

ACTS 27-28:10

When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment.² We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

³ The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs.⁴ From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us.

⁵ When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.⁶ There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board.⁷ We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone.⁸ We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

⁹ Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Day of Atonement. So Paul warned them,¹⁰ “Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also.”¹¹ But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship.¹² Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. This was a harbor in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest.

¹³ When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete.¹⁴ Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island.¹⁵ The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along.¹⁶ As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure,¹⁷ so the men hoisted it aboard. Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along.¹⁸ We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard.

¹⁹ On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.

²⁰ When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

²¹ After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. ²² But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed.

²³ Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me ²⁴ and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' ²⁵ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.

²⁶ Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island."

²⁷ On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. ²⁸ They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep.

²⁹ Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. ³⁰ In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. ³¹ Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." ³² So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away.

³³ Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven't eaten anything. ³⁴ Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head." ³⁵ After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ Altogether there were 276 of us on board. ³⁸ When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

³⁹ When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. ⁴⁰ Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. ⁴¹ But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.

⁴² The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. ⁴³ But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. ⁴⁴ The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely.

28 Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. ² The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. ³ Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. ⁴ When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live." ⁵ But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. ⁶ The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

⁷ There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. ⁸ His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. ⁹ When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. ¹⁰ They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

Have you ever been a part of a major storm while at sea or on the water?

What happened?

How does this week's passage tell of both the power of nature and the sovereignty of God? Who was in ultimate control of the circumstances? How do we know this to be true?

As a prisoner on the ship, how was Paul able to share about the Lord with those onboard and on the island? How did it influence them?

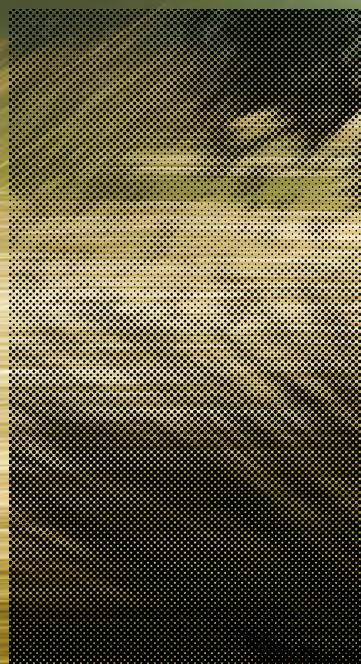
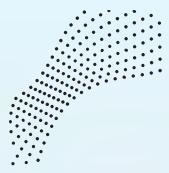
In the midst of all that was going on in this story, Paul maintained unwavering faith in God's promises. How did he stay calm in the storm, in a shipwreck, through hunger, and even with a snake bite? What can we learn from him?

How do you normally react in a crisis? Fear? Control? Calm? Confusion?

How does God use our trials and tragedies to build our faith? How has He done so in your life?

DAILY READINGS

1. ISAIAH 43:1-13
2. ISAIAH 43:14-21
3. MATTHEW 14:22-33
4. ACTS 27:1-12
5. ACTS 27:13-26
6. ACTS 27:27-44
7. ACTS 28:1-10





ACTS 28

IMPRISONED BUT UNHINDERED: THE GOSPEL EXPANDS FROM ROME

“For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!”

- Acts 28:30-31

Acts 28 does not end with a grand conclusion. Former pastor and chaplain of the US Senate, Lloyd Ogilvie, said of Acts 28, “The abrupt ending of Acts leaves us with the challenge and opportunity to allow the Spirit to write the next chapter... today... in and through us.”

In Acts 1, Jesus said, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remote parts of the earth.” In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit birthed the church in Jerusalem and then filled the city with the witness of Jesus by chapter 5. Then in Acts 8, that witness went to Samaria and then reached a Gentile soldier in chapter 10. By Acts 13, the gospel traveled north to Asia minor. It finally jumped to the continent of Europe in Acts 16, headed further west to Greece in chapter 17, and then went back east to Turkey in chapter 18. The gospel witness finally made it across the Mediterranean Sea to Rome in Acts 28. And there the adventure was just getting started.

