

Verse 29: *'Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. ³⁰ And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. ³² Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.'*

Paul is being taken by ship to Rome under the watch of the Roman centurion. They've been caught in a terrible storm for many days; some of the anchors are gone, the life boat is gone, the sails are worthless in such terrible winds of which they are completely at the mercy but in reality, they are at the mercy of God Who, as always, is in complete control. He told Paul that He had 'given' Paul everyone on board; I believe they would all come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Whom Paul would have preached... Scripture doesn't say so... but nor does it say not!

Verse 33: *'And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. ³⁴ Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. ³⁵ And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. ³⁶ Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.'*

Paul stands up in their midst and calmly encourages them all, promising that none will drown, that they will all be kept perfectly safe and then he prays, thanking God for the food and for their safety. This, in itself would have been a powerful witness of the Lord Jesus Christ; Paul had been experiencing the exact same trial and danger as had they all but here he was in perfect peace: *'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.'* Isaiah 26:3. This was the most powerful demonstration of the Truth of all that Paul was preaching of God's promise of peace through Salvation that Paul could have offered and this is why they might very well have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to then evolve into growth of the Church at Rome.

(Not the Vatican! Roman Catholicism is not the Church of Rome)

Verse 37: *'And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. (276) ³⁸ And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.'*

They all ate some food, felt much better and finally set about to finish throwing everything overboard, even the cargo of wheat; the owner would have tried to hold on to the cash cargo... this, to him, really was the last resort but even with this last ditch effort, he is still going to lose everything except his life.

Verse 39: *'And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.'*

This Greek word doesn't mean what we typically think of as a creek, a small stream. The Greek word is: kol'pos which is used 6 times; 5 times, it was translated: 'bosom,' as in: Lazarus kept safe in 'Abraham's Bosom' or of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son in the 'Bosom of the Father' so it seems to mean a place of safety.

Here, Luke says that they 'knew not the land;' in other words, the 'mainland' or a major island. This seems to indicate that they have encountered some island with a shore. Remember, back in verse 25, Paul had told them, *'Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be **cast upon a certain island.**'* This, then, is that certain island upon which they hope to run the ship aground rather than be caught out on a reef since they no longer had their small boat in which to gain the shore. Now here we see that the interpreters' choice of 'creek' could actually mean a stream of running water into which they could hope to drive the ship but, remember, they are unable to direct the ship.

Verse 40: *'And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.'*

They took up the remaining anchors, raising the mainsail and committing their way to God. The rudder bands

are what is used to tie off the rudder control so that the ship does not simply flounder in the waves; with the rudder free and the sail back up they will try to steer the ship onto the island's shore: *comfort and safety*.

Verse 41: *'And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.'*

They made it safely to shore; the bow of the ship is stuck fast while the stern is broken up by the waves and wind.

Verse 42: *'And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.'*

The ship is stuck in the sand and being broken apart by the wind and waves.

Oregon's own 'Peter Iredale' was run aground by strong winds and rising tide in 1906; it became so embedded that towing it out and away became impossible and, so, it was never removed nor was it broken up for salvage. A century of waves has broken it until all that remains visible are the iron ribs of the bow.

Paul's ship, exclusively wooden, is being broken up as soon as it makes land.

The soldiers, fearing the escape of any number of prisoners, decide their best course would be to murder them all! Imagine the mindset that would even consider such a thing! There had to be a very large number of prisoners; remember: all tolled, the number of men on the ship is exactly 276. The centurion and his century of men equals 101; Paul, the captain and owner are 3; to man a ship large enough to carry 276, the crew might number 30; perhaps there are 30 paying passengers which leaves the number of prisoners as well over 100.

Verse 43: *'But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: ⁴⁴ And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.'*

Once more, we see that God has given Paul favor with the centurion who had previously allowed Paul to leave the ship at Sidon in order to meet with the Christians of that city. Of course it could be that the centurion is responsible for seeing Paul safely to Rome and knows it would not be well with him if Paul were killed. Either way, because of Paul, all the prisoners are kept safe and the soldiers don't have to wrestle with their consciences. The centurion tells all 275, 'You're on your own; get to land however you can; if you can swim, good for you but if not, find something that floats and will carry you to shore and, so, all 276 make it safely.'

Acts 28:1: *'And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.'*

They must have encountered some of the islanders who told them where they were: Malta. Melita is the ancient name of the island of Malta.

Verse 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.'*

And there it is, one last time: Luke using his Lukism: *shewed us **no little** kindness*. Luke is the only Biblical author to ever use that phrase: *no little, not a few*, etc, using a negative to indicate an abundance. Only Luke. Luke is not using an insult when he refers to the Maltese islanders as barbarous/barbarians. Here in the New Testament, it simply means a foreigner using a non-understood language. The Greeks used the word to describe any foreigner ignorant of the Greek language.

These foreigners do not speak Greek; the original language of Malta/Melita was, and remains the official language of Malta... Maltese; they are a single, relatively small island with their own language which, likely, none of our characters from the ship did speak or understand but it is a Semitic language which is related to Arabic which, surely, Paul did understand and speak. The native Maltese were not barbarous; they were kind and hospitable and they 'received' them all; they built a roaring fire from which all the nearly drowned sailors, soldiers and Paul could dry and warm themselves; at that moment, there was nothing these shipwreckians would have wanted more than that fire.

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.'*

Paul is helping to gather wood for that roaring fire; when you're wet and cold, you're more than willing to help

get more wood: the more the better! 270 or so men gathering wood would add up to quite a lot! As he is gathering wood, he lifts a stick with a viper hanging on which bites him so hard that its fangs remain embedded, sending a large dose of deadly poison into his hand... he's about to die or so the Maltese thought.

