

Paul's Ministry at Melita

We noted in ACTS chapter 27 that the Apostle Paul was highlighted as a man of faith. And the Holy Ghost seen to it that even though two hundred and seventy six souls were on Paul's ship, the record left for us in ACTS 27 centers around one race course runner, and how his life positively influenced each of their lives. We noted in ACTS 27:36 that in the darkest of circumstances, and during very trying times, Paul got these two hundred and seventy six souls to focus on God above, and to be themselves full of "good cheer." The end result was that they all were then prepared to escape the confines of their sinking ship, which they did, and arrived safe upon land. Thus we read again the last words of ACTS 27:44 *...And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.*

Now here in ACTS 28 we will find Paul once again in unfamiliar surroundings having been sent by the Lord to a new group of Gentiles, *...To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in... Jesus Christ... ACTS 26:18.* This new group of Gentiles are on the island of Melita, and are called "barbarous," and "barbarians" in ACTS 28:2 & 4. Shortly after arriving safe on this island of Melita, the Holy Ghost once again quickly puts the spotlight on one man, the Apostle Paul, and uses divinely ordered unusual events, which to us may at first appear to be extremely harsh, *...To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in... Jesus Christ... ACTS 26:18.* Let's now get into this chapter, and see how all of this came about.

We will start studying this 28th chapter by reading verses 1 through 6, and all of these events occurred on the very same day they escaped from the storm tossed ship. It certainly was a full action packed day, as we will see, and brings to mind a statement found in the last part of PROVERBS 27:1, which reads: *Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.* Often time such eventful days can be looked back upon to mark high water marks in our own individual lives. Always remember that as a child of God, and redeemed by the precious blood of our lovely Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, our every day steps are ordered by the Lord. PSALMS 37:23 tells us this: *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.* Two hundred seventy six souls escaped the tempestuous sea this very day we continue to read about in ACTS 28:1-6, and within a short period of time the Lord once again made sure that the Apostle Paul became the focal point of attention, as we noted above. As we read verses 1 through 6 realize that the storm was still raging, and it was raining, and it was cold. Just because they had all escaped safe to land didn't mean that their trials were over either. ACTS 28:1 *And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. 2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. 3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. 5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. 6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.*

As always there are a lot of things to consider here. This particular day had really started around midnight when the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country in ACTS 27:27. After the subsequent shipwreck, and enduring a wet and soggy arrival upon shore, where we noted that all from the ship escaped safe to land, we find that the island is called "Melita," which is now known as Malta. Supposedly Melita comes from the Greek word signifying honey, and at that time in history Melita was noted for producing large quantities of honey. Even before Paul's ship arrived at the island of

Melita, it was known as a refuge to the Phoenicians, used especially in stormy weather, thus some texts also associate the meaning of Melita to escaping, or "to escape." Furthermore ancient historians noted that pirates also often used to winter on the island of Melita, thus escaping the stormy winter seas. Both meanings, ("honey," and "to escape") certainly have application to the Apostle Paul, and those who escaped the violent sea with him. As for the significance of the word "honey" being applied to Paul's situation here, let me give you Brother Copley's thoughts. "Our bitter experiences in God's will are followed by sweetness. A life of hard, bitter toil here will be rewarded by sweet fellowship with God and all the holy ones in heaven forever, of which our fellowship on earth is only an earnest. What a glorious hope is ours in Christ! I fear that very few really appreciate it." {End of quoting Brother Copley, yet how true are his thoughts even today, and maybe even more so, for how many today really appreciate the glorious hope that is ours in Christ Jesus? How many even know what he was talking about here? How many today in our fast paced world of modern technology truly know what is the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus" spoken of in PHILIPPIANS 3:14? Very few, only a rib portion of Saints in the body of Christ understand, and appreciate what Brother Copley was getting at here.}

How did they determine ...*that the island was called Melita*...? No doubt they asked the inhabitants, who in verse 2 were called "barbarous people." The common languages in Paul's day were Greek, Latin, and to the Jews, Hebrew. Paul we have previously noted, spoke all three. However the Phoenicians who inhabited the island probably spoke another language, and perhaps a little of Latin, or Greek. We have an explanation in scripture, written by the Apostle Paul, which defines what a "barbarian" was. 1 CORINTHIANS 14:11 *Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.* Realize now that to the resident of Melita those of Paul's ship were barbarian, and to those off Paul's ship, the people of the island were barbarian. Thus they met on equal terms having some difficulty communicating with each other, but those from Paul's ship soon learned that they had arrived upon the island of Melita.

Paul's crew found the natives to be very friendly indeed, for verse 2 records: *And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.* Let's step back and look at this scene in our minds eye. Two hundred and seventy six souls from Paul's ship had just arrived on this island by swimming, or floating on pieces of the broken ship, and none of them escaped with more than the clothes on their back. All of their worldly possessions were lost to the sea. What they could swim or float with was all any of them had when the island's inhabitants found them. And fourteen days lost at sea had changed all of their perspectives on what was important in life anyway. We noted in ACTS 27 how Paul was able to get all on board his ship to be of good cheer, which could only happen by looking to God above for encouragement, and help in such a desperate time of need. Just because they all arrived safe to shore didn't mean that they still weren't needy. Their immediate needs had changed. All were in danger of hypothermia, where the body begins to shut down as the core temperature decreases. Shivering and mental confusion are a part of hypothermia. God didn't save all two hundred and seventy six souls from their ordeal at sea, just to watch them freeze to death once they safely arrived upon shore. The Lord ...*is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*.... 2 PETER 3:9 tells us. And part of His provision for this safe arrival to land of Paul's shipmates was to have waiting a friendly native compassionate people, who could provide their immediate needs, which at this time was a bonfire to ward off the hypothermia they all were now experiencing. Realize that the natives of Melita didn't know a thing about those on Paul's ship, nor did those from Paul's ship know anything about the barbarians, who out of curiosity had come down to the shore to see what was going on. The natives knew Paul's shipmates needed help, so they kindled a fire. During all of this time each side was observing the other, and trying to determine what would happen next. Only by what each man wore could the natives determine anything about those from Paul's ship. Obviously they could recognize the Roman soldiers by their uniform, and perhaps discerned the prisoners by their attire, or their chains if they were still shackled by such. Beyond

that the only clues the natives had as to who had arrived upon their soil was by what they were wearing.

And note that Luke makes mention of how the natives *...received us every one...* . Think of it like this, it didn't matter the position one may have held in this life, rich or poor, famous, or not, old or young, prisoner or soldier, sailor or passenger, ship owner or centurion, Jew or Gentile, Egyptian or Roman, it didn't matter, all were made welcome by the barbarous people of Melita. Again it really was God who provided such a grand welcoming committee for the distressed off of Paul's ship. And there are probably twenty or more sermon thoughts that could come from ACTS 28:2. For example we are reminded here how that *...there is no respect of persons with God...* ROMANS 2:11. Again the thought comes to mind of what is said in GALATIANS 2:6 *But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person):...* . Such was the attitude found here in those of Melita, that is not concerning themselves with who these wet survivors really were, and only recognizing that they all indeed needed immediate help at this present time, and they were equipped, and willing to provide such aid as was now required. One word sums up the people of Melita's actions: "kindness," and in fact this is the word Luke chose here to describe their immediate conduct: *...the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness:...* !

The word "kindness" is found forty-eight times in scripture, but only this one time with the associated meaning portrayed here. In the Greek the word "kindness" used in ACTS 28:2 is philanthropia {fil-an-thro-pee'-ah}, (number 5363 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), coming from two Greek words; philos - loving; and anthropos - man. The same Greek word philanthropia {fil-an-thro-pee'-ah} is found twice more in scripture, in one verse of TITUS 3, where it references "love," and "man" in association with the kindness that God has towards man. TITUS 3:4 *But after that the kindness and love <5363> of God our Saviour toward man <5363> appeared,...* . Simply put, "kindness" as used here in ACTS 28:2 shows a love for man, which is why the island people of Melita treated the shipwrecked mariners like they did.

ACTS 28:2 *And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness:...* . These words should now have a little deeper meaning to us, but the depth of the kindness shown here didn't end after the fire burnt out. The word "shewed" here points to a level of concern that reached beyond the immediate time frame, and expresses the thought that not only did they shew kindness, but they just kept on shewing "no little kindness." Realize that this "kindness" continued for several months, until those of Paul's ship found other transportation. Interestingly the Greek work translated "shewed" here in ACTS 28:2, (parecho {par-ekh'-o} number 3930 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), is only found in sixteen New Testament scriptures, and sixteen is also the number that points to love. Do you see a little of what the Holy Ghost is emphasizing here? This kindness manifested by the people of Melita was God's way of showing an expression of His love towards those from Paul's ship. Back to the Greek word parecho {par-ekh'-o}, which here is rendered "shewed;" it also translates into English as "to bring," or "minister," and usually means: to offer, to furnish, to supply, or literally to have near, or to bring that which is to be given. Later in his life the Apostle Paul wrote this statement in PHILIPPIANS 4:19 *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* Perhaps as Paul wrote PHILIPPIANS 4:19 he had this day noted in ACTS 28:2 in his thoughts.

Another point of interest to note here in verse 2 is what I will term a Luke-ism. A Luke-ism is an expression that seems to be unique to Luke. Here in ACTS 28:2 we see Luke noting that *...the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness:...* . The words "no little" is the Luke-ism, akin to his words of "no small" found in ACTS 12:18; 15:2; 19:23; 19:24; and 27:20. "No little," and "no small" equate to words, and expressions that carry the same weight as: "remarkable," "exceeding," "unbelievable," "unusual," "gigantic," "huge," "extraordinary," "great," and "exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think." Stated another way, the people of Melita showed their love, their compassion, their concern, by putting themselves into immediate action, providing loving kindness, and a welcome reception for everyone off of Paul's ship, and a bonfire by which they all could escape the distress of the present rain and the cold.

Another point to ponder from ACTS 28:2 is God's never ending provision. God always has prepared for them that love Him an exceedingly abundantly above all that we

could ask or think provision. {Study EPHESIANS 3:20.} This has always been God's way. In GENESIS 22 Abraham's faith was tested in his willingness to offer his son Isaac as a burnt-offering unto God. When Isaac asked Abraham "where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" in GENESIS 22:7, Abraham responded in verse 8, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." And reading on in GENESIS 22 we know that God indeed did provide Abraham a lamb for a burnt-offering. Of course we know that there is a much deeper truth revealed here too, fore shadowing the true Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who was sacrificed for us on the cross of Calvary: (1 CORINTHIANS 5:7 *...For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:...*). Christ is our provision from sin. Later in GENESIS 45:21 provision was given by the hand of Joseph, with the permission of Pharaoh, to bring the children of Israel into the land of Egypt. In EXODUS the Lord provided Moses with a rod by which many miracles were performed by the mighty hand of God, including the deliverance of the children of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh, through the Red Sea. Young David was provided with the faith, and skill to use a sling shot to deliver the children of Israel from the oppression of the Philistine's in 1 SAMUEL 17. God provided Daniel deliverance from the very same lions, in the very same lions' den, that later killed his accusers. All of these examples of Abraham, and Isaac, and Joseph, and Moses, and David, and Daniel, are but a few from the Old Testament, and all of these are worthies of faith, who experienced many times God's exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think God's never ending provision. Think about it, and realize that all full overcomers experience God's abundant supply. Here in ACTS 28:2 we find that not only did God provide a means of escape from the sea to those on Paul's ship, but once upon land, God provided them a warm welcoming committee, who in turn provided their immediate needs. Paul, and those from his ship were now experiencing the very same abundant provision from the endless supply provided by the hand of God to those who believe him. Paul had already expressed it this way in 1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* Later Paul would write more about what we have been noting here in EPHESIANS 3:20 *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,...* So we observe here then that the Apostle Paul is still being highlighted as the man of faith he was here in ACTS 28, and we will continue to see this as we make progress through this chapter.

