



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

ACTS
Week 4

“Don’t Go to Jerusalem!”

Acts 21:1-25

OPENING
up to the Word

What tradition is most important for you and your family? (a) Easter Sunday, (b) Thanksgiving day, (c) Christmas.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Follow Paul’s route on this third tour from Miletus to Jerusalem (vs. 1-4, 7-8, 15). Note the hospitality of the Christians along the route.
2. How many times in this chapter did Paul’s spiritual brothers and sisters plead with him not to go to Jerusalem (vs. 1-16)? Why was Paul so insistent (20:22-23)?
3. What reception greeted Paul in Jerusalem (vs. 17-25)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you taken a trip and been given hospitality? Have you shared your hospitality with others recently?
2. Look at your traditions for worship. How do they differ from those of other Christians? Can you appreciate the diversity rather than being bothered by the differences? Can some traditions and customs become an impediment and stumbling block to the gospel?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Paul had a deep concern for his own people, the Jews, and for the people to whom he ministered, the gentiles. To win them all to Christ, he was ready to conduct himself according to the **traditions** of either group (1Co 9:21-22). However, he refused to impose traditions as requirements for Christians, no matter what their ethnic background was.*

Riot in the Temple

DAY 23

Acts 21:26-40

Have you ever seen an unruly mob (a) at a soccer match, (b) at a rock concert, (c) at a political convention, (d) at a Little League game, (e) at a shopping mall the day after Thanksgiving?

1. Who were Paul's accusers at the Temple (v. 27)? Why were they in Jerusalem?

2. What were their accusations (vs. 28-29)? Were they similar to the concerns of the Jerusalem elders (vs. 20-21)? In what ways?

3. Why did the crowd turn into a mob (vs. 30-36)? Who intervened to restore order and rescue Paul? In what way was Paul's arrest different from what Agabus had prophesied (v. 33 compared with 21:11)?

4. How did Paul respond (vs. 37-40)? With a sword or a sermon?

1. Have you ever accused someone of wrongdoing based on what you saw? Did you jump to wrong conclusions? Next time, will you get the whole story first (Pr 18:13; 25:2)?

2. Have you ever rescued someone from the anger or gossip of others? Consider your words today—will they be weapons of war or instruments of peace?

When Paul spoke in Greek to the commander of the garrison, he thought that Paul might be an Egyptian who had led an earlier revolt. The historian Josephus reports that this self-proclaimed prophet led 30,000 followers to the Mount of Olives to await the collapse of the city walls, which were to fall at the command of the prophet. Thousands of his followers were killed by the armies of Felix, the Roman governor, but the Egyptian leader escaped (Antiq. XX, viii, 6).

OPENING

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Defense to the Jewish Mob

Acts 22

OPENING
up to the Word

When do you feel it's appropriate to call attention to things you have said or done? (a) all the time, (b) to tell about God's actions in your life, (c) to brag about your good works, (d) to defend against false accusations.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did Paul's polite introduction (22:1) parallel the introduction by Stephen (7:2)? Why was Paul so gracious to an unruly mob?
2. How did Paul's training and past zeal for the law introduce his defense against his accusers (22:3-5)?
3. Compare this testimony about his calling (vs. 6-21) with the earlier record by Luke (9:3-25). What variations do you see? What about 22:18?
4. What does Paul link to baptism (v. 16)? How does cleansing fit the symbolism of baptism?
5. What finally provoked the rage of the crowd (vs. 22-24)? How did Paul use his civil rights (vs. 25-30)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you ever had to make an appeal for your rights as a citizen—of your country, your family or your church?

WINDOW
on the Word

Roman citizens had rights that were not given to the average person of the realm. It was illegal for Roman citizens to be beaten before being convicted of a crime. Scourging was about to begin in order to force his confession, when Paul's citizenship saved his hide. Paul's father had Roman citizenship, either through his birth, through buying it or by having it conferred for military service to Rome.

