puteoli, though still one hundred and forty-one miles from Rome, they had ended their long and perilous voyage, and would travel overland to the Imperial City.

WITH BRETHREN IN PUTEOLI

In view of all that Paul had gained for the soldiers in Malta, and of the high respect in which he was held by the centurion, we need not be surprised that, prisoner though he was, when he found brethren in Puteoli, he was permitted to remain with them for seven days. It would be a blessed seven days for the Christians in Puteoli to meet with Paul and hear him tell of his recent voyage and shipwreck and how God had been with him and honored his message in Melita. Then going back over his past experiences before he was a prisoner he would tell them of the great things God had enabled him to do, and how rapidly the church was spreading in many lands and cities throughout the world. Though Paul had seen and experienced enough to do the average man for a life time, during the past six months, yet there was nothing which would so interest him or refresh his heart as the little church here in Puteoli. He would not pass it by without stopping and spending a week with the disciples. Most men would have desired to spend the seven days in

examining the great stone pier, thirteen of whose arches still remain; or to have inquired into the commercial life of the busy city; or to have taken a little boat across the bay to Pompeii and Herculaneum; or to have climbed to the top of Vesuvius and looked down over the vineyards, temples and theatres; or to have gone into some of the theatres and watched the games. Not so with Paul; he was first and always interested in one thing, the building up of the Church of Christ. The week's delay at Puteoli would give time for word to reach Rome of Paul's coming.

“SO WE CAME TO ROME”

These are the words of Luke as they left Puteoli. Though Paul had been much on the sea, had been in three shipwrecks before the recent one, yet he was naturally a landsman and it must have been with a feeling of relief that he knew the sea voyage was over, and he was tramping up over the hills of the Consular Way within a few days march of Rome. Before they had scarcely completed a day's march on the way to Capua, they would see, stretching up the hills from the right and joining their own road, the greatest and most famous Roman road in the world, the Appian Way, over which they would travel the remainder of the journey. When they had trudged on for several days, had crossed the Pontine Marshes, and had come to The Market of Appius, the traveler's resting place, Paul's heart would leap within him and new thankfulness and courage would come into his soul as he saw a group of Christian brethren hastening to greet him. They had come the forty-three miles from Rome to welcome their friend and father in the faith, and to form an escort to bring him into the great Capital City of the world. They would be greatly pleased to see that the soldiers treated Paul with such respect and were willing to allow him to walk and talk with his friends.

Ten miles farther on, at a place called The Three Taverns, other friends from Rome had come to meet Paul. Who were these children of the Faith who had come so far to meet him? We are not told their names, but we suppose that Aquila and Priscilla would be there, friends who had already risked their lives for Paul's sake: **“Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles”** (Romans 16:3, 4). Timothy would probably be there and Paul's well-beloved Epaenetus, Andronicus his relative, Amplias, Urbane, Stachys, and Herodian another relative, and perhaps many others whom he names in the salutation of his letter to the Romans. It would be no formal kiss of welcome that these dear friends would give Paul as they rejoiced to see his face in their midst and almost at Rome. They were sorry that Paul was in chains, but they were not ashamed of him because of them.

IN SIGHT OF ROME

What they talked of by the way we are not told. Paul's eye would catch the gleam of the marble towers and monuments which lined the road on either hand to keep in memory the names of the noble Romans whose tombs they marked. He would see the great aqueduct with its thousand arches, which conveyed the water to the city from the distant hills across the plain. As he was told of the thousands of slaves who had toiled to build it, he would sigh with a desire that he might bring the Gospel of liberty and light to them. When they had crossed over the shoulder of the Alban Mount, Paul could see down the road which stretched straight as an arrow twelve

miles before him, the city of Rome, her marble temples and Imperial Palace, her great walls, amphitheatre, forum and baths. Some one would probably tell him about the young Emperor Nero, and how he was beginning to kill any whom he imagined had given him a slight offence, of how during the past year he had taken the life of his mother, Agrippina, and how he kept trained gladiators simply for the amusement of seeing them kill one another.