ACTS 28:2 *And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.* We noted above that there are a number of thoughts contained in ACTS 28:2, which could inspire twenty or more sermons, and I am sure over the years much more than that has been preached from this text. Not to mention the number of Sunday school lessons found here also. Brother Charles Spurgeon, the famous nineteenth-century English evangelist, once preached a sermon from this verse, and called it "Kindling a Fire." His thoughts go beyond what I will repeat here, but here are some highlights from his notes.

After reading ACTS 28:2 Spurgeon spoke of the practical kindness shown by the people of Melita, and especially noted the fact that it was cold outside. He then went on to highlight the need for kindling a fire for those who may be spiritually cold, pointing out that the world is a cold country for gracious men. And that because of inbred sin, we are cold subjects that are far too apt to be lukewarm, or frozen. He noted that the world too has cold seasons, places where the sun seldom shines, and that churches, Saints, and even ministers are too often like these places, and can be found to be cold as ice. He then went on to remind us that there are means of spiritual warmth, pointing out first that the Word of God is a fire, that whether heard, or read, it tends to warm the heart. Fires can also be kindled by prayer, meditation, and communion with Jesus. He quoted from PSALMS 39:3 *"...while I was musing the fire burned,..."* and LUKE 24:32 *"...Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"* Spurgeon then encouraged his listeners to get to these fires ourselves, by returning to our first love, and doing the first works spoken of in REVELATION 2:4 & 5. Then he went on to encourage his congregation to also kindle fires for others, by sharing our spiritual warmth with others: to let His radiant beams shine forth from us, and give warmth and comfort to those cold and weary we come in contact with. Before

ending with prayer, Spurgeon encouraged his congregation to let no one dampen the flame, but rather feed the fire for the sake of the shivering ones who need comforted. His closing words: "bring a stick." {End of Spurgeon's thoughts.}

With Spurgeon's closing words in mind, how appropriate is it then that we next read of our Apostle Paul gathering sticks? ACTS 28:3 *And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire,...* . This was Paul's immediate way of himself showing comfort and consolation, a subject he had already written about in 2 CORINTHIANS 1. 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3 *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. 6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.* Back here in ACTS 28 we once again see that Paul wasn't afraid of physical work. Sure he enjoyed the heat provided by the fire, but he also was making sure others continued to enjoy the much needed warmth the fire provided. Certainly he wasn't alone in this endeavor, for there were at least two hundred and seventy five others trying to get warm again after enduring a couple of weeks of rain and cold themselves. Paul was given by the Lord the leadership of those on his ship in ACTS 27. It was Paul alone who encouraged his fellow mariners to look for help from God above. It was Paul alone who was given the message of hope for those who sailed with him in ACTS 27. It was by the encouragement of Paul alone that all two hundred seventy six who sailed with him were prepared for their arrival upon land, and because of Paul's faith, and actions *...it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land...* ACTS 27:44. And now once upon the island of Melita we find Paul still at the fore front leading the new arrivals from the ship wreck to help in building this much needed fire.

Here we glimpse a little more of the character of Paul, that is his being willing to do that which needs done. Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 15:58 *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* Was gathering sticks a work of the Lord? Think about it for a minute. There were two hundred seventy five individuals from Paul's ship, (besides Paul himself), who had just been saved from the sea, that had observed his actions, and followed his instructions ever since midnight, and they all knew it was the God of Paul who had saved them from being lost to the sea. Do you now think they still didn't observe Paul, and take note of what he was now doing? So was this a work of the Lord that he was now doing in gathering sticks? Certainly to Paul it was, for he had already written in 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31 *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* We could add this thought to his scriptural statement here: *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or gather sticks, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* Later Paul would write in EPHESIANS 6:8 *Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.* Again in COLOSSIANS 3 Paul writes in verse 17: *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. ...23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.* Stated another way, Paul was a testimony to all those who were on his ship, and now here safe upon land, Paul was still a testimony to all who observed him, and his witnesses now included the barbarous people from the island of Melita. Paul's gathering together bundles of sticks was used of the Lord as a testimony to all who witnessed his actions. Paul wasn't gathering sticks for the benefit of himself alone, but he heartily did so for the benefit all the others experiencing the rain, and cold. Recall here also what Paul wrote in his first two epistles: 1 THESSALONIANS 2:9 *For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. 2 THESSALONIANS 3:8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10*

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

ACTS 28:3 *And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire,...* . The Greek word translated "fire" here in verses 2 & 3 is "pura" (number 4443 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), and is only found in these two verses of scripture. "Fire" here simply means: a fire, or a pile of burning fuel. We do not need to read anything deeper in meaning here, for the whole purpose of this present fire was to provide heat and warmth. In other instances in scripture, "fire" can speak of judgment, or purification, and even mark the appearance of the Lord, but such is not the case here in ACTS 28. However we will note that the Apostle Paul also had the "fire" of the Word of God burning in his heart as he ran his race to win Christ as his bridegroom. All of the first rank full overcomers will have the "fire" of the Holy Ghost burning bright in their own lives too. Are you too "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" as was noted of the disciples, and Apostles in the book of ACTS?

Paul himself being full of the Holy Ghost no doubt prayed as he was gathering these sticks: he prayed of a way of communicating with these kind barbarous people, whose language he didn't speak. As Paul prayed, and ...*gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand...* ACTS 28:3. One translation says the viper "clinched onto his hand." Another translation reads that the viper "seized his hand." In verse 4 we read that it was a venomous beast hanging from his hand, and in verse 6 we find that Paul ...*should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly...* from the bite of this poisonous beast. Was this getting bit by a poisonous snake an answer to prayer? It certainly was! Remember that Paul had already written ROMANS 8:28 *And we know 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 doesn't say that all things work together for good to them that love God, except for viper bites. There is no "except for" in ROMANS 8:28. Realize that this one event was God's way of introducing Paul to the barbarous people of Melita. Of the more than two hundred seventy six now gathered around this warm fire, only one got bit by a viper, and that one was the Apostle Paul. Is this any way for our beloved Apostle Paul to be treated? Let's don't think like that, and get in tune with what God is doing here. The Apostle Paul was in tune with the Lord, and we don't read of him fretting one bit here. Perhaps ISAIAH 26:3 & 4 were at the fore front of his thoughts: *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. 4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:...*

In LUKE 10:19 we read these words of Jesus spoken unto the seventy disciples He sent out: *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.* Did Paul get hurt here? Again let's read this in ACTS 28 starting with verse 3: *And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. 5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. 6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.* We just read in verse 6 how that no harm came unto Paul. Paul's getting bit by the poisonous viper was God's way of once again putting His spotlight on the Apostle Paul. This was God's way of showing Paul, and all who observed him, and all who will follow Paul as he followed Christ, that He...*is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us...* EPHESIANS 3:20. Once again we are reminded of those verses in ISAIAH 55, where we read: *8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Here is another thought to consider that is also found in ISAIAH 26:3 *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. 4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:...* . Was Paul in perfect peace here? Hasn't he been at perfect peace running the race course he

placed on by the Lord Jesus Christ, and been at perfect peace for a long time? Certainly he was! We read back in ACTS 20:24 Paul's testimony before the Ephesian elders where he said: *...But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.* Brother Jesse Franklin noted that this verse shows the spirit of the overcomer. Again while still enroute to Jerusalem we found a certain prophet named Agabus warning Paul, and saying unto him in ACTS 21:11 *...Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.* This was a prophecy. Did the prophecy of Agabus come to pass? Yes it did within a few days of this time. Was Paul in perfect peace even though Agabus prophesied this? He certainly was, and we read in ACTS 21:13 Paul's response: *Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.* All of this too nearly happened unto Paul shortly after his arrival at Jerusalem. None of these events moved him either from running his race course to win Christ as his bridegroom. Do you know who wasn't at perfect peace with Agabus' prophecy? Those that were with Paul. ACTS 21:12 confirms this: *And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.* Reluctantly, after hearing Paul's words of his having perfect peace with following the Lord's leading him on his race course, those who heard Agabus' prophecy, and Paul's response, *...ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done....* ACTS 21:14. Now here in ACTS 28 part of pursuing the high calling of God in Christ Jesus had placed Paul, (after another shipwreck) on the island of Melita, and lo and behold a venomous viper has latched onto his hand, biting Paul. ACTS 28:5 that we read above tells us: *And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.* And Paul was still kept in perfect peace here, wasn't he? ISAIAH 26:3 *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.* 4 *Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength....* . Now who was fretful because of the venomous viper bite Paul had experienced? It wasn't Paul, for we find him kept at perfect peace here. It wasn't those from Paul's ship, for they probably had no experience with how deadly these nasty little vipers can be. The people who knew what harm to expect from the bite of a viper were the barbarous people from the island of Melita. After all it was them that the Lord had sent the Apostle Paul unto in the first place. Paul being bit by a viper was again the Lord's way of introducing him to the friendly people of Melita. What a remarkable divinely designed course God has laid out for His race course runners.

Now I am not saying at all that this viper bite was a trivial event. It wasn't. Nor is this the kind of thing you or I want to face. Neither did Paul. But his focus wasn't on the viper bite, or the ship wreck, or the prison sentence, but rather we should see that Paul's focus was always upon His Excellency, the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover Paul was counting upon the power of God, the power of the Spirit of God, the power of the Holy Ghost, and the power of our Lord Jesus Christ to be more than sufficient to meet whatsoever need, or condition he may face. Paul already knew the facts of 1 JOHN 4:4 even though it hadn't been written yet: that *....greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Paul himself had already written about his ministry unto the Gentiles in his letter to the ROMANS, stating in ROMANS 15:19 *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.* So we see again that it was the power of God that Paul was relying upon to fulfill his calling as a minister of the gospel of Christ. Again EPHESIANS 3:20, which we noted above, comes to mind: *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,....* . Again Paul has written in 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

While considering viper bites, let's review something that John Mark wrote in the 16th chapter of MARK. (On your own review the chapter we wrote on John Mark starting on page 94 of these notes.) [Recall that John Mark was first associated with the church at Jerusalem, and knew all of the kingdom Apostles. One of his relatives was Barnabas, who is mentioned this way by Paul in COLOSSIANS 4:10 *....Marcus, sister's son*

to Barnabas,... . ACTS 12:12 tells us that John Mark's mothers name was Mary, who had a house at Jerusalem where Saints met to worship and pray. He is the very same John Mark that later was a fellowlabourer with Paul as noted in PHILEMON 1:24, and who late was *...profitable to me (Paul) for the ministry* (2 TIMOTHY 4:11).] At any rate John Mark recorded some words of Jesus in his gospel record that the other gospel writers left unrecorded. We find this starting in MARK 16:15 *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 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. 19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.* Take time to note here that Jesus said: *"these signs shall follow them that believe;... ."* Was Paul a believer? Are you a believer? *"They shall take up serpents;... ."* Does it say *"They shall take up serpents;..."* intentionally? No. Did Paul take up this viper serpent intentionally? No. But Jesus goes on to state: *it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* Reading on here in ACTS 28 we find all of this true here on the island of Melita, even though Paul wasn't one of the ones who heard the Lord Jesus Christ say these words. Yet Paul still believed these words of Jesus, and the resulting miracles performed on the island of Melita verify the fact that the word of God is true. Only believe!