Defense to the Jewish Leaders

DAY 25

Acts 23

Which of these do you consider your greatest right?

(a) freedom of speech, (b) bearing arms, (c) voting, (d) legal counsel, (e) a fair trial among peers.

1. How does the situation between Paul and the high priest Ananias demonstrate the need to “turn the other cheek” (vs. 1-5)?

2. How did Paul win the favor of the Pharisees (vs. 6-9)? Why was the resurrection central to Paul’s defense?

3. As Paul was lying in the barracks facing persecution, how did the Lord comfort him (vs. 10-11)?

4. How did the band of 40 Jews conspire with the Sanhedrin to kill Paul (vs. 12-15)?

5. How did God thwart their evil plans (vs. 16-35)? Should the people have listened to the opinion of the Pharisees (v. 9)?

6. Why did Claudius Lysias support Paul over the Jewish council (vs. 26-30)? Was he afraid of being accused of illegal actions? Was his letter an accurate report?

1. When do you feel a Christian should accept persecution without retaliation? How can assertiveness replace aggression?

2. Has God comforted you during persecution? (a) by images in a dream, (b) through Scripture, (c) by the assurance of hope, (d) by faith.

Ananias was the high priest from A.D. 47 to 59, according to Josephus. Here, he illegally commanded Paul to be struck during the court hearing. As high priest he was bound by duty to uphold the law. Eventually he would be assassinated by the Jewish people. Ananias, like many high priests of this era, was a political appointee—not chosen in the way the law prescribed.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

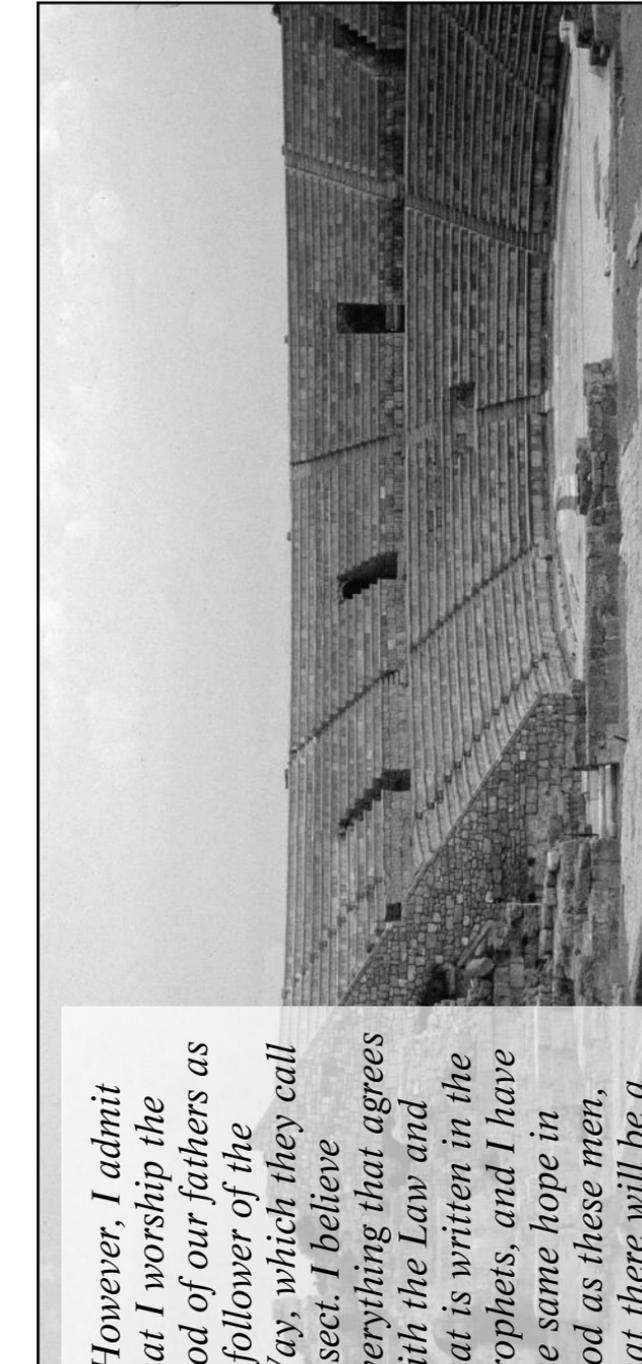
into the Word

LIVING

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WINDOW

on the Word



“However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”