Now remember: God is always in complete control of all things; why would God want Paul to be bitten by a deadly poisonous viper? This is not an example of 'Satan meant this for evil but God meant it for good'; Satan did not put that viper under that stick at just the right time... God did! Is Paul about to keel over dead?

Verse 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.'*

These barbarous Maltese don't know the True God and His Son but it's clear that they do believe in some kind of powerful, reasoning guiding force, what they call 'vengeance' which would know that Paul was a murderer (which, by the way, he was before his conversion) and that 'vengeance' would have the understanding and the power to guide that particular viper unto Paul's hand and, just as he did on Mars Hill, Paul would have used this to preach the Gospel unto all these, including the sailors and soldiers but perhaps not quite yet.

Verse 5: *'And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. ⁶Howbeit 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.'*

Paul suffers no ill effect so they think he is a god; once before, Paul was called the god, Mercury, after he had healed the lame man in Lystra Acts 14; we're not told which Roman or Greek 'god' these Maltese imagined him to be but there was even more confirmation of Paul's words still to come:

Verse 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.'*

Publius was a common Roman personal name; Malta/Melita is an island right in the middle of the Roman Empire; just as Israel or 'Palestine', as the Romans derogatorily renamed it after Israel's archenemy, the Philistines. Israel was a Roman province, so, too, would Malta have been. Publius would have been the Roman governor over Malta just as Pilate, Felix and Festus were over Israel. By the way... (there has never been a 'Palestinian' people and those who call themselves such, today, are named for the Philistines, a most wicked pagan people.) Even today, to refer to people as 'philistines' is to mean that they are crude, coarse, contemptible, uncouth... so, perhaps the name isn't so far off in regard to modern 'Palestinians'...

Since Paul was still being mistaken for a god, Publius probably lodged them in his own spacious quarters. For all the rest, especially Julius and his soldiers, he would have pressed local citizens into providing 'willing' quarters for food, drink and sleep for those same 3 days. Naturally Publius was more than willing to personally house a 'god,' more powerful than their local deadly viper.

Verse 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.'*

Once again, God provides someone in need of healing and Paul is right there to be used for God's purpose...

Verse 9: *'So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:'*

No one had ever seen a genuine miracle healing; when the chief's father is healed, word spreads quickly and many more miraculous healings are accomplished.

Now... what was God's purpose, during the transitional period of the Book of Acts between the birth of the Church and the production of the written Word of God?

'Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. ⁶And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.' Acts 8:5

God gave miracles, sign gifts, to confirm that what the Apostles were preaching was, in fact, true, that what they spoke were the actual Words from God. During this time, there was no written Word of the New Covenant which God had inaugurated in the Life, Work, Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. All these miracles were given to confirm to these Maltese the Gospel which Paul, Luke and any others who

were accompanying Paul to Rome were preaching to them. As well, Julius the centurion, his 100 soldiers, all the sailors, the ship's owner and captain and any other passengers were all seeing the signs and hearing the Gospel. God had caused a great storm and shipwreck in order that Paul and those with him would bring about a great revival here on the island of Malta as well as a great harvest in Rome as these soldiers, maybe even all of them would then take the Gospel throughout the armies and families of Rome.

Verse 10: *'Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary. And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.'*

Paul's group was treated as well as these islanders possibly could; many were now possessed of Christian love as brothers and sisters in Christ. How do I know that very many came to faith? For 3 whole months they were preaching the Gospel and performing miraculous signs to confirm the Word.

Finally, another ship of Alexandria, possibly owned by the same ship owner of the wrecked ship, which had safely wintered at Malta was also large enough to take them all away toward Rome.

This ship having the sign of Castor and Pollux meant that these were twin figureheads on the ship's bow. In Greek mythology, Castor and Pollux are twin gods, sons of Zeus and considered to be protectors of sailors. Their stars are in the constellation of Gemini, the Twins. A shipbuilder would add them to the bow to make the ship more attractive to very superstitious sailors.

Verse 12: *'And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. ¹³ And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhenium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: ¹⁴ Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.'*

From Malta, they are very close to Italy. Malta is the small island just south of Sicily; Syracuse is on the S.E. coast of Sicily which is the large island just south of mainland Italy. Italy, on the map, looks like a boot which is kicking something; Sicily is that thing, with mainland Italy being the boot.

Next they sail to Rhenium at the southern most point of the boot with Puteoli about half the way up to Rome, just one day's sailing. In Puteoli they found other believers with whom they stayed for one week, preaching teaching, strengthening and encouraging them.

Paul did the same thing everywhere he went.

Verse 15: *'And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw he thanked God, and took courage.'*

The map is probably too small but the final two dots are Appii forum, and the three taverns. They are almost to Rome and I'm sure Paul was ready and anxious to enter this next, new phase of his earthly ministry...

Verse 16: *'And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.'*

All who were on the shipwreck at Malta were still on, for the most part, until Puteoli where they finally made the final landing for Paul's group and all the soldiers. Julius, the centurion, and all his soldiers had seen all the many miracles on Malta; many would have come to believe Paul's message of Salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This large company of soldiers would have marched on land past Appii and the three taverns and finally to Rome. They would have told all the wonders they'd seen; Julius delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard but everyone knew that Paul was different, that he was, in fact, innocent of any crimes and, so, he was allowed to rent his own house with only one soldier to watch him. Paul had not only distinguished himself as a miracle worker, he had also proven himself honest and faithful; he would never attempt to circumvent authority or to sneak away. In the last verses of Acts, we will read: *'And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, ³¹ Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.'*