The barbarians of Melita knew nothing about the power of God, but they did know about the power of a viper bite. Paul may have known nothing of the power of the viper bite, but as we just noted, Paul did know about the power of God. Recall what took place in Ephesus back in ACTS 19? ACTS 19:11 *And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.* Even though Paul didn't know how to communicate with the friendly people of Melita, God did, and He used a viper bite to get their attention, and open His line of communication.

ACTS 28:4 *And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.* Here we see manifested the thought processes of the natural man. In GENESIS 8:21 we read: *...for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth;... .* Again in 2 CORINTHIANS 2 we read: 11 *For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. ...14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* These people of Melita were reasoning among themselves as to why Paul got bit by a viper, and they first conclude that *...No doubt this man is a murderer,...* Why did they not think that no doubt this man is an Apostle? Or no doubt this man is a believer? Or no doubt about it, this man obviously is a Son of God? For one thing they didn't yet know what any of that meant. Secondly we find that they spoke about of what they observed, which was a man dressed in prison attire. Perhaps they observed Paul's prison chain. Quite possibly a Roman soldier was attached to Paul, or at least over seeing his every movement. Something visible to them gave away the fact that Paul was a prisoner. Thirdly, they had a different thought process against criminals. According to some researchers of history, it is supposed that among the ancients, their thought processes assumed that divine punishment was inflicted upon the part of the body that had been the instrument of sin. Since the viper bit the hand of Paul, their assumption then was *...No doubt this man is a murderer...* and now divine vengeance was now punishing him for the taking of life by the hand. This is quite an assumption isn't it?

Different cultures had differing opinions of what sin was, and we read a little of this in JOHN 9. JOHN 9:1 *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? 3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* Jesus then healed

the blind man's eyes, by seemingly impossible means, putting clay in his blind eyes, and sending him to the pool of Siloam to wash the clay out, and the blind man saw, and became a testimony to all he came in contact with of the fact that Jesus heals blind eyes, that Jesus is the sight giver, and that Jesus is indeed a prophet! You can study JOHN 9 on your own, and see what else took place there, however let us notice the reason Jesus gave His disciples for coming upon this blind man, which is found in verse 3 *...that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

The very same thing should be noted here in ACTS 28 also concerning the Apostle Paul being bit by a viper as to why this happened unto him: *...that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* Paul was already the focal point of all those from off his ship, and now the Lord was seeing to it that the Apostle Paul was being the focal point to all those on the island of Melita, for after all, it was the Lord who actually had sent the Apostle Paul to them *...To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in... Jesus Christ...* ACTS 26:18. Oh sure there was a communication issue here between Paul, and those of the island of Melita, however this was not a problem too hard for God to solve. Besides "a picture is worth a thousand words," an old saying goes, and here on the island of Melita all eyes were now focused upon Paul, and they were all taking mental pictures of what was now taking place.

Let's read again ACTS 28:4 *And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.* Now we will examine the word "vengeance" found here. "Vengeance" as used here comes from the Greek word dike {dee'-kay} (number 1349 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), and this word is only found four times in scripture. Twice dike {dee'-kay} is translated "vengeance," once here in ACTS 28:4, and in JUDE 1:7; once it is translated "judgment" in ACTS 25:15; and once it is translated "punished" in 2 THESSALONIANS 1:9. Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words remarks that the usage of dike {dee'-kay} here "is personified and denotes the goddess Justice or Nemesis, who the Melita folk supposed was about to inflict the punishment of death upon Paul by means of the viper," which is the same thought process we discussed above. Interestingly the Greek word dike {dee'-kay} (here translated "vengeance") adds up numerically to 39, and we learned in our meaning of Bible number study that the number 39 has to do with CHANGE. What we see hinted at here is God's way of introducing positive CHANGE to the barbarous people of Melita. Look up the word "repentance" and see that it signifies a CHANGE of one's mind or purpose for the better. The Greek word for "repentance" is number 3341 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, metanoia {met-an'-oy-ah}, and carries the meaning of "repent" as to it's resultant after affects, showing how one has turned from sin, and turned to God through faith in the precious shed blood of Jesus Christ, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past... {study ROMANS 3:21-26}. Two portions of scripture, one from the Old Testament, and one from the New Testament pretty well summarize this topic. EXODUS 34:6 & 7 in part reads: *...The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,...* . And 2 PETER 3:9 tells us this: *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* So to summarize, we see that God here was using the people of Melita's idea of "vengeance" to introduce positive CHANGE in their life, which could only be brought about by their repentance, and accepting Jesus Christ as their Saviour for the forgiveness of their own sins.

To communicate this idea of positive CHANGE, and thus introduce the concept of "repentance" to these friendly island people, God used Paul as a visual example to get their attention. All of their eyes were now fixed upon Paul anyway, so they all got to witness what we next read about in ACTS 28:5 & 6 -- *And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. 6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly; but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.* Note that *...they changed their minds...* as to who Paul may have been. In verse 4 they reasoned: *"No doubt this*

man is a murderer." By the end of verse 6 ...*they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.* What they had just witnessed was a miracle, but miracles don't save. Jesus saves. And as we continue to study what took place here on the island of Melita we will get a better picture of how God used Paul to be a testimony unto them about the salvation of Jesus Christ. For now note that the island people of Melita perceived Paul the man, to be a god. By the time Paul leaves the island I believe we will see the island people knowing that the man Paul was merely a man, howbeit a remarkable man of God, by whom, and through whom Jesus was magnified.

So we find the Apostle Paul on the island of Melita having received nearly instant fame. He was bitten by a viper, and should have died according to the wisdom of the island people, yet he felt no harm, and was now seen in their minds as a god. By this point in time of Paul's life he had considerable experience to draw from as to how to deal with such people who thought of him as a god. Recall back in ACTS 14 when Paul was on his first missionary journey with Barnabas, how the people of Lystra tried to worship Paul and Barnabas after a lame man was healed. We read this in ACTS 14:11 *And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. 12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. 14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, 15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: 16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. 18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.* In the very next verse we find Paul being stoned, and left for dead, however in this case there were certain Jews from Antioch in Pisidia who had influenced these idol worshippers to stone Paul. Such was not going to be the case here at Melita.

On Paul's second missionary journey with Silas, and Timothy, Paul and Silas were wrongfully accused and thrown into a Philippian jail because of those at Philippi who believed in soothsaying and divination. Because of his preaching Paul was then ran out of town. A short time later Paul was in Thessalonica, where he once again found idol worshippers, and later Paul wrote to them of his preaching unto them in 1 THESSALONIANS 1:9 & 10 -- *For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; 10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.* Paul was once again run out of town at Thessalonica because of the Jews which believed not, who went unto the rulers of the city and said: *...These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus...* ACTS 17:6 & 7. Paul and Silas left Thessalonica immediately at night in ACTS 17:10. Again here on the island of Melita there were no Jews to falsely accuse Paul. After leaving Thessalonica, Paul and Silas went to Berea. A short time later the unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica stirred up the people of Berea, and Paul immediately once again left town. His next stop was Athens, which was full of idol worshippers, and the home of Greek mythology. Those of Athens mocked Paul after he preached his sermon on Mars Hill, however ACTS 17:34 notes that a few men clave unto him, and believed. Would there be a few from the island of Melita who would believe? After Athens Paul ends up in Corinth while still on this second missionary journey, where he preached for a year and a half according to ACTS 18:11. Paul later wrote to the Corinthians concerning their idol worship, noting in 1 CORINTHIANS 8:4 *As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.* Yet those young Saints at Corinth still tried to make idols of men, which Paul had wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 1:12 where he noted that some of Corinth had said: *...I am of Paul; and I*

of Apollos; and I of Cephas;.... . In 1 CORINTHIANS 3:11 Paul corrected them, and showed them: *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* Would Paul be able to lay the foundation of Jesus Christ here on the island of Melita?

On Paul's third missionary journey Paul came to Ephesus and taught there three years! Ephesus was a center of idol worship, whose citizens had built a huge temple to their goddess Diana, which was approximately 420 feet long, and 238 feet wide, with 127 sixty foot high columns supporting the roof structure. Many of these supporting columns were donated by the different kings of Paul's Asia. A large portion of the treasury of Western Asia was stored up in the temple of Diana. ACTS 19:27 notes that the great goddess Diana was worshipped by "all Asia and the world." Recall that here at Ephesus Paul was also run out of town by the idol makers, but before that happened we read in ACTS 19:10 *...that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. 11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.* We will find similar happenings on the island of Melita. ACTS 19:20 continues: *So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.* Did this too also happen on the island of Melita? ACTS 28:7-10 will give us our answers to these questions we have been asking.

ACTS 28:7-10 (from The New Testament in Modern English by J. B. Phillips): 7 In that part of the island were estates belonging to the governor, whose name was Publius. This man welcomed us and entertained us most kindly for three days. 8 Now it happened that Publius' father was lying ill with attacks of fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and after prayer laid his hands on him and healed him. 9 After that all the other sick people on the island came forward and were cured. 10 Consequently they honoured us with many presents, and when the time came for us to sail they provided us with everything we needed.

Three months elapse in these few verses. Realize that the events from ACTS 27:27 through the beginning of ACTS 28:7 all happened in a one day time period beginning at midnight. And we have spent much time discussing all that has taken place since midnight. We have also seen in this 28th chapter of ACTS how the Lord has kept the spot light on Paul, and how Paul now has become the focal point of all on the island of Melita. Yet we also read of a communication issue here, for the island people of Melita didn't speak the same language as those from off Paul's ship. Though this may be a problem for the natural man, communicating with the natives of Melita was not going to be a problem for God. Remember this concept that all full overcomers come to learn in their walking with the Lord, that there is nothing too hard for the Lord. GENESIS 18:14 records these words of the Lord: *Is any thing too hard for the LORD?* JEREMIAH 32:37 continues with this same point: *Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?* Our natural minds all the time tell us -- this problem is too hard even for God to solve, but the spiritually minded realize there is absolutely nothing too hard for God to solve. Let me reference some thoughts Brother Hill penned in the margin of his Bible in JOHN chapter 4: There is a common failure of many to measure the task by man's abilities, and yet the Bible is filled with the radiant promises of power. God wants to do wonders in our lives, but we only see how deep the well, and nothing to draw with. (This in reference to John 4:11 where the woman of Samaria says to Jesus: *Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep;...*) Then Brother Hill noted: "All things are possible to him that believeth." {End of quoting Brother Hill.} In LUKE 18:27 we read: *...The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.* Again in MARK 9:23 we find these words of Jesus: *...If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* Also in MARK 10:27 Jesus said *...With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*

Smith Wigglesworth made a career out of believing one scripture, which is found in JOHN 14:12 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works (grander in scope) than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.* The real power of Wigglesworth's ministry was the Holy Ghost, whose anointing he was filled with in 1907, at the age of 48. It is reported that about twenty people were raised from the dead after Wigglesworth prayed for them! He too emphasized his belief in the fact that God could do the impossible, and he had great faith

in what God could do, and in what God could do through him. His favorite saying was: "only believe."