Acts 24:14-15

Trial Before Governor Felix

DAY 26

Acts 24

What best motivates you to do good deeds? (a) guilt, (b) greed, (c) fear, (d) faith, (e) hope, (f) love.

1. Why did the council use the professional orator Tertullus (vs. 1-9)? How did he seek the governor's favor (vs. 2-4)? Did it work?

2. What did Tertullus accuse Paul of that required Felix's judgment (vs. 5-9)? Contrast his report with the facts given by Luke (21:26–22:30) and by Claudius Lysias (23:26-30).

3. Analyze Paul's response (24:10-21). Why did he start by denying the accusations? Why did he not mention Jesus? And why did Paul say he travelled to Jerusalem this time (v. 17)?

4. Why did the events following Paul's defense lead to his further imprisonment (vs. 22-27)? Why did Felix do an about-face (vs. 23-25)?

5. How does Luke summarize Paul's message about the life of faith in Christ (vs. 24-25)?

6. Why did Felix leave Paul in prison?

1. How does bias influence a person's accusations against others? Does name-calling tend to strengthen or weaken one's argument?

2. How does believing "everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets" (v. 14) lead to "hope in God" (v. 15)?

*The **Way of Christianity** was consistent with the teaching of the Law and the Prophets (v. 14), and Paul had not violated the laws of the Temple nor any laws of the Romans. The Roman governor **Felix** was married to **Drusilla**, a Jew. According to Josephus, this was an adulterous relationship (Antiq. XX, vii, 2). According to Luke, Felix was also dishonest, hoping that Paul would give him a bribe (v. 26). Guilt and greed underlie the response by Felix.*

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Trial Before Governor Festus

Acts 25

OPENING
up to the Word

What creates the greatest difficulty in seeing the truth? (a) not getting all the facts, (b) not questioning assumptions, (c) not viewing all the options, (d) not listening to other opinions.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What did the leaders of the Sanhedrin do to sway Festus to the conclusion they desired (vs. 1-2)? Were they deceitful (v. 3)?

2. Since Festus did not give in to their plot, the Jews had to go to Caesarea to accuse Paul (vs. 4-8). How do you visualize the trial based on Luke's summation?

3. As a Roman citizen, what rights did Paul invoke (vs. 9-12)?

4. Why did Festus confer with King Agrippa (vs. 13-21)? Was it to get himself off the hook with the Jews, or to determine specific charges against Paul?