His friend would also tell him of the great number of slaves that Nero had brought from great distances, as from Britain, Africa, Syria and Spain, until now in Rome there were as many slaves as there were freemen. Another would probably point out the sacred stream of Almo, as they passed over it, down which, the Romans believed, the infants Romulus and Remus had floated in their little basket into the river Tiber to the foot of the hill where they founded the city of Rome. Particularly, his friends would point out the palaces of the Caesars which had been built by Tiberius and Caligula, and in which Nero had lived. He had never seen so great a city before with her two million of thronging people.

NOT ARCHITECTURE BUT CHRIST

But while all these subjects would interest Paul, they would not be the principal subject of conversation as he walked with his friends toward Rome.

More than the monuments of the great and noble would interest him the lives of the disciples of Christ in the midst of heathen surroundings. More than the vast amount of merchandise which flowed in a constant stream through the harbors of Puteoli, Brudusium and Ostia into Rome, he would be concerned with the possibility of sending through these harbors and along all the great highways out from Rome the Bread of Life to be distributed in all the nations, cities and hamlets of the world. More than the great aqueduct which bore the water into the city, he would be interested in the organization of a church through which might be borne the Water of Life to every man, woman and child within it.

More than the gleaming temple of Hercules, he would be taken up with the evangelization of the men and women whose bodies would be temples of the Holy Spirit, but which temples at that moment were being defiled with the vilest of sins, even within and about the temple where they then worshipped. More than to liberate from human slavery, oppressive as that institution was, Paul had come to Rome to tell her people of a more terrible slavery and a more harrowing master than Nero, and of a way to find liberty for the lowest and weakest of the oppressed. More than in Romulus and Remus and the founding of ancient Rome, the apostle was endeavoring to lead men and women to become citizens of a city which hath foundations and of which there will be no decay, whose builder and maker is God.

More than raising sentiment against the cruelty of Nero, prisoner though Paul was, he was eager to propagate the Gospel of the love of Jesus Christ, which he knew had power to subdue cruel monsters like Nero and make them as humble as little children. More than in the great palace of the Caesars and the kingdom whose center was Rome, Paul was occupied in the heralding of a kingdom which was destined to overshadow all other kingdoms, the head of which was and is, the King of kings and Lord of Lords.

THE TEST OF YEARS

Was Paul merely an idealist whose fanciful visions would die and drift away with the autumn leaves? The searching test of almost two thousand years ought to furnish a reliable answer. That kingdom which Paul preached has spread so far over the earth that the empire of Rome would only make a little section within it. When today the kingdom of Rome is only a name in history, the kingdom of Christ is spreading out into the far off islands of the sea and coming to be the dominating factor in the greatest nations of the world. Slavery was one of the greatest institutions of Rome, but the Gospel of liberty, which Paul preached, has driven slavery from every civilized nation on the face of the earth. Though, long since, the throne of the Caesars has decayed, the name of Paul is known in almost every nation under Heaven. Though Nero than held Paul in chains, today the name of Paul is honored and the name of Nero is held in execration.

TRUSTED IN ROME

When Paul reached Rome and had been led up the Caelian Hill to the camp of the Foreign Legion, Julius delivered him up together with the other prisoners to the commander of the camp. In doing so he evidently explained to the captain the trustworthiness and respect in which he had held Paul, and the benefit to the Emperor's soldiers that he had been; for he allowed him, from the first, to remain in a separate lodging with a soldier that kept him. There he had the privilege of seeing and talking with all friends whom he wished to see.

Let us now turn from this interesting account to some of the lessons which we find in it.

MANNER IN WHICH GOD AWAKENS MEN

The mysterious manner in which God often awakens men from their superstition is worthy of study. The Maltese who saw the viper leap upon the hand of Paul reached the hasty conclusion that he was a murderer. Then in a little while they came to the very opposite conclusion, that he was a god. When he healed the father of Publius he was regarded as having divine powers, and perhaps the word spread over the island that a god had come down in the likeness of man, as the people had said some years before when Paul was at Lystra.