We find the phrase "only believe" in MARK 5:36, and in that portion of scripture from MARK 5:35-43 we find the story of a ruler of the synagogue, who had just been told his daughter of twelve is dead. MARK 5:36 *As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.* Jesus then went to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, where much unbelief was manifested, *...And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked;...* MARK 5:41 & 42. Prior to this incident in MARK, we find in LUKE 4:18 that Jesus was back in Nazareth where He had been brought up, except this time was different in that Jesus ministry had now begun. And on the sabbath day Jesus stood up to read, and the book of ISAIAH was delivered unto Him, and Jesus opened up the book of ISAIAH to chapter 61, and reads verses 1 & 2. LUKE 4:18 repeats ISAIAH 61:1, stating: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,...* There was a never heard before passion in Jesus words as He read this scripture, and He made these words come alive, and the congregation knew it. Then we read in LUKE 4:20-22 -- *...And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. 22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.* The point we need to see, among the many that are presented here, is that Jesus was telling that His ministry was manifold, and included not only the preaching of the gospel, but healing, and deliverance, and opening blind eyes, and setting men at liberty that have been beat up and bruised in this life. Isn't this exactly what Jesus did back here in MARK 5? He preached a sermon when He said to the broken hearted ruler of the synagogue, *...Be not afraid, only believe.* Jesus then healed the damsel who was dead, raised her to life again, and in the process opened the blind eyes of all them who mocked Him, to the point where *....they were astonished with a great astonishment....* MARK 5:42.

What was Paul's ministry? Like Jesus' ministry, Paul's ministry was manifold, but The Lord Jesus had told him on the road to Damascus exactly what his ministry was to be: ACTS 26:16 *But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.* Now how does all of this tie in with Paul having been sent unto the people of the island of Melita? How is Paul going to be able to minister unto those on the island of Melita, and to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, especially since there is a communication issue here? How is this going to happen? Well didn't we just read that there is nothing too hard for the Lord in both GENESIS 18:14 and JEREMIAH 32:37? And didn't we just also read: *...The things which are impossible with men are possible with God...* in LUKE 18:27, and in MARK 9:23 *...If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth...* and in MARK 10:27 *...for with God all things are possible....?* So what is a little communication issue with God? Nothing! "Only believe!"

Perhaps you have heard the story of Helen Keller, who was left deaf and blind probably from scarlet fever at the age of nineteen months. This was in 1880. In 1886 The Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston provided Helen Keller with a teacher named Anne Sullivan, who in time found a way to communicate with Helen Keller. By the time Helen Keller was 16, Anne Sullivan had been able to teach her well enough that she passed the entrance exam to Radcliffe College. When she was nine years old a minister told her about God. When he did, Helen smiled real big and communicated back to him these words: "I always knew He was there, I just didn't know His name." In those years of darkness, without knowing human communication, Helen knew she wasn't alone. She felt God's love. And when later told about Christ, she knew it was Him who

was living in her heart! Our natural mind wonders how this could be? How could Helen Keller know Jesus without anyone being able to communicate with her? Does MARK 10:27 answer this question for you? *...for with God all things are possible....?* Remember Moses' conversation with the Lord back in EXODUS 4 when Moses argued with the Lord about his lack of eloquence? EXODUS 4:11 *And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?* Let's look at some verses from ISAIAH 43. ISAIAH 43:8 *Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. 9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. ...11 I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. ...13 Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it? ...18 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.* LUKE 1:37 perhaps sums up all of this by stating: *For with God nothing shall be impossible.* Let me take this one step further. Since God took Helen Keller the way He did, and let her become deaf, and blind at nineteen months of age, thus losing two of her most important five senses, leaving her seemingly isolated from normal human communication during her most formative years, and this happening before she even reached the age of accountability; don't you suppose that God, her creator, who maketh both the deaf and the blind, don't you suppose He communicated with her? God didn't just leave her in utter isolation in her dark, and silent world, lost with no lines of communication for seven years. No, He brought her to this place to reveal Himself unto her, in a way only she could understand! She couldn't talk to anybody. She couldn't see anybody. She couldn't hear anybody. She couldn't yet communicate with anyone. But God communicated to her, and with her. Helen Keller later wrote: "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart." God touched her heart. Her own testimony was that she felt God's love; that she knew she wasn't alone. What does 1 JOHN 4:16 tell us? *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Again what did we read above: *...The things which are impossible with men are possible with God....* in LUKE 18:27. Can I reason in my own mind how this was possible with Helen Keller? No. Can I explain how when missionaries first came to a group of natives, who had never even seen people outside their tribe, how it was they already knew Jesus as their Saviour? No. Can I explain how a person with no education, and no reading ability, after praying to God can read a Bible, but can read nothing else? No, and I have heard two different examples of this happening. There are a lot of things I can not explain, but there is one thing I too can do, *...Be not afraid, only believe....* MARK 5:36!

Now as an aside, consider this. None of us have been translated... yet. Only two people have ever been translated (so far), Enoch, and Elijah. Do you believe that? Do you believe *...The things which are impossible with men are possible with God....* in LUKE 18:27? Do you believe that an iron axe head can float, and a piece of wood sink? If not read about it in 2 KINGS 6:1-7. Do you believe that the sun, and moon stood still in the sky about a whole day? JOSHUA 10:12-14 tells us that it did! And NASA had to program this fact into their data base before they could ever hit their targets with satellites! JOSHUA 10:12 *Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. 13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. 14 And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.* Do you think God could make the sun go backwards in the sky? Well He did and NASA had to account for this fact too! Here's the story how God did this. 2 KINGS 20:1 *In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not*

live. 2 Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, 3 I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. 4 And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 5 Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. 6 And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. 7 And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. 8 And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day? 9 And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees? 10 And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees. 11 And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz. Do you believe these stories? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever? HEBREWS 13:8 tells us He is! So here is my point, since none of us have ever been translated, yet, nor have any of us witnessed such a thing, do you for your self think this to be possible? Do you think translation is possible for yourself? Do you really think it possible for your self to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air as foretold in 1 THESSALONIANS 4:17? (1 THESSALONIANS 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.) Do you think it possible for your very self to be a Philadelphia full overcomer? ...Be not afraid, only believe.... MARK 5:36! As Brother Hill used to say: "come on now, get with it!"

The Bible is full of incredible stories. To some, these stories are unbelievable. But we have now shown several examples of the fact that ...with God all things are possible.... MARK 10:27. Back here in ACTS 28:7-10 we are considering the communication issues between those off of Paul's ship, and those on the island of Melita. More specifically we are seeing how it is that the Apostle Paul was going to be able to minister unto these friendly Barbarous in spite of a language barrier. By now we should realize a couple of things here: (1) there is not a communication issue with God, and (2) there is nothing impossible for God. Do you think Paul knew these things? Yes he did, though he may not have thought about these very same things in the way we have presented them here. There really is no way for us to know exactly what Paul was thinking here after the events of ACTS 28:1-6, but let's once again recall some of the things Paul has already penned in his letters, and epistles that he has written so far, starting with ROMANS 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Perhaps as he was swimming to shore after the earlier in the day ship wreck he quoted this verse. And again after being bitten by the viper he may have once again quoted ROMANS 8:28. And then he may have thought about what he wrote in the rest of ROMANS 8. ROMANS 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? ...37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Do you suppose as Paul warmed himself by the fire after being bitten by the viper that ROMANS 11:36 was on his mind? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. Do you think Paul recalled the following thoughts he wrote about in 1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-12 as he became the focal point of those on the island of Melita? 1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed

them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. And we know that Paul loved God, and in his own life manifested the love of God, which he expounded upon in 1 CORINTHIANS 13, where he noted in verse 7 that love ...*Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* Perhaps this thought that Paul wrote about in 2 CORINTHIANS 9:8 now came to his mind here at Melita: *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:...* . And this just scratches the surface of what Paul had already written concerning the subject of the many various events, and things that God has placed upon our individual race courses for us to overcome.

Certainly Paul was very familiar with the facts of ISAIAH 55:8 & 9 -- *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* There is none of us who could have written such a script as we have read here in ACTS 27, and in what we have read of in ACTS 28 so far, for truly none of our thoughts, and our ways are like the Lord's thoughts, and His perfect ways. We have pointed out how Paul became the focal point of all those on his ship, and how by following Paul, as he followed the leading of the Holy Ghost, they all had now escaped safe to land, unharmed. None of us could have imagined this to even be possible. We have now also pointed out how our beloved Apostle Paul has become the focal point of all the friendly barbarous people on the island of Melita, and how God put the spotlight on Paul by having a poisonous viper bite him right in front of everybody, with no ill effects, or no harm done! Certainly none of us would have authored such a story, nor could we, for indeed Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith (HEBREWS 12:2). The Holy Ghost already has inspired the Apostle Paul to write the following: ROMANS 11:33 *C the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

All of these events of ACTS 27, and what we have read so far in ACTS 28, and what we will continue to examine, even to the end of ACTS 28, really highlights, and brings into clearer focus how God deals with people, and what He looks for in an individual. And really all scripture emphasizes this same theme. Specifically we are taking note here of the manifold ways The Lord deals with the heart's of men, ...*To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in...* Jesus Christ (see again ACTS 26:18). The communication issue that we find here on the island of Melita between those off of Paul's ship, and the friendly people of Melita, is no obstacle for God, for again He looks on the heart. God spoke to the heart of Helen Keller before any man could communicate with her about Him. Language, of course, is no barrier as far as God is concerned.

Let's review a few scriptures that once again illustrates this point. In 1 SAMUEL 16:7 the prophet Samuel had been sent by the Lord to Bethlehem to anoint the next king of Israel, and here is what the Lord told Samuel: *But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.* When king David brought the ark of God into the city of David, he delivered a psalm of thanks unto the Lord, which is recorded in two portions of scripture: 1 CHRONICLES 16:8-36, and PSALMS 105. Both 1 CHRONICLES 16:10 and PSALMS 105:3 read the same: *Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.* The whole 44th PSALMS is written to encourage our faith, and verse 20 & 21 reads: *If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; 21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.* In JEREMIAH 17:10 we find a verse that Jesus Himself quotes from in REVELATION 2:23, and

JEREMIAH 17:10 reads: *I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

By now it should be plain that the Lord is the heart examiner, and there are many other verses in the Bible that verify this important principle, which you can look up on your own. The point we need to see here is that God has brought the Apostle Paul unto the island of Melita to be a witness unto them of the power of God, so that they too could be brought to the point where they receive forgiveness of sins, and even an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus. What does ROMANS 10:10 tell us? *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* There is no language barrier in this verse, for there is no language barrier with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who searches the hearts of all men. Paul will preach to these island people of Melita, not so much with words, but with the active actions of a man of faith. Study ROMANS 2:4 and see that it is the goodness of God that brings men unto repentance. Again 2 PETER 3:9 speaks nothing of a language barrier, but reminds us that: *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Let's jump ahead in ACTS 28 here for a moment to when Paul actually arrives in Rome. Recall that about four years earlier Paul had written them his ROMANS epistle. At any rate Paul called the chief of the Jews to come together where Paul was being held in Rome so that he could present his defence before them, which they did one day, and verse 23 tells us that Paul *...expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.* And they understood him, for Paul spoke their language. Verse 24 goes on to state: *And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.* Praise the Lord for those who did believe Paul's gospel message here. For those who didn't receive Paul's gospel message he left them with words from ISAIAH 6:9 & 10, from which Jesus also quoted in MATTHEW 13. Here is what Paul said: ACTS 28:25 *...Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, 26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.* Paul then added these closing words in verse 28 -- *Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.* Paul made this statement in verse 28 after years of personal experience as an Apostle; after years of traveling all over his known world testifying to both Jews and Gentiles alike. And most recently Paul's experiences had been with those barbarous people on the island of Melita, who heard the words of the Apostle Paul, even though they didn't speak his languages, and they saw with their own eyes many miracles performed at the hands of Paul, and in spite of the language barrier, it seems they understood with their heart, because they came and sought Paul out, and were healed as noted in ACTS 28:9. Obviously those on Melita believed something, and that something was the God of the Apostle Paul, by whom, and through whom special miracles were wrought, and witnessed by the Melitian's themselves.