5. How did Festus present the case to Agrippa the next day (vs. 22-27)? Was Festus perplexed? Angry?

LIVING
out the Word

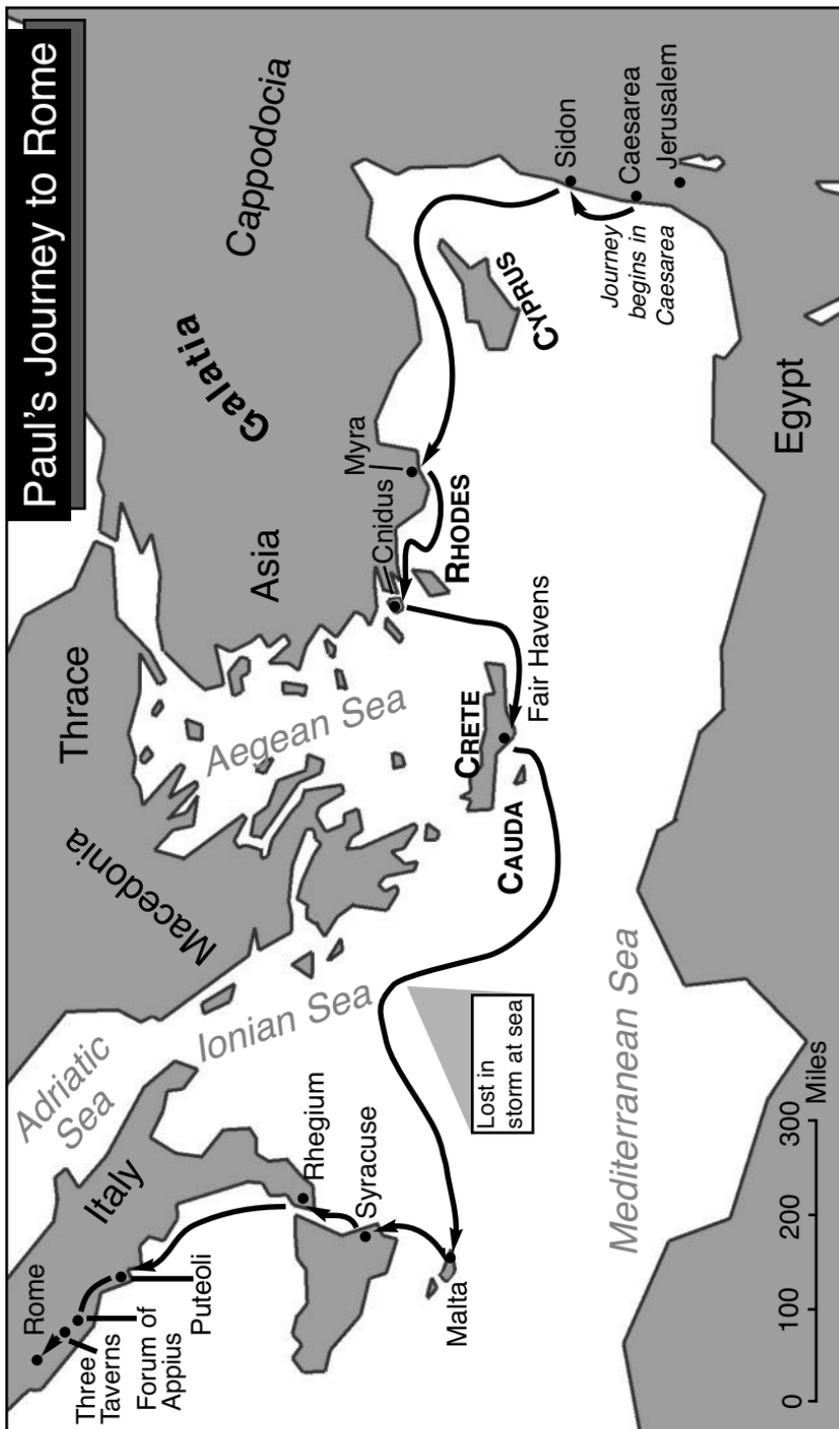
1. How do you respond to false accusations? Have complaints against you been the result of truth or someone's bias?