As in the experience of Paul, so today, the superstition and prejudice which holds the Christian missionary at a distance is usually overcome by some ministration to the body. The Christian physician has therefore, a very important place in missionary work in gaining a hearing in new fields or districts, and in breaking down prejudice in the minds of those who remain opposed in older stations. When those who are opposed to the Gospel think that they will be healed or relieved of pain, they will place themselves in the care of a foreign doctor, while otherwise they would not listen to his advice. The hospitals in foreign fields soon gain popularity and are kept full and overflowing. They are a great aid to the mission schools.

The different ways in which the missionaries break down prejudice are varied and ingenious. Not long ago I listened to a missionary from India tell of a young woman who went to a new field in the interior of the land. The people would have nothing to do with her.

They would not send their children to her to be taught. Finally she asked some of the parents if they would not allow the children to come to be taught how to count. They said, "Yes, we want our children to learn how to count." They knew that would help them in business. The young woman began to teach them how to count in this way: "One, two, three, four, five, God is love: six, seven, eight, nine, ten, God loves me." When they had committed that she continued: "Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, Jesus is my Saviour." Thus repeating over and over she taught them to count to fifteen the first day. She asked them to come back the next day. More children came to learn to count. She gave them a good warm meal the next day. The following day she took them one by one and washed them and gave them some clothing to cover their naked bodies. When they went home their parents were greatly pleased. They wanted to send the rest of their children, and even the parents wanted to come. Thus little by little the missionary won the hearts of the superstitious heathen, and today there is a strong congregation of Christians and an organized station at that place.

General Chang, one of the five generals under the Chinese Christian general, Feng, told, not long ago, how he was won to Christ. He said that fifteen or sixteen years ago, when he first heard of Christianity, he did not like it because of the evil reports which he had heard of missionaries scooping out the eyes of the Chinese. He was ill but would not go to the mission hospital lest he should be injured. After several years, when he had noticed General Feng's army, and saw that the evils of opium using, wine drinking, gambling and immorality, of which he was becoming tired, were not practiced there, it appealed to him strongly.

General Feng, who was stationed near where he was located, asked him to go to the churches and places of religious worship and he soon saw that the reports which he had heard of Christianity were untrue. Soon after this, General Chang asked his commanding officer to release him to join Feng's army. He became General Feng's staff officer. When Yuan Shi Kai became president, he noticed how truly patriotic the Christians of China were. Later, while traveling for General Feng, he met a Christian general, Wuching Piao, and was entertained in his home. He saw the life of a Christian home; the general's Bible study and family worship, the schools that he had started, the orphans that he had adopted and treated as his own children. He saw that, although a general, he was entirely different from the officials of the old style. He was as humble as a child.

Before this, he had seen what Christianity does for one's country; here he saw what it does for one's home. Not long after that he went to a Christian missionary and told him that he wanted to become a Christian. The old prejudice had broken down, the Gospel had found an entrance, and within was a desire, as the disciples of old, to follow Christ. Wherever the Gospel has a reasonable opportunity it will win its way over the prejudice and superstition of heathenism.

GOD BRINGS FAVOR

God brings His own into favor. Paul started from Rome a prisoner, charged with causing sedition and trouble throughout the whole empire. God brought him into favor on the voyage until he was listened to more attentively than any other person. On the island of Melita, he came to be the most honored person, not excepting the governor. After this he stood in such high favor with the soldiers that he was given special privileges in Rome. He was allowed freedom except in name.

After reading the record of Paul's life and work, as well as that of other saints of the Bible, it is strange that men believe that Christianity is likely to bring them into disfavor and weaken their opportunity for service in the world. It is true some are never vindicated in this world before the civil authorities and suffer as martyrs. Their names, however, are honored afterward and they have a great influence in all the ages. Most of God's servants are preserved in life and enabled, like Moses and David, to receive the favor of men as well as of God. For all who serve God there is favor with Him and the assurance that they shall enjoy it in the ages to come.