Having now contrasted the different attitude found between those of Rome, and those on the island of Melita, let now go back to verse 7, and examine a little closer how God was able to deal with these friendly island people, to whom He has now sent the Apostle Paul unto. Realize also that Paul, and those off of his ship were on the island of Melita for three months according to ACTS 28:11.

ACTS 28:7 *In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.* The New Testament in Modern English by J. B. Phillips translation of this verse again reads: *In that part of the island were estates belonging to the governor, whose name was Publius. This man welcomed us and entertained us most kindly for three days. A little knowledge of history helps our understanding here, for Melita was under the*

control of the Roman government. The chief man of the island was also this Roman governor, named Publius. The name "Publius" is Roman, and means: popular. As the governor of the island it would simply be the governors' duty to take care of the Roman centurion, Julius, and his company. Luke here records that Publius, the governor, *...received us, and lodged us three days courteously...* or as one translator puts it, "generously made us his guest with friendly thoughtfulness." Imagine taking in two hundred and seventy six unexpected guests! And then keeping them for three days until such time when they could better provide for themselves! This is what governor Publius did. Note what Paul later wrote in HEBREWS 13:1 *Let brotherly love continue. 2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* To Publius the Apostle Paul was such an angel, or messenger from the Lord. Now there exists the possibility that Publius spoke Latin, for he had a Latin name, and if he did speak Latin, then Paul could communicate with him, for Paul too spoke the language of the Roman Empire. Obviously there was some communication here, for Luke does record Publius' name.

ACTS 28:8 *And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.* Let's look at this verse a little closer, starting with the words *...And it came to pass...* We are not told how long a period of time elapsed here. The phrase "it came to pass" is found over four hundred and fifty times in scripture, indicating time frames from minutes to decades. We are not told if Publius' father lived in the same house as Publius, nor are we told if Paul prayed for him during the three days they were lodging in Publius' house. Sometime during the winter "it came to pass" that Publius' father was lying ill with a fever and dysentery, certainly not a pleasant affliction, nor one that we want to further discuss. Obviously the sickness of Publius' father became known to Paul, but we must keep in mind that Paul was a prisoner here, howbeit a prisoner with certain liberties that were given him of Julius the centurion, as noted previously in ACTS 27:3. By now we know that Julius himself paid close attention to Paul, and his Godly words of advice, for Julius knew that it was because of Paul's prayers, and his God given direction, and wisdom that they all had survived the recent ordeal at sea. And after the recent viper bite incident, all on the island knew that there was something different about Paul too, and had assumed he was a god, but couldn't figure out why he was a prisoner. God opened the lines of communication between the barbarous people, and Paul, through this illness of Publius' father. And in spite of this communications barrier, and prison chains, the Lord brought Paul to have compassion upon this man, for Paul knew the healing power of the living God.

Before we continue looking into what happened here to Publius' father, let's explore a little more about compassion. Before the Apostle Paul was saved, he had no compassion on anyone. What did we read about him before he was saved, when he was called Saul of Tarsus? When that sweet disciple of the Lord, Stephen was being stoned to death, Saul of Tarsus was there, and ACTS 8:1 tells us: *And Saul was consenting unto his death.* Obviously there was no compassion shown there on Saul's part. Two verses later we read: ACTS 8:3 *As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.* No compassion shown here either. ACTS 9:1 *And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.* Breathing out threatenings and slaughter is just the opposite of showing compassion. Paul later wrote Timothy about this time in his life where he noted in 1 TIMOTHY 1:13 that he *...was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious:...* In GALATIANS 1:13 Paul expressed another revealing thought about his life before he was saved: *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:...* Persecuting and wasting the church of God is just the opposite of showing compassion. Then on the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus, the man with no compassion, met the One who is full of compassion, who is Jesus Christ the Lord! Five (GRACE) times in the PSALMS we find the phrase "full of compassion," which scriptures Saul of Tarsus had learned from his youth, but meant nothing to him, until that day on the road to Damascus. These five scriptures from PSALMS are: PSALMS 78:38

But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. PSALMS 86:15 But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. PSALMS 111:4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion. PSALMS 112:4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. PSALMS 145:8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. On the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus learned first hand of Him ...Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way... HEBREWS 5:2. In ROMANS 9:15 Paul quotes from EXODUS 33:19 noting what the Lord said unto Moses: ...I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Certainly Saul of Tarsus learned this lesson of the Lord's great compassion that mid day when he saw the Light while on the road to Damascus. Saul of Tarsus accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour right then and there, and then asked "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" ...ACTS 9:6. One of the important things Saul of Tarsus learned that he himself needed that day if he was ever going to be the minister, and witness, and Apostle that Jesus told him he was to be, was a compassion for souls. In short, Paul began to learn that day on the road to Damascus, that he needed to let the same mind be in him, which was in Christ Jesus if he too was ever going to have a compassion for souls (see PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8), and himself ...have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way... HEBREWS 5:2. Obviously the Lord gave Saul of Tarsus the compassion he needed to become the Apostle Paul. In part this is why Paul was able to write what he did in 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Even though we don't find the word "compassion" any where in the book of ACTS, we do see that Paul had "compassion" on souls everywhere he went. We also find Paul's "compassion" for souls here on the island of Melita. It is interesting to note that there are five words found for the Greek verb translated "compassion," or "compassionate" in our New Testament scripture, all of which come into play here on the island of Melita. We will briefly look at all five of these verbs in a moment, and I encourage you to make a study of this on your own also.

The first of these five Greek verbs that translates into "compassion" is eleeo {el-eh-eh'-o}, (number 1653 in The Strong's Greek Concordance) meaning: to have mercy, to show kindness, to have pity on, and to feel sympathy with the misery of another, and especially sympathy manifested in act. This was the kind of "compassion" the island people of Melita had toward the 276 stranded shipwrecked souls when they showed "no little kindness" in ACTS 28:2. MATTHEW 5:7 uses eleeo expressing mercy this way: *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*

The second Greek verb that translates into "compassion" that we will look at is oikteiro {oyk-ti'-ro}, (number 3627 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), meaning: to have pity, or a feeling of distress through the ills of others, and is used of God's compassion. This usage of the word "compassion" is only found in one scripture in the New Testament, which we referenced above in ROMANS 9:15 Paul quotes from EXODUS 33:19 noting what the Lord said unto Moses: ...I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Paul himself showed this kind of "compassion" in ACTS 28:8 & 9, when he called upon God in Jesus name to heal those whom he came in contact with there on the island of Melita.

The third Greek verb that translates into "compassion" in the New Testament is the word metriopatheo {met-ree-op-ath-eh'-o}, (number 3356 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), which we looked at above also when we read HEBREWS 5:2 *Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;...* . The meaning here is to treat with mildness, or moderation; to bear gently with, or sympathize with others, overlooking their faults and ignorance. Obviously this is the way by which Paul had "compassion" with the people of Melita, who, no doubt, were ignorant of God, or the things of God until this time frame of ACTS 28.

The fourth Greek verb that translates into "compassion" is sumpatheo {soom-path-eh'-o}, (number 4834 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), meaning to be affected

with the same feeling as another, to sympathize with, or to feel for, or have compassion on another. Obviously Paul sympathized with the father of Publius, and felt touched with his infirmity, which is why *...Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him...* in ACTS 28:8. This Greek word *sumpatheo* is translated "feeling" in HEBREWS 4:15 *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* Praise the Lord for Christ's "compassion" upon us!

The fifth Greek verb that translates into "compassion" is the most common one that translates as "compassion," and is the Greek word *splagchnizomai* {*splangkhnid'-zom-ahee*}, (number 4697 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), meaning to be moved as to ones inwards; to yearn with compassion. This is the kind of "compassion" most commonly shown in association with Jesus, as is noted in the following scriptures. MATTHEW 9:36 *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.* MATTHEW 14:14 *And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.* MATTHEW 15:32 *Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.* MATTHEW 20:34 *So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.* MARK 1:41 *And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.* LUKE 7:13 *And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.* This too is the very same kind of "compassion" Paul showed in ACTS 28:9 when *...others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:...* Thank God who raiseth the dead, for sending our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who had "compassion" on all of us, and died for our sins, and by whose stripes we were, and are healed!

ACTS 28:8 *And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in,...* Obviously Publius' father was very sick, and during the course of Paul's stay on the island of Melita, Paul became aware of the fathers' sickness. The governor could have called for the finest doctors on the island to come to the aid of his father, and perhaps he did. Jesus Himself said in LUKE 5:31 *...They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.* If governor Publius called for a doctor, perhaps Luke's name came up, for even Paul himself called Luke, "the beloved physician" in COLOSSIANS 4:14. If Luke did become aware of the fathers' illness before Paul's knowledge of this, we are not told in scripture. But we do find here that *...it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick,...* and it seems, no one was able to help, physician or otherwise. The father of Publius was in a helpless, and seemingly hopeless situation, *...but for God.* Perhaps the governor had witnessed, or at the very least heard about Paul's being bitten by the viper, and had carefully observed Paul himself, and had concluded that there was something extraordinarily unusual about Paul. This old prisoner displayed a calm demeanor, a quiet spirit, and a glow from the Holy Ghost of a man full of the peace and joy of the Lord. And Publius' felt the love of God manifest in the life of Paul, and felt comfortable having this prisoner in his home. Perhaps also the governor then entreated Paul to put his hands on his father, or maybe even Publius' father request Paul to touch him himself, for after all they knew he possessed some kind of power after the viper incident. However this came about, Paul had compassion for this sick man, as we noted above, and convinced Julius, and the governor that he knew the One who could help. So it came to pass that Paul was allowed, both of man, and of God, to enter into the room of Publius' father.

Let's observe something very important here as we continue to examine the life of the Apostle Paul. Keep in mind that we have been pointing out that Paul is being highlighted in scripture on this trip to Rome as a man of faith, and a man who continues to live his life by faith. This quality is found in all full overcomers, for you will not find any full overcomers in heaven who did not live their life by faith. There are certain qualities also highlighted in scripture of those who achieve this highest rank of full overcomer; qualities found mentioned by Jesus as He comments on the Philadelphian Saint in REVELATION 3. This quality we need to note from REVELATION 3, and also

observe here in ACTS 28, is how the full overcomer deals with the different doors of opportunity that is set before them. Realize that all Saints don't recognize these full overcoming doors of opportunity, for these doors are only mentioned by our Lord and Saviour, (in His address to the seven churches of REVELATION 2 and 3), to those of Philadelphia. These doors of opportunity are designed, and even foreordained to challenge the faith of the full overcomer, and as we will see as we go through this thought, some of these doors are opened, and some of these doors are closed on purpose by God, challenging us, and allowing Him the opportunity to open them by our prayers of faith. Before we cover this thought in more detail, observe here in ACTS 28:8 that the first door of opportunity opened here was the one that allowed the Apostle Paul to enter into the room of Publius' father, in spite of the language barrier, and in spite of the fact that Paul was a prisoner. This event then led to even a bigger door of opportunity where many others on the island also, which had various diseases, came, and were healed in ACTS 28:9.