2. Do you seek an objective viewpoint when you are in doubt about someone? How much grace do you grant?

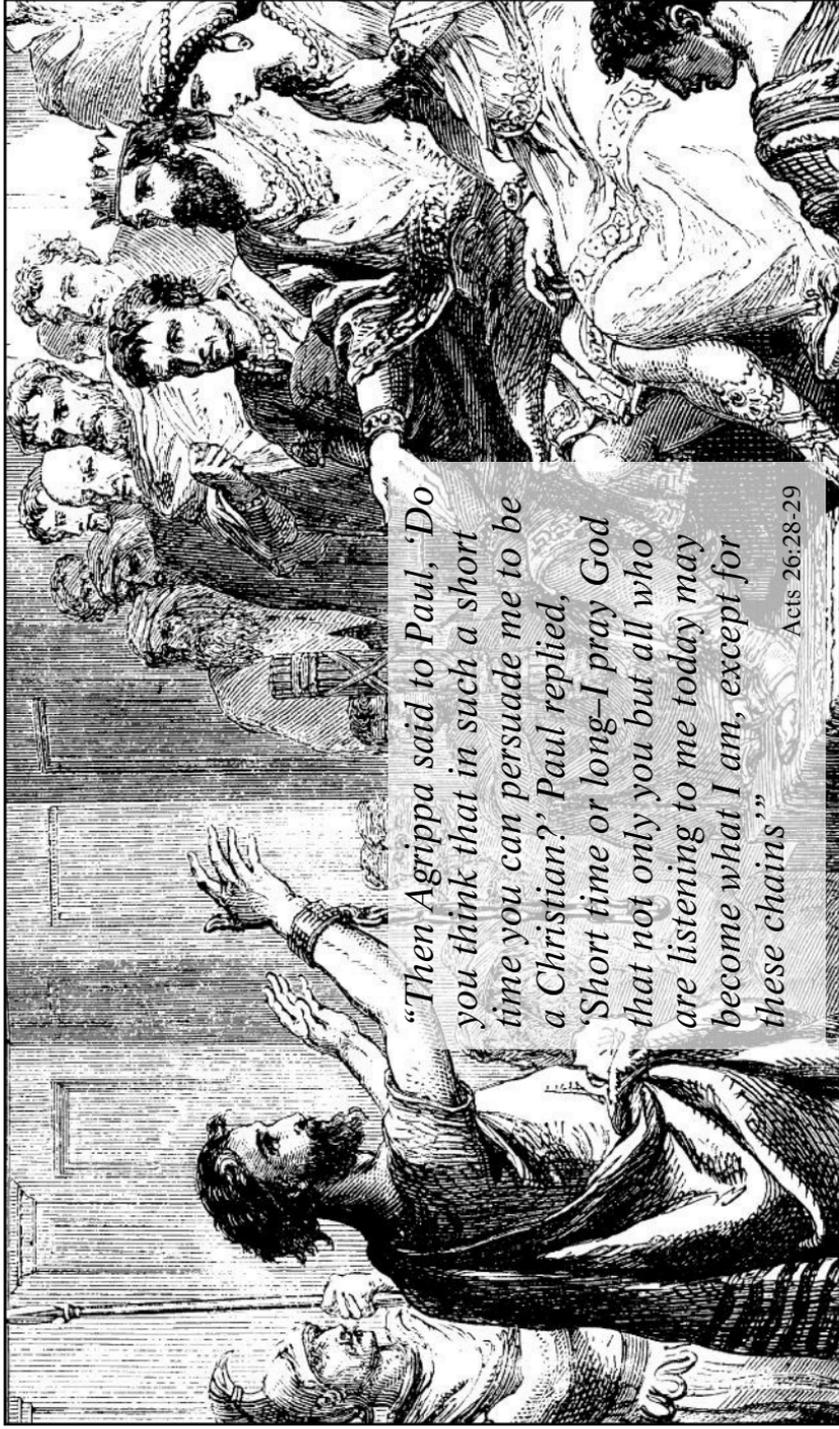
WINDOW
on the Word

Festus replaced Felix as Governor about A.D. 60. Although he wanted a peaceful relationship with the Jews, it was important that his authority went unquestioned, so he held Paul's trial in Caesarea, his headquarters.

Paul's Journey to Rome



Source: Reader's Digest Atlas of the Bible. Map by Omar Cova



“Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?’ Paul replied, ‘Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.’”

Acts 26:28-29

Defense Before King Agrippa

DAY 28

Acts 26

What makes you the most nervous? (a) a date, (b) a job interview, (c) being called on the carpet, (d) walking down the aisle, (e) a letter from the IRS, (f) making a speech.