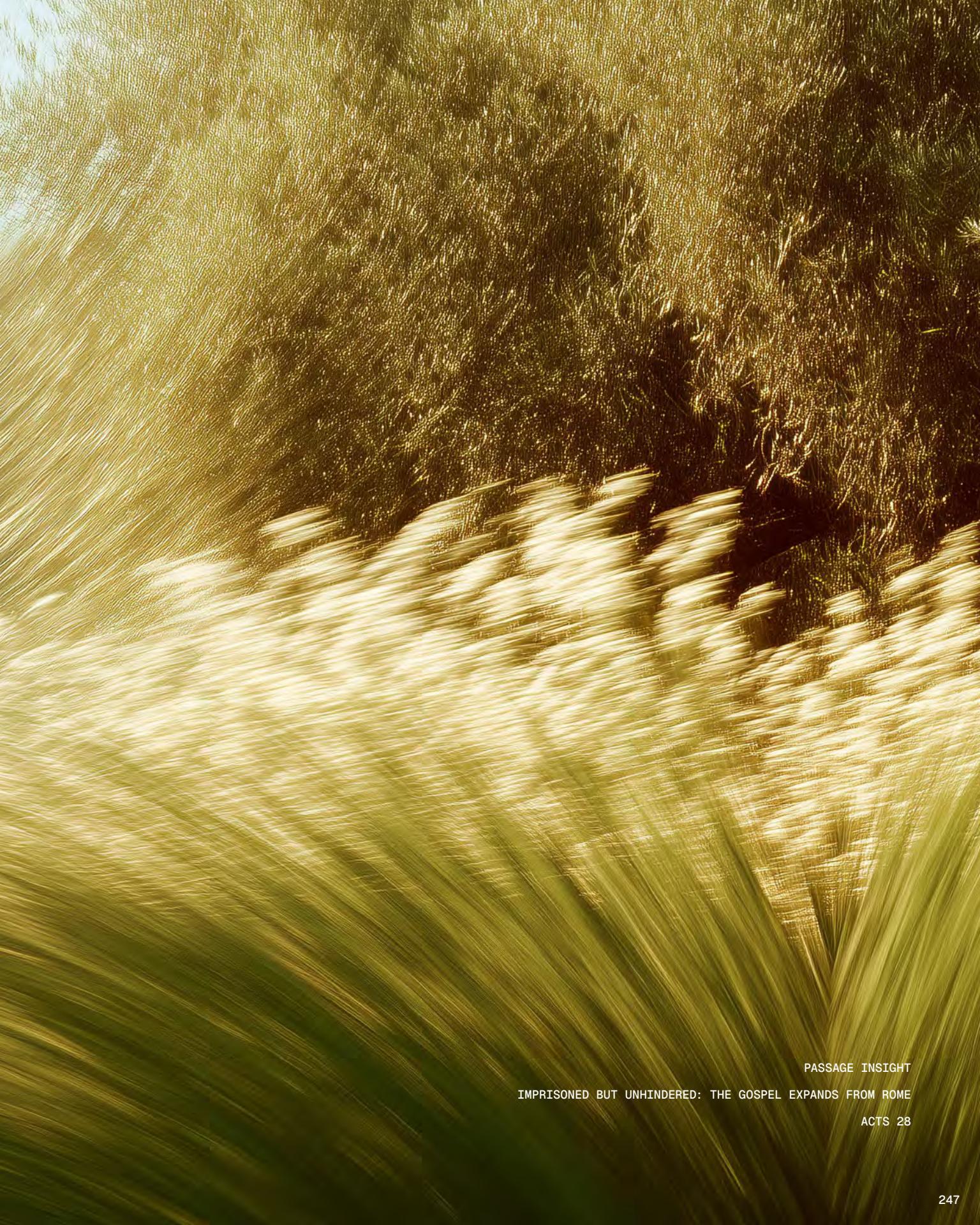
For two years, Paul remained in Rome, chained to the wrist of a member of the Praetorian guard, an elite group of soldiers who guarded the emperor and the royal city. During that house arrest, Paul wrote letters to the churches he planted in Ephesus, Colosse, and Philippi, and a letter to his friend, Philemon.

"Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear."

- Philippians 1:12-14

You cannot stop the gospel. It cannot be imprisoned. Jesus who conquered sin and death is not stopped by prison chains. He promised that His church would be built upon His gospel, and the gates of hell would give way in its presence. House arrest becomes a tool in God's hand to reach Jews and Romans, commoners and elite, religious and military leaders.

God is going to fulfill His plan to reach and redeem people from every nation. That is the Gospel-story. What Jesus launched in the Middle East two millennium ago has come to us. It did not start with us, and it does not, must not, end with us. We are caught up in a much larger story. There is no Acts 29 recorded in scripture because the acts of the Holy Spirit are still happening in and through us.



PASSAGE INSIGHT

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ACTS 28