Now let's consider the challenge presented to the Philadelphian Saints of the doors of overcoming opportunity that could only be opened by faith. REVELATION 3:7 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; 8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* This is one sentence, wherein are presented many thoughts, but let's bring our attention to focus upon the door of opportunity presented here. In His opening remarks to all of the seven churches, Jesus give a brief description of Himself, by which the members of their particular assembly will recognize, and know Him. (This thought is indeed a whole other subject of study, which we will not cover here.) What we want to take note of from verse 7 of REVELATION 3 here is the fourth point of His four fold description of Himself where Jesus states it is *...he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth...* In part we should see here then that it is Jesus who opens the previously locked doors, which, to the Philadelphian Saint, are doors of opportunity that only Christ Himself can open. How can He do this? In His third description of Himself in verse 7 Jesus announces that *...he that hath the key of David...* which signifies the key of power and authority by which Jesus shall *...reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end...* LUKE 1:33. {Study also ISAIAH 9:7.} REVELATION 1:18 also tells that Jesus has *...the keys of hell and of death.* What we need to see here is that Jesus has the power and authority to unlock any door that he wants to open, and there really is no limit that can be put on this statement. He can unlock physical doors, mental doors, spiritual doors, or whatever kind of doors you can imagine.

Just one example of a little of this can be found in ACTS 12 where we see literal locked doors opened that delivered Peter out of prison. ACTS 12:5 *Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. 6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. 7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. Who unlocked these chains that bound Peter? Jesus ...that hath the key of David. ACTS 12:8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. Who unlocked this iron gate of the prison that leadeth unto the city? Jesus ...that hath the key of David. ACTS 12:11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. Peter knew Jesus, and also knew that Jesus was the one ...that hath the key of David.*

Now let's consider a couple of thoughts from REVELATION 3:8, the last part of Jesus opening sentence to the church of Philadelphia: *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* To each of the seven churches Jesus (after giving a brief description of Himself by which they would know Him) said: *"I know thy works,"* along with a brief description of what their works were in enough detail so that the members of each particular assembly would also recognize themselves. To the Saints of Philadelphia Jesus says: "behold..." meaning: look, pay attention and see. He wants us the potential Philadelphian overcomer to see, to recognize, and to fully grasp, and lay a hold of just exactly what it is He is doing in our own lives; to see it with our eyes of faith, to ...*behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* Now in one respect this open door speaks of the open door of translation that all Philadelphia full overcomers will pass through, but that will be their last open door through which they will pass during their time on earth. Before their time of translation the Philadelphia Saint, (potentially you and me), will have trusted Him that ...*that hath the key of David...* to open locked doors, and to shut, and lock doors behind us, if necessary, to bring us to that point in our lives where we are ready to rule and reign with Him as His Bride, who hath made herself ready. It is Jesus, the Author, and Finisher of our faith, who wants us to ...*behold,...* Him, and recognize that it is Him, Jesus Christ, who has ...*set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it:...*

Recall from REVELATION 3:7 that it is Jesus ...*that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;...* these doors that we are talking about in the first place. Such doors often times are invisible doors, that is invisible doors to our eyes, but not invisible doors to open hearts of faith. In order to be a participant in allowing Jesus to open and close doors of opportunity unto you, you first must open the door of your heart unto Him. Jesus explains this in REVELATION 3:20 -- *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* Brother Fuller used this scripture to lead over two hundred boys to the Lord over a period of years at the Golden State Youth Camp. Once you have opened the door of your heart, and let Jesus into your heart, seemingly limitless doors of opportunity from Him are opened to you. Doors of deliverance. Doors of healing. The door of receiving the Holy Ghost is opened to believers. And then there are the many doors of overcoming. There are also doors that are shut by Jesus. Who put your sins and iniquities behind the door of "I remember no more?" {See HEBREWS 8:12 & 10:17}. Who closed the door of harm on those who would have stoned the woman taken in the very act of adultery in JOHN 8:3-11? Who closed the door of the ark? Who opened the door of the Red Sea for the children of Israel? Who closed the same door of the Red Sea upon the Egyptians? Who shut up the doors of heaven in the time of Elijah so that it didn't rain for three and a half years? Who opened the doors of heaven to make it rain again? {See 1 KINGS 17:1 & 18:42-46, LUKE 4:25, and James 5:17 & 18}. Who, once allowed into your heart, said *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee?"* {See HEBREWS 13:5; DEUTERONOMY 31:6 & 8; and JOSHUA 1:5}. It is Jesus ...*that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;...* The fact is that no man can shut the open door that Jesus holds open for us. No man, not even you, for you are a man. There never has been a man alive who could overpower Jesus. 1 CORINTHIANS 1:25 states why this is true: *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* Jesus states here in REVELATION 3:8 ...*behold, I... ..set before thee an open door...*, which ...*no man can shut.* It is important to note that ...*no man can shut...* this open door of opportunity, which is set before the potential full overcomer. This eliminates the excuse then that so many Saints make of why they can't have God's best because so and so person hindered them. GALATIANS 5:7 & 8 reads: *Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? 8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.* So and so person may indeed hinder you along the way if your focus is upon so and so person, or so and so circumstance for that matter. The full overcomer recognizes that there will be obstacles to overcome, even so and so person(s) to overcome, but their focus remains upon Jesus Christ the Author and Finisher of their faith. In the end the fact remains that Jesus still holds the door open, which no man can shut. Do you see Jesus holding the door of overcoming opportunity open for you? No

man can shut this door. In HEBREWS 12:2 we find the full overcomer *...Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

We will get back to this door of opportunity that Paul walked through, and "entered in" in ACTS 28:8 in a moment, but before we do I want to read a note from Brother Hill's Bible that he wrote in the margin next to MATTHEW 7:7 & 8, which text reads: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* Now Brother Hill's note: "So often we hear of the challenge of the open door, but here we have that of the closed door. Some opportunities are before us when the door is ajar, but here they are bolted. We like to hear, *...behold, I have set before thee an open door...* but it is the closed (door) that challenges our faith, and tests our courage. Many are the closed doors (of) the heart we would enter and see lighted with the life, and love of God. We knock and no answer, or a growl -- the reveling goes on. We can't get their attention, the world is too bright and promising, the door is closed, what shall we do? Keep on knocking. The doors are many, so anyone can enter an open door. The real challenge is closed, locked, barred and sealed. Here we need to measure the door by God, not our own puny might." (End of Brother Hill's note.) This was Brother Hill's way of noting that it is He that openeth.

In our text of ACTS 28:8 we find that our man of faith, Paul, has walked through the door of opportunity presented him here on the island of Melita, and has now arrived at the bedside of governor Publius' sick father: *...Paul entered in, and prayed...* . What does a man of faith do? Pray! Men of faith pray to the living God; pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him; pray in faith believing, expecting to receive exceeding abundantly above all that they could ask or think, and ask Him to accomplish the impossible tasks placed before them!

We just mentioned the word "impossible," a word found only nine times in scripture. Nine is an interesting number that points to FINALITY or DIVINE COMPLETENESS, and shows that the final touches on an overcoming Christian life can only be divinely completed by the Holy Spirit. A quick example of this is found in GALATIANS 5:22 & 23 where we read of the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit, which are: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. This nine-fold fruit manifests itself in the measure that a Holy Spirit Christian allows Christ to grow up within himself, *...unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ...* EPHESIANS 4:13. The full overcomer will be fully grown up into Christ in all things, which is how the Bride of Christ will have made herself ready (study REVELATION 19:7), by allowing the Holy Spirit to work these full overcoming changes into her (our) lives.

Now back to the word "impossible," which is only found nine times in scripture, let's see how the word "impossible" ties in with the life of a full overcomer, who are also prayer warriors of faith. The final time we read the word "impossible" in scripture is in HEBREWS 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Impossible to man translates to possible with God. In LUKE 18:27 Jesus says: *...The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.* The angel Gabriel told Mary in LUKE 1:37 *For with God nothing shall be impossible.* The scripture is full of accounts of impossible things that really, and truly happened unto those who diligently sought God. The Red Sea was no obstacle to God, and God told Moses in EXODUS 14:16 *But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.* Did Moses say, you know what Lord, I think I have heard it all now? What you are telling me to do is impossible! No Moses didn't say this, because Moses knew better, and Moses believed God, and Moses knew if God told him to do something as simple as raise up his rod unto God, and stretch his hand over the sea, that it was God's job to divide it! And He did, and HEBREWS 11:29 records: *By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.* That is just one example of the many impossible things God did because Moses was a man of faith who believed that God could

do the impossible. All full overcomers are proven to have this kind of faith! How many Red Sea's has the Lord placed on your race course? How did He take you through them? There was only one way, by faith.

A youth named David went up against a well armored giant, and slew him! Impossible you say? Not for God, for it was God who guided the smooth stone from David's antique sling shot to hit Goliath in his forehead, sinking it deep into the giants skull. David proved here that he truly was a man of faith, trusting God to do the impossible. Let's read a brief account of this in 1 SAMUEL 17:45 *Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. 46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.* Goliath thought this to be impossible too, until the stone from David's sling shot took him out.

In DANIEL 3:15 king Nebuchadnezzar said to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: *...who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?* King Nebuchadnezzar expected, and even demanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego bow down and worship his man made gods, and if they didn't follow his orders, he would cast them into the burning fiery furnace. You know the story of how they didn't go along with this heathen idea of the king, and we read in the next verses: DANIEL 3:16 *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, C Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, C king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, C king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.* These were men of faith, who knew that God could do the impossible for them. Nebuchadnezzar was furious, and commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than it was supposed to be heated. Too bad Nebuchadnezzar wasn't familiar with God, or the meaning of Bible numbers, for the number seven is the number that has to do with SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION, and he was about to witness SPIRITUAL PERFECTION in person! DANIEL 3:21 *Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, C king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. 28 Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.*

We just briefly reviewed three accounts from Old Testament scripture of impossible things that really, and truly happened unto those who diligently prayed,

and sought God, and believed Him to do the impossible. Jesus said in MARK 9:23 *...If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.* Are these words you can believe, and latch onto for the impossible situations He brings you to? In GENESIS 18:14 God asks Abraham: *Is any thing too hard for the LORD?* How did Abraham answer God this question? In faith believing! ROMANS 4:20 & 21 gives us Abraham's answer: *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.* New Testament worthies of faith accomplish impossible tasks by faith in God, believing that there is nothing hard for the Lord to do. Note what the Lord told Jeremiah in JEREMIAH 32:27 *Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?*

Let's get back to our text in ACTS 28:8 where we find Paul in another seemingly impossible situation, but for God. Recall that all race course runners are brought to many so called impossible situations, so that the Author and Finisher of our faith can test, and perfect us! Here is the impossible situation Paul was now in. Paul was in the governors house here on the island of Melita, and the governors father was sick with a seriously bad case of dysentery, and a high fever. But Paul faced a couple of obstacles here however. One, he was a prisoner, and as a prisoner he couldn't just come and go as he pleased. Secondly, all indications we find in our text of ACTS 28:1-10 tells us that there was a serious communications issue between those off Paul's ship, and the friendly island people of Melita, who are noted to be barbarians, meaning that they spoke a different language. But Paul had been in many impossible situations before, and he knew he could face these impossible situations just like those in the Old Testament had, which was by faith in God. Jesus told His disciples in MATTHEW 17:20 *...verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.* By this point in his life Paul knew this to be true. Paul also knew the facts of MATTHEW 21:22 to be true, which reads: *And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* Further more we have found here in ACTS 28:8 that our man of faith, Paul, has been presented a door of opportunity by the Lord, and with the approval of the governor, Paul has walked through the door of opportunity presented him here on the island of Melita, and has now arrived at the bedside of the governors' sick father: *...Paul entered in, and prayed,...* . We also noted above how Paul prayed, stating that he prayed to the living God; prayed in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him; prayed in faith believing, expecting to receive exceeding abundantly above all that he could ask or think, and asked the Lord Jesus to accomplish the impossible task that was now placed before him. Note that Paul didn't just rush in and lay hands on Publius' father, for our text reads: *...Paul entered in, and prayed,...* . No doubt as Paul prayed, he asked the Lord to guide him as to how to deal with this very sick man. Think of how inappropriate it would have been for a prisoner to suddenly lay his hands on a governors' father! That wouldn't have been right, and Paul knew it. After many years of experience as an Apostle, Paul later wrote the following Holy Ghost inspired advice unto the Apostle Timothy in 1 TIMOTHY 5:22 *Lay hands suddenly {hastily} on no man,...* . But we don't read of Paul suddenly laying his hands of Publius' father here, for our text reads: *...Paul entered in, and prayed,...* and then after a period of time we find that Paul *...laid his hands on him, and healed him.* Our focus now turns to that period of time between Paul entering in to the room of the governors' father, and his laying hands on him to pray for his healing.