1. How did Paul view King Agrippa (vs. 1-3)? As an opponent or a potential ally?

2. What common heritage did Paul have with these Jews (vs. 4-7)? Did he love the Jewish people?

3. In this defense Luke provides the fullest account of Jesus' words to Paul on the road to Damascus. How did Paul's testimony rely on his conversion experience (vs. 8-19)? How does this testimony relate to Luke's summation in Acts 24:25?

4. What did Paul claim as the focus of his preaching (26:20-23)? How was Jesus "the *first* to rise from the dead" (v. 23)? Hadn't Lazarus (Jn 11:43-44) and many others (Mt 27:52-53) been resurrected before Jesus? See John 11:25-26.

5. Was Agrippa's response genuine or sarcastic (vs. 27-28)? How did Paul respond (v. 29)?

6. What was Agrippa's conclusion (vs. 30-32)? Did it help Festus?

1. When put on the spot by anyone in authority, how respectful are you of their position?

2. Give a brief mission statement for your life. How does it compare with the statement by Paul (v. 29)?

Herod Agrippa I had martyred James and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12). **Herod Agrippa II** later replaced his father as ruler of Galilee until AD 66. He, too, was a heartless leader.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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Shipwrecked on Malta

Acts 27

OPENING
up to the Word

What is the gravest danger you have ever faced?
(a) auto accident, (b) substance abuse, (c) criminal
act, (d) life-threatening illness.

DIGGING
into the Word

- 1.** Plot the course along the Mediterranean coastline of Paul's voyage from Caesarea to Myra (vs. 1-5).
 - 2.** Plot the course of the Alexandrian ship to Crete (vs. 6-8). What difficulties led Paul to advise the crew against continuing the voyage (vs. 9-10)?
 - 3.** Why did the helmsman and owner decide to sail on (vs. 11-12)?
 - 4.** Read the dramatic account of Paul's shipwreck (vs. 13-44). Were Paul's fears well founded? How was his prophecy modified by God (vs. 10, 22-25)?
 - 5.** How did Luke feel about this voyage to Italy? Who does he credit as the human hero of this venture?
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LIVING
out the Word