CHRIST GIVES REWARD

Christ rewards those who honor His disciples. Publius honored the servant of Christ by taking him into his house and treating him courteously. Christ rewarded Publius by bringing back health and happiness into his home in healing his father. This is not an isolated example of the rewards which those receive who honor God's servants. Rahab was probably not a good woman at the time the spies came from Joshua to view Jericho and its surroundings. But because she hid the spies and helped them to escape, she and her household were rewarded, and when Jericho was destroyed she was saved alive. Very probably Rahab became a woman of faith when she saw what God could do and what He had done for her.

When Elijah first came to the widow of Zidon and asked for a drink and for food, she was probably not a believing woman. But she likely came to believe in God when Elijah remained with her and she saw what God could do. She was rewarded, during the famine, with a constant supply of food until it was given again in the natural way. She was rewarded in a greater way, when her son, who had died, was restored to life. Jesus said: **"He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward"** (Matthew 10:40-42).

ENCOURAGEMENT BY BRETHERN

There is a great value in encouragement by brethren in an hour of need. The brethren who met Paul on the way to Rome, at The Market of Appius and The Three Taverns, caused him to thank God and take courage. Paul was a man who did not complain. He was a man of great courage. He was a man who could go alone, if necessary, into "the jaws of the lion." But yet he valued Christian friendship and encouragement. It had perhaps been a query in his own mind how his friends would receive him at Rome when he came in chains. It put new life into him to find that they greeted him with the greatest warmth though he was a prisoner.

Perhaps some thought it too long a walk to go away out to The Market of Appius, forty-three miles distant, or even to The Three Taverns, thirty-three miles, to meet Paul. Perhaps some of them would argue, Paul is a courageous man and has made many long trips alone, and it will be useless to trouble ourselves about going to meet him.

Those who went did a great service to the apostle, and it has been recorded and published over the world to their honor. Their mere greeting and company was of great value at that critical hour in the life of Paul. It gave him a new reason to thank God, and it instilled into his noble soul new courage.

A kind word spoken, an act of appreciation, a little token of love, is often a great stimulus to one of Christ's disciples in a world of discouragements. You may think that what you say and do is of little value. You may think that what you think or say makes no difference to your Sunday school teacher, but perhaps it is the very thing he is longing for in the effort to decide whether to continue in the work of teaching. You may think that whether you show a spirit of encouragement or discouragement to your elders and ministers matters nothing to them for they are determined to be faithful men. But you do not know the thankfulness and new courage that it may give to them.

“Little deeds of kindness,
Little words of love,
Make the world around us
Like to heaven above.”

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL GUIDANCE

There is another lesson in the mystery of God's providential guidance. Some years before this Paul had written of his desire to go to Rome. He had expected to go from Achaia or Macedonia to Jerusalem and then back to Rome. Then he was arrested and his object seemed to be defeated. The Lord encouraged him both in Jerusalem and on the sea. Now his great desire has been realized, but not as he had expected, for he has been taken to Rome in chains.

One would think that if ever Paul needed to be free and to have the dignity of an honored ambassador it was in Rome. But, strange though it then appeared, we can see today that it was a wise plan of God. It was the best way that Paul could have reached the Roman soldiers who were sent as messengers to the farthest parts of the world. It was the only way, so far as we can see, that he could have seen the Emperor, and have had an opportunity to minister to his household.

The peculiar thing about Paul's position in Rome was that he had all the privileges of a free man, so far as preaching or teaching was concerned, though he was a prisoner. He could remain in his house and could invite any of his friends, including the chief of the Jews, to see him and hear him. He had an advantage which he had in no other city where he had previously gone. In almost every case, before he had been long in a city, he had been interrupted by ruffians and often thrown out by a mob. The Jews tried to take his life so that he would never reach Rome. Instead, they placed him in the protecting care of the greatest military power of the world, so that he not only was taken free of charge to Rome, but he had the protection of the Roman army while he was there. The Jewish mob dare not threaten or approach him, no matter how vigorously he taught or how many disciples he made.

