

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 12



PAUL AND MIRACLES ON MELITA

Scripture Text: Acts 28:1-10

The journey of Paul, a prisoner, to Rome was filled with great dangers and great blessings, with storm and shipwreck, and also with the peace and presence and miracle work of God. Landing on Melita, 276 men were cared for by people of that country that they were foreigners to. The barbarous people spoken of in Melita were not uncivilized people, but simply non-Romans. They spoke a foreign language. To a Roman, all others were "barbarians."

Jesus' promises of **Mark 16:18** were fulfilled to Paul immediately. The promise is to all His saints. What does

Paul's action show about his faith? Did he wonder or doubt if God would protect him? He seems to have felt so confident of God's healing that he could trust and forget about it. God will go to any extreme to carry out His plan.

MEMORY VERSE: *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

—*Philippians 4:13*

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Luke 10:17-24** The seventy returned.

Tue.—**Romans 12** Living the dedicated life.

Wed.—**Ephesians 5:1-17** Redeeming the time.

Thu.—**James 1:1-18** True religion patient in temptation.

Fri.—**2 Corinthians 11:16-33** Suffering of Paul.

Devotional Reading: **Mark 16:9-18** Commission and promise.

Landing on Melita

Acts 28:1-6 The sailors soon learned that the strange land they had reached was the island of Melita (now Malta). There was rain and cold. The men were wet and cold. The islanders saw their need and did all they could to help them. They kindled a fire to prevent exposure from taking the lives the sea had not.

Paul was one to take part in whatever was to be done. He gathered sticks for the fire. As he laid them on the fire, the heat drove a viper out from them. Fighting back for its hurt, the snake **fastened on his hand**. Paul **shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm**. The watching people saw and superstitiously thought this was punishment to Paul for sin, probably murder. They looked for him to become ill and fall over dead. **A great while** passed. No harm came to him. The islanders then **said that he was a god**, a superstition as untrue as the first mistake. This shows how fickle and unstable the thinking of people is who do not have the Word of God to give them wisdom. Paul was only a man like all other men. God had performed a miracle on Paul as Jesus promised in **Mark 16:17-18**. This is His promise to every saint.

God Heals Publius' Father

Acts 28:7-9 They had landed near where Publius, **the chief man** or governor, of the island lived. He, like his people, was kind. He **received us, and lodged us three days**. *Us* must mean Paul and his friends. The whole

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group must have been temporarily cared for in a large building or buildings where they could be guarded by soldiers. Publius' father was sick. **Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.** This was new to the islanders. Seeing what God could do through Paul, **others who had diseases . . . came, and were healed.**

Publius' father and many others were healed. Nothing is said of their spiritual needs or salvation. From their conclusion that Paul was a god, we gather that the people were pagans, knowing nothing of the true God and Christ. We cannot imagine Paul leaving them in that ignorance. He would not be satisfied to heal their bodies and leave their souls dead in sin. It is a quick step from faith for healing to belief for soul salvation (**James 5:14-16**).

Gratitude of the People

Acts 28:10 The healed ones felt so grateful that they **honored** Paul and Luke and Aristarchus **with many honors**. The shipwrecked men stayed on the island of Melita for three months. When they left, the people loaded Paul and his brethren with things they needed as they sailed on toward Rome.

Honors and material gifts to Paul and the others showed the sincere feelings of the people for what they had received from them. Gratitude is a virtue. We should try to have more of it. Given to our brethren, it gives them courage and strength. Given to God, it pleases and brings satisfaction to Him.

Worthy to Suffer

Paul had served God faithfully. God had not forsaken him and allowed him to suffer such shame and hardship unnoticed. God gives not as the world gives. His favors are not given in luxury, fame, fleshly comforts or material gains. To those He would honor, He gives greater burdens. To those He would favor, He gives the privilege of humility, sacrifice, shame, and pain for His name's sake. He tests the character to show what it is made of. He gives that which will make strong. He strips away earthly supports to reveal that the life rests not in them, but in inner, divine supply. So it was with Paul. So it was with other saints of Acts. So it will be with all who dare to give up all for Him.

The Miracles of Acts

Are not the miracles told in Acts as great as those done by Jesus when on earth? Why has God given us this detailed account of the many miracles and works of salvation? He wants us to know that the power of God was not diminished or removed from the earth when Jesus went back to Heaven. Jesus came to set up the Kingdom of God in the earth. It was not to be a temporary thing with its blessings soon removed from man (**John 14:12; Luke 1:33; Daniel 2:44**). The strong, living, growing church with its miracle and salvation work which we see in Acts is the normal church.

Do you find it difficult to serve God in your surroundings? Consider the hindrances Paul met. Then consider the life Paul lived and the victory he enjoyed. It was not because of HIS strength. It was because Christ lived within him, and Paul depended wholly upon Him.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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