And what we have seen here is that after entering into the room, and before laying hands on Publius' father, Paul prayed. Without question Paul prayed aloud in Jesus name, the name above all names, the main character and chief love, and focus in the life of a full overcomer. By first praying in Jesus name, Paul was introducing Publius' father to the Holy One of Israel, the only One who could help in this time of need. In HEBREWS 4:16 we read: *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* Keep in mind that Publius' father most likely didn't speak Paul's language(s), yet the name of Jesus is a universal language, and by praying in Jesus name Paul was glorifying Jesus, and opening another door through which Jesus could, and would be magnified by the power of the Holy Ghost. Remember from REVELATION 3:7 that it is Jesus who *...hath the key of*

David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth,... thus it was in Jesus name that this door of impossible opportunity was opened, and it will be in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth by which Publius' father will be healed in ACTS 28:8. Furthermore it will be in the name of Jesus, the *...name which is above every name...* (PHILIPPIANS 2:9), by which a greater door of opportunity was opened here on the island of Melita, whereby *...others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed...* (ACTS 28:9).

So we find Paul now in governor Publius' father's room praying in Jesus name, who in turn is unlocking multiple doors of opportunity for Paul, and to those who will hear him. We could probably spend hours exploring thoughts on the power that is in Jesus name, and how praying in Jesus name unlocks so many so called impossible to unlock doors, but we won't do that here. However let's recall something here that started for Paul on that day he got saved on the road to Damascus. While blinded by the glorious Light of Jesus on that road, ACTS 9:6 records that Paul, (then called Saul), asked: *"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"* It then took Paul about twenty-five years to tell what Jesus told him to do that day, and we find this recorded in ACTS 26:16-18, which we studied earlier at length. But here (in part) is what Jesus told Paul after he had first called upon the name of the Lord, and asked him what he was to do: *But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness... unto... the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

Now let me ask you a question here: were these barbarians on the island of Melita some of the Gentiles unto whom Paul was sent? Obviously the answer is yes, for the Lord had brought Paul to this place. So how is Paul going to be a minister and a witness unto these people whose language he doesn't speak? This is the Lord's business, to open this seemingly impossible door. Yet we find that the Lord already has opened this door, for after all He is the heart examiner, and knows how to speak to the hearts of each individual. Remember Helen Keller that we noted in our lesson several weeks ago? The Lord communicated with her before people could. So when Jesus told Paul that he was going to make him a minister, and a witness, and send him unto the Gentiles, He didn't necessarily tell him that they would always understand his words, but Jesus was still going to use Paul *...to open their eyes...* Here on the island of Melita these barbarians eyes were opened unto the power of God when they witnessed the viper incident of ACTS 28:4-6, which we also covered previously. They "saw" in verse 4, and "they looked" in verse 6, and *...after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god...* ACTS 28:6. Obviously the Lord had used Paul *...to open their eyes...* and now those in the room of Publius' father were hearing Paul cry out in prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus, as he asked for the Lord's help in dealing with this situation. Paul has already written in 2 CORINTHIANS 4:6 *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* Perhaps this became a part of Paul's prayer here, to be able *...to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* Let's now read something else Paul has already written in ROMANS 10. ROMANS 10:12 *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ...17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* Jesus is The Word of God REVELATION 19:13 tells us, so praying in the name of Jesus speaks The Word of God. In the name of Jesus we find: a Saviour, a Healer, a Redeemer, a Provider, a Shepherd, the prophet of the Highest, a Deliverer, a buckler, a shield, a high tower, the Creator, a Rock, a fortress, a very present help in time of need, a refuge in times of trouble, a Sanctifier, a lifter up, a Strengtheners, a Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Prince of Peace, The King of Glory, The King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, the Alpha and Omega, The Beginning and the Ending,

The Truth, The Life, The Word of God, The Holy One of Israel, The Lamb of God, The I Am, The Light of the world, the only begotten Son of God, the Apostle and High Priest, the everlasting Father, the most High, The Son of man, the Justifier, the Hope of Israel, the Righteous Lord, our soon coming Bridegroom... and the list goes on. No wonder then that we read in PHILIPPIANS 2:9-11 -- *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* So we should by now begin to see how it is that by praying in the name of Jesus in faith believing we have unlocked for us limitless doors of impossibilities!

In ACTS 28:8 we read that...*Paul entered in,... to the room of governor Publius' father, ...and prayed,...* then after a period of time we find that Paul *...laid his hands on him, and healed him.* Previously in this study we did a whole chapter on "The Doctrine of The Laying on of Hands," where some of the things we are now going to review were first discussed. {See these notes starting on page 488.} There we noted that the doctrine of the laying on of hands expresses the power that can be latched on to by Holy Ghost filled believers, reaching out their hands unto the mighty power of God, manifest through Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Ghost whom He sent on the day of Pentecost, showing their agreement with Him, and their faith in trusting in His power to accomplish whatever it is they are asking Him to do. We examined several accounts where people in the New Testament were healed by the laying on of hands in Jesus name, and by just praying in Jesus name. The doctrine of the laying on of hands in Jesus name was given in these New Testament times as a sign that would follow those who believe, this according to MARK 16:17 & 18 -- *And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 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.* "Them that believe" means even you, and me! Note the instructions from Jesus found in verse 18 above, *...they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* This was the New Testament doctrine of Jesus concerning the laying on of hands for the sick. Note also in verse 17 above that the laying on of hands in Jesus name was one of the signs that was to follow them that believe.

And what is the purpose of a sign? To point one in a particular direction, and to confirm whether or not that one is on the right path. Webster says that a sign is something that indicates a fact. The fact being conveyed by the laying on of hands in Jesus name then is that a divine agreement, kind of like a contract only better, has been achieved. The laying on of hands in Jesus name was a sign that was given of the Lord to follow them that believe. The laying on of hands in Jesus name acted like a conduit from heaven full of the healing power of God. But New Testament doctrine also teaches that the laying on of hands was not necessary for the healing of the sick. For example, in ACTS 5:15 we find *...that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.* We see that it was in the name of Jesus that these were healed.

The laying on of hands in Jesus name for healing, and for receiving the Holy Ghost became common practice among the disciples of the Lord. Ananias of Damascus was familiar with this New Testament doctrine of the laying on of hands in Jesus name, and after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus he was given specific instructions from the Lord as to what is was to do with his hands concerning Saul of Tarsus. We read this in ACTS 9. ACTS 9:10 *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. ...17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and*

putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. Of course we know Saul of Tarsus goes on to become the Apostle Paul, and he learned the doctrine of laying on of hands in Jesus name from Ananias of Damascus, having received his natural sight restored by the laying on of hands, and by having his spiritual eyes enlightened by receiving the powerful gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands. So what we see that the Apostle Paul first learned this doctrine of the laying on of hands from Ananias of Damascus.

When Paul and Barnabas started their first missionary journey from Antioch, Syria in ACTS 13:3 we read that those of the church of Antioch *...laid their hands on them, they sent them away*. This was an expression of their agreement with God that these two disciples would be blessed as they made their journey to points unknown for the purpose of spreading the good news concerning Jesus Christ. In ACTS 14:3 we read how this request was answered, for it states this concerning Paul and Barnabas: *...they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands*. And these signs, and wonders, and miracles, and healings continued to follow Paul's ministry everywhere he went. Paul even mentioned this in his epistle unto the ROMANS stating in ROMANS 15:19 *Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ*. During Paul's time at Ephesus in ACTS 19 we read: 11 *And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. ...17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. ...20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed*.

The doctrine of healing in the name of Jesus prevailed on the island of Melita also, for after...*Paul entered in,... to the room of governor Publius' father, ...and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him...* in ACTS 28:8, we read in verse 9 *So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:...*. Let me quote here from Brother Copley as he commentated on this portion of scripture: "Some modern teachers condemn Luke for emphasizing divine healing, in his record, instead of salvation. How wise the natural man poses to be when he turns religious. It is still the "wisdom of this world," however pious it may seem to be, which the Lord abominates. Jesus Christ secured the attention of the people by the healing of their maladies. Paul and the other apostles followed His steps. And we do well to learn God's plan and manner of ministering to the world, by studying their conduct as recorded by the Spirit." {End of quoting from Brother Copley.}

ACTS 28:9 *So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: 10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary*. Here is a few things that we should note from these verses. When we pray, (as Paul did in verse 8 before laying hands on Publius' father, asking the Lord for guidance in how to deal with the situation he was now faced with concerning the governors' father), who benefits from our prayers? In this instance we find that the father of Publius' was healed, so certainly he benefited from Paul's prayers, but Paul's prayer for guidance in this situation reached far beyond this one very sick man. We find that word of this healing quickly spread, and *...others also, which had diseases in the island, came,...* and got prayed for too, *...and were healed:...*. Of course it wasn't long before all on the island took note of what was taking place, and came unto Paul, and got prayed for too. Thus we could repeat this of the ministry of the Apostle Paul that is recorded in ACTS 19:20 *So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed*. Verse 11 tells us that they were on this island for three months, so there must have been a steady stream of sick people coming to prisoner Paul for prayer during these three months. And they all got to hear about Jesus as Paul prayed in Jesus name, and experience His healing power. PSALMS 68:19 *Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah*. So who benefited from the

prayer Paul first prayed in verse 8? All on the island who would dare to also come and get prayed for, and everyone who came and got prayed for were healed! Additionally Paul, and those from his ship benefited also, for as we read in verse 10, when it was time to depart the island, the grateful people from the island laid their hands on what they could, and gave Paul's company *...such things as were necessary...* for their continued journey.

So we see when we pray in Jesus name, asking for His divine guidance in how to deal with the impossible situations we are brought to on our race course, that the benefits reach far beyond what we can even imagine. PSALMS 103:2 *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:...* . The fact that we are discussing this even today shows how two thousand plus years of time hasn't stopped our talking about the many miracles that took place on the island of Melita during the three months when Paul was stranded there, and in some measure, we too are still benefiting from Paul's prayers that he prayed on the island of Melita. PSALMS 116:12 *What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?* How did the Psalmist answer this question? Let's look at some of the next verses in PSALMS 116. PSALMS 116:13 *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. 14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. ...17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. 18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, 19 In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.* After years of experience as a prayer warrior Paul wrote in PHILIPPIANS 4:6 *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.* Again in EPHESIANS 5:20 Paul wrote: *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;...* . Only He knows how far in time, distance, scope and magnitude your prayers will reach, and who will benefit from them. Pay attention here too how Paul prayed with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving flows from the heart, and lips of a full overcomer. Paul makes further note of this fact in the following scriptures written unto the Saints at Colosse. COLOSSIANS 1:3 *We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,...*3:15 *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.* ...17 *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.* Again in COLOSSIANS 4:2 Paul writes: *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;*... . In REVELATION 4:9 we find the church age full overcomers, pictured by the four living creatures, giving *...glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,...* as they continue in heaven doing what they did here on earth, and that is being leaders in praise and worship, with thanksgiving eternally acknowledging His Majesty. Note further in REVELATION 5:8 these very same full overcomers have every one of them *...golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.* Here we see a little more of how far reaching, and important to God our prayers are.