- 1.** How assertive are you in the face of danger (v. 10)? Have you ever had to warn family, friends or strangers of actions that are potentially dangerous?
 - 2.** When is it appropriate to say, "I told you so"? Paul did so in order to draw attention to the activity of God (vs. 21-26).
 - 3.** In times of calamity, do you take heart in the assurance that God is with you?
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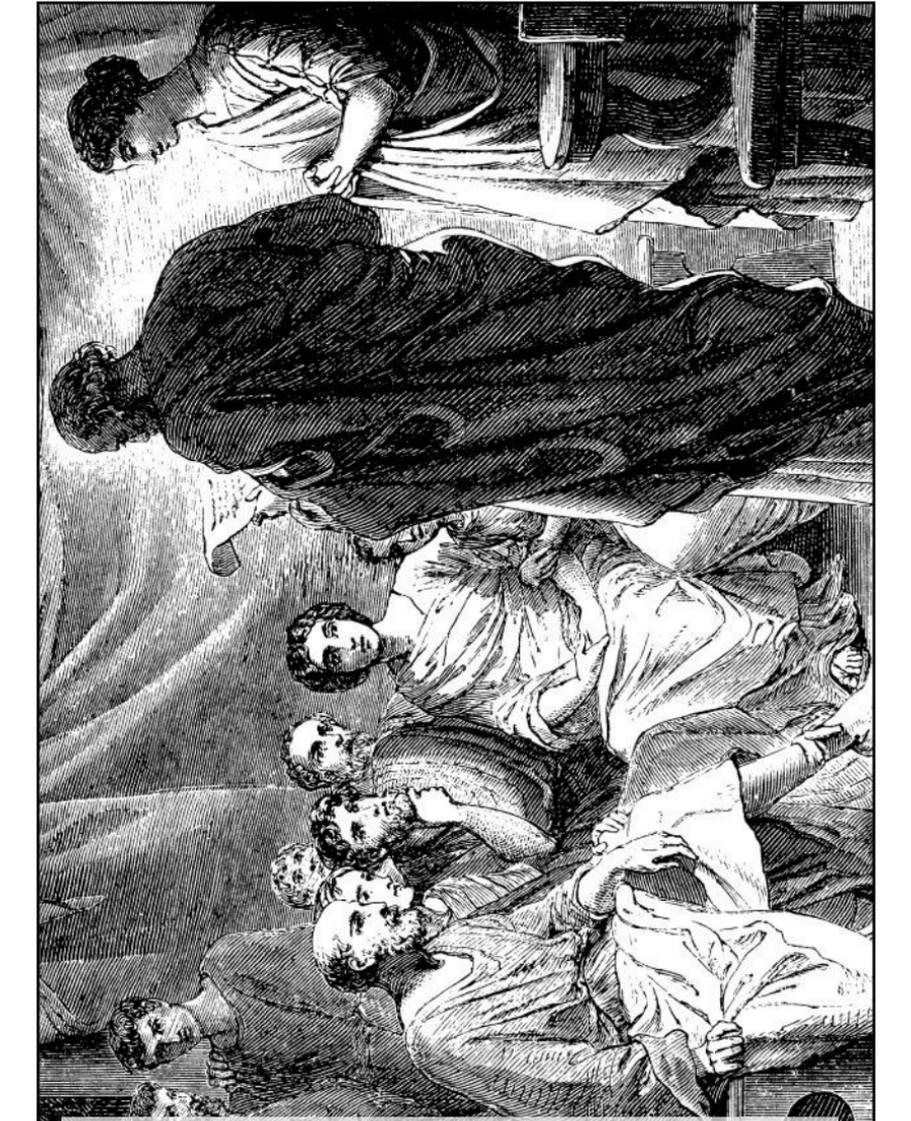
WINDOW
on the Word

***This voyage** began late in the fall after the fast of the Hebrew Day of Atonement (v. 9). This was a dangerous time for sailing because storms became more frequent. The Greek word for "hurricane" was typhonikos (v. 14), from which we get the English word "typhoon."*



“He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety.”

Acts 27:43-44



“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Acts 28:30-31

Prison Ministry in Rome

DAY 30

Acts 28

How do you know that God is active in the world?

(a) healings, (b) protection, (c) answered prayer
(d) conversion, (e) faith, (f) rainbows.

1. What importance lies in the episode of Paul's snake bite (vs. 1-6)? Was he confident of God's plans for him in Rome?
2. Chart Paul's course from Malta to Rome (vs. 11-15). How eager were the believers in Rome to meet Paul and encourage him (v. 15)?
3. Review Paul's explanation to the Jews who lived in Rome (vs. 17-20). How did these Jews respond (vs. 21-22)?
4. What was the eventual outcome of Paul's message to the Jews in Rome (vs. 23-29)?
5. Although Paul was unable to travel freely in Rome, what were his living conditions like (vs. 16, 30-31)?
6. What progress is the gospel making as Luke ends the book of Acts? Has the commission given to Paul in Acts 9:15 been accomplished?

1. How do you judge other people? Like the Maltese judged Paul—certain that the snake was sent by God to claim justice for sin (v. 4)?
2. Does it take miracles to convince you of the Lord's action in the world?
3. From what chains has the Lord released you? Which ones does he allow to continue for some reason as yet unknown to you?
4. Consider how your life, both in word and deed, can proclaim the kingdom of God with all confidence!

*Even though Paul had not previously visited **Rome**, in about A.D. 57 he had written believers there to expound the doctrine of salvation and its practical application for Christians. Paul continued in Rome to contact the Jews first, then the gentiles, to teach salvation to all who believe (Ro 1:16).*

OPENING

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