Paul as a teaching prisoner gained the attention of both low and high. He would come into contact with officials who, later, would be promoted and sent out as praetors and proconsuls to govern provinces in various parts of the world. Through Paul's influence at Rome, many other Christian teachers who were not Roman citizens would, in after years, receive protection from those who had known Paul and had either come to respect or to espouse his religion.

We may not see what God has in store for us. We may wonder, on account of some sickness that has weakened us, or limitations that have been thrown about us, why we are so hindered. God sometimes brings into the sick room those whom the Christian worker or minister has been unable to see when they were well. They may listen in a quiet and receptive mood which otherwise they would not do. God may have important lessons for the Christian worker or minister also, which he impresses upon them by reason of his chastisements. Do not allow your limitations to cause you to fret, but recognize in your present position the favor of God, proceed to make the very best use of your opportunities, and you will receive His blessing. Your ministrations may extend, in the end, far more widely than you would have dreamed.

Many years ago Japan was so distrustful of foreigners who were admitted to her seaport towns that the first missionaries found it almost impossible to get anyone to teach them the Japanese language. One man employed a private teacher, and after some time discovered that what he was learning was a dialect of one of the smaller islands and not the language of the main body of people. In vain he looked about for another teacher. One evening, without the thought of personal advantage, he drove away some robbers who were attacking a man outside of his door. The man proved to be a Japanese noble, and in gratitude to the missionary, offered him as a reward anything that he should name. "Teach me your language," cried the missionary. "Anything but that," replied the nobleman, feeling that he had promised what perhaps he had no right to perform. The missionary persisted, and after consideration, the nobleman came the next day to give the first lesson - the entering wedge of Christianity in Japan, for that missionary was the translator of the New Testament into the Japanese language. Thus God, in the mystery of His providence, caused the robbers to bring a blessing to the missionary and to the whole country of Japan. Indirectly they brought the Gospel into that, heretofore, heathen land.

When we work and when we pray may we remember, that though what we have desired is denied, yet we will rest in faith knowing that God gives us what is best, and uses us in a way that we may best serve Him. We may have the assurance that even our chains will work to the furtherance of the Gospel.

Oh believer, that we could only learn, and then convince ourselves that "**all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose**" (Romans 8:28). How much more would we accomplish for the cause of Christ knowing that He is the director of every event.

"I wonder what are the prayers I pray,
As seen from the other side.
I am still petitioning day by day
For something that is denied.

“Some gift I am certain would make life sweet,
And help me to grow in grace;
Would nerve my heart, and speed my feet
For running the Christian race.

“I would give some service that is not asked,
I would say what my work should be,
I would not mind how severely tasked,
Did the choice but remain with me.

“So I miss the power that can surely save,
When I pray as I have begun
So often, ‘Give me the thing I crave’;
So seldom, ‘Thy will be done’.”

- B.G. Ambler.

QUESTIONS (Acts 28:1-16)

1. How did Paul come to be on the island of Melita?
2. How long was he there?
3. What kind of a welcome did the ship-wrecked sailors and prisoners receive?
4. Was it long before Paul began to help with the work?
5. What occurred after Paul had placed some sticks on the fire?
6. How did the superstitious people regard Paul?
7. What did they think when they saw he was not injured?
8. Is the absence of snakes from the island today an argument against the accuracy of the record? Why?
9. Who was the governor of the island?
10. How did Paul win his affection?
11. How did he win the affection of the people of the island?
12. How did the sailors profit through Paul’s work?
13. Was there apparently a reason for sailing on the Castor and Pollux?
14. What did Paul do at Puteoli?
15. How does this show Paul’s consecration?
16. How does it show the favor of the Roman soldiers?
17. Over what noted Roman did Paul travel?
18. How far did some of the Christians come to meet Paul? What does this act show?
19. What effect did this have upon Paul?
20. Was Paul trusted when he reached Rome? Why?

~ end of chapter 43 ~

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