One more thing about the prayers of men of faith before we move on. When Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, LUKE 11:2 tells us: *And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.* Interestingly we only find the phrase "thy will" seven times in scripture, showing us, in part, a glimpse of the SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, and SPIRITUAL COMPLETION that takes place in our heart when we sincerely pray in earnest "Thy will be done." When we pray "Thy will be done," it is like grabbing a hold of the hand of God, and agreeing with Him that *...with God all things are possible...* MATTHEW 19:26. When we pray "Thy will be done," we are asking Him to perfect a good work in us that will go on developing until the day of Jesus Christ. {Study PHILIPPIANS 1:6.} The Apostle Paul expressed it like this in a prayer of his recorded in HEBREWS 13:20 *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

(We just read in HEBREWS 13:20 the phrase "God of peace." The Apostle Paul is the only writer to reference the "God of peace" in scripture, which is also a reference to the Holy Ghost. Paul uses "God of peace" in the following five scriptures: ROMANS 15:33; ROMANS 16:20; PHILIPPIANS 4:9; 1 THESSALONIANS 5:23; and HEBREWS 13:20. Study these five scriptures out and you will see for yourself that the "God of peace" references the Holy Ghost.) {Review page 92 of these notes.}

The magnitude of the island people's thankfulness, and gratitude for what the Lord had done for them by the laying on of hands of the Apostle Paul is expressed in ACTS 28:10 *Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.* An expounded translation of this verse reads: "They also showed us every kind of respect, and when it came time for us to sail, they provided us with everything we needed." Perhaps this was a part of the inspiration behind Paul later writing in PHILIPPIANS 4:19 *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* Recall that the 276 souls from off of Paul's doomed ship all arrived on the island of Melita with only the clothes on their back, so they too were grateful for any assistance that was given them by these friendly island people. Again this reminds us of the profound expression of appreciation that Paul later wrote about concerning the love of Christ that far exceeds any bounds we can imagine when he penned EPHESIANS 3:20 & 21 -- *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

ACTS 28:10 is the last we read anything about the people of Melita, who showed themselves most friendly during the course of this winter that Paul, and those stranded with him, spent on their island. True enough we don't read of anyone getting saved here on the island, and we must leave that accounting with the Lord. Only He knows what takes place in ones heart, as we have so often mentioned in the past. There was a language barrier on this island, yet there seemed to be little communication barrier. We have tried to point out here also that as Paul prayed for these different ones here on the island, he prayed in Jesus name, so certainly all that came to him for prayer heard of Jesus. And we read in ROMANS 10:13 *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved...* so we will wait until we get to heaven to see how many were truly born again during this time. We do know however, that even unto this day the people from Malta, (Melita), still remember the winter that the Apostle Paul was on their island. And as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul's calling, and assignment from the Lord, was *...to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ...* 2 CORINTHIANS 4:6, which he did while on the island of Melita.

Let's look at verse 10 a little closer. ACTS 28:10 *Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.* There are five different Greek words used in verse 10 that show the gratitude of those island people of Melita. The first two are translated "honoured" are time {tee-may'} (number 5092 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), and "honours" timao {tim-ah'-o}, (number 5091 in The Strong's Greek Concordance). Both of these words express a high value of reverence reserved for those held in highest rank, or esteem. The first "honoured" (time {tee-may'}) shows an inestimable value. To the believer this Greek word "honoured" translates to the preciousness of Christ, as is noted in 1 PETER 2:7 *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious <5092>:...* This too is the same kind of "honour" that the full overcomers show in their praise of the Lamb of God in REVELATION 4:9; 4:11; and 5:12 & 13. The second word "honours" (timao {tim-ah'-o}), shows more of a placing a measurable value of something in the honouring of a person. In this instance the second usage of the word "honours" magnifies the first word "honoured" as kind of a double portion of gratitude. 1 TIMOTHY 5:17 makes mention of this kind of gratitude stating: *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.* Here in ACTS 28:10 also note again the usage of the words "us" and "we" showing how Luke once again included himself, and Aristarchus, along with the other of the 276 into the class of recipients of these honours being bestowed because of the prayers of healing prayed by Paul.

The Greek word translated "laded" in ACTS 28:10 is epitithemi {ep-ee-tith'-ay-mee}, (number 2007 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), is the very same word "laid"

(as in laid his hands on) in verse 8. Paul laid his hands on them (epitithemi) as he prayed for their healing. In return as a show of their appreciation, the island people of Melita laid their hands, ("laded") (epitithemi) upon the things they had that could be given as gifts of gratitude, which gifts met the necessities of the stranded mariners when they departed the island.

The fourth Greek word found in ACTS 28:10 that expresses gratitude is pros (number 4314 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), here translated "with such things." This is a forward looking statement, and is a preposition of direction, such as towards a particular point, or destination, and is most commonly translated "come unto," or "coming to." In this particular instance the forward direction of travel was going to be toward Italy. The bestowments given the travelers as gifts from the friendly island people would be of the kind that would supply their immediate daily needs as they went forth unto Italy.

The fifth Greek words found here in ACTS 28:10 that expresses gratitude is chreia {khri'-ah}, (number 5532 in The Strong's Greek Concordance), which most commonly is translated "need;" sometimes it is translated "needed;" and is found twice in scripture translated "necessity;" and is here translated "necessary." The meaning as used here in ACTS 28:10 is to supply that which is lacking. So we find that the Lord used the friendly barbarous people on the island of Melita to supply the necessities to Paul, and those on his ship as they continued their journey toward Italy on a different ship after the winter was over. They did so in part as an expression of their thanks for the healing prayers of the Apostle Paul.

One more thought to ponder here is the far reaching effect that these gifts of gratitude reached just in the life of Paul. We read in ACTS 28:30 that "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house" after his arrival at Rome. Where did a prisoner who lost everything he owned in the ship wreck of ACTS 27 come up with enough substance to have his own hired house in Rome for two years? Perhaps the funds for such an expense came from the gifts bestowed upon him from the island people of Melita. This was just an extended benefit of Paul's initial prayers for guidance there on the island of Melita. So as we leave this portion in ACTS, spend a little time pondering the question we asked earlier: who benefits from our prayers?

Before moving on, and getting the Apostle Paul off of the island of Melita, let's for a moment reflect on the thought of thankfulness presented here from ACTS 28:1 through verse 10. We mentioned back in ACTS 27:35 how Paul, during the darkest of times and in a most desperate situation, *"gave thanks to God in presence of them all,"* that being the 276 on his ship. And as we noted in ACTS 27 also, Paul had gotten all of the 276 to focus upon God above, realizing that their deliverance and salvation came from Him. We noted too how that Paul wrote in his very first epistle *...In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you...* 1 THESSALONIANS 5:18, and that those from off his ship all had something to be thankful for, that being escaping safe to land after a shipwreck in time of a terrible storm. So we must note that those off of Paul's ship were exceeding thankful, even though nothing is mentioned of this in ACTS 28:1-10. What we do find in ACTS 28:1-10 is a warm reception from the island people of Melita, who showed "no little kindness" as they received everyone from off Paul's ship with welcome arms, and took them all in, and courteously lodged them. Certainly all from Paul's ship were exceeding thankful for all of this, and no doubt expressed their thankfulness as best they could to the friendly island people. Paul wrote in 2 CORINTHIANS 2:14 *Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.* The Lord saw to it that the Apostle Paul became the focal point of these island people. And as a thank you from the Lord for the warm reception given to His Apostle, and those other 276 traveling with him, the Lord performed great miracles by the hands of Paul, where all on the island who wanted to, came, and got prayed for, and were healed, and learned a little about Jesus, and His healing power! When it came time to leave the island, there would really be no way the 276 from off of Paul's ship could properly give enough thanks for all the island people had done for them during this winter on the island of Melita. Yet because Paul was a man of faith, and a man who in everything gave thanks unto God, and a man whose focus was always upward on things above, looking unto Jesus

the Author and Finisher of his faith; and because thankfulness has no boundaries, no limits, and looks forward, as well as backwards; looks up, as well as looking down, the message received by the Melitian's from Paul, as a spokesman for all off his ship, was a heart felt message of thankfulness manifested by the outpouring of the love of God through the hands of Paul. In return the Melitan island people, to whom Paul was sent, expressed their gratitude, and thankfulness by honouring Paul, and those traveling with him "*with such things as were necessary.*" They thought Paul was a god, back in ACTS 28:6. Paul pointed them the best he could to the One true living God, and they honoured him for this by providing his provision for his continued journey. As Paul leaves Melita, all who came in contact with him were thankful, and their thankfulness, if properly directed, was to the God of Paul. Certainly Jesus was magnified that winter on the island of Melita.

Melita to Rome

ACTS 18:11 *And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.* No doubt some interesting friendships were made on the island of Melita during this winter. From what we read above it seems that all on the island got to know who Paul was, and a considerable number of them, especially those who were diseased, came to Paul for prayer. Those from off of Paul's ship all got to know him better also, especially the other prisoners, and the soldiers. These would remain as a group. As for the rest that initially arrived on this island from Paul's ship, no doubt, they went different directions. Not everyone on Paul's ship had Rome as a destination. I know from personal experience that when a detour from a planned itinerary is taken, some take a different course of action. Here for example on the island of Melita there would be no reason for the old ship owner, and former shipmaster of Paul's fateful ship to continue on to Rome. Their next destination would probably have been to return to Alexandria, from whence they sailed in the first place. However we are not told any of this in scripture, because it isn't really all that important for us to know. The focus of our text remains upon the Apostle Paul, and those traveling with him.

We mentioned earlier in this study that Alexandria was among the three largest cities in the Roman Empire, with Rome, Italy and Antioch, Syria being the other two. We also previously noted that some of the finest, and largest sailing ships of Paul's day were built in Alexandria, Egypt. No doubt this too was a large grain ship, for in Paul's day Egypt was the granary of Italy. Josephus even wrote of a large ship that he sailed to Italy in that held about six hundred people. It too sank in the Adriatic Sea.

Alexandria means: "man-defender," "defender of mankind," "one who assists men," or "helper or protector of men." As for Alexandria recall that Apollos was born at Alexandria, and after traveling to Ephesus, and meeting Aquila and Priscilla, and being taught the Paul's gospel from them in ACTS 18, Apollos goes on to become one of the church Apostles. Apollos then went on to teach many Paul's gospel, getting them to have a heavenward focus, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith. We could say that as Apollos preached Christ, he assisted many to seek the ultimate "man-defender," "defender of mankind," "one who assists men," or "helper or protector of men," who is Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. These four descriptions again are meanings of the word Alexandria, yet these meanings more appropriately apply to Christ. He is the true "defender of mankind." Peter calls Jesus *...the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls...* in 1 PETER 2:25. Paul wrote in HEBREWS 13:5 & 6 *...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*

Not knowing God, the mariners of ancient Egypt often marked their ships with an image of a beast, or a man, or a heathen god, or some other object, which was either sculptured or painted on the forward part of the ship. This new ship that Paul was now sailing on was marked at the side with symbols of two heathen gods named Castor and Pollux, which the mariners thought afforded protection for them. Those who were now sailing with Paul from his previous ship knew it was the Lord who provided their