

ROUTE 66

Session Number Nineteen
Wednesday, June 18, 2014

ACTS - PART THREE

1 Today we come to one of the most powerful, poignant, sections of all the Word of God -
2 the earthly termination of Paul's missions ministry and his appearance before one of the
3 most wicked and insane rulers of all time, Roman Emperor Nero. I remind you that the
4 book of Acts has no ending. Unlike most of the other books of Scripture, chapter 28
5 ends abruptly with no "finito" to it. This means simply that you and I are living in the
6 unwritten, incomplete "29th chapter of Acts." Let's carefully open these sacred pages to
7 see what God wants us to learn in this study.
8

9 In our last study, we left Paul in prayer and good-byes with the elders of the church of
10 Ephesus. No one wanted Paul to return to Jerusalem because they felt a sense of
11 foreboding about it. But Paul knew where he needed to be - although his advisers were
12 right. Danger lurked directly ahead.
13

CHAPTER 21

14
15
16 Acts 21:10-15 (all scriptures from The Message unless otherwise noted)

17 After several days of visiting, a prophet from Judea by the name of Agabus came
18 down to see us. [11] He went right up to Paul, took Paul's belt, and, in a dramatic
19 gesture, tied himself up, hands and feet. He said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says:
20 The Jews in Jerusalem are going to tie up the man who owns this belt just like this
21 and hand him over to godless unbelievers."

22 [12] When we heard that, we and everyone there that day begged Paul not to be
23 stubborn and persist in going to Jerusalem. [13] But Paul wouldn't budge: "Why all
24 this hysteria? Why do you insist on making a scene and making it even harder for
25 me? You're looking at this backwards. The issue in Jerusalem is not what they do to
26 me, whether arrest or murder, but what the Master Jesus does through my
27 obedience. Can't you see that?"

28 [14] We saw that we weren't making even a dent in his resolve, and gave up. "It's
29 in God's hands now," we said. "Master, you handle it."

30 [15] It wasn't long before we had our luggage together and were on our way to
31 Jerusalem.
32

33 Paul now heads for Jerusalem for the final time. He and his group leave Miletus on the

1 seashore where they boarded a ship. They sailed to Coos, about 40 miles away, an
2 island that had been the home of Hippocrates, the father of medicine. From there they
3 sailed to Rhodes so famous in history because it possessed one of the ancient seven
4 wonders of the world - the tremendous Colossus standing astride the harbor of the island.
5 From Rhodes they proceeded to Patara and from there to Phoenicia (Lebanon today) and
6 finally to Ptolemais (which we know today as Acre, Israel.) On the last leg of his long
7 trip, Paul sailed about 36 miles south along the Israeli coast to Caesarea and then overland
8 to Jerusalem.

10 The Folly of Compromise

11
12 Acts 21:17-26

13 **In Jerusalem, our friends, glad to see us, received us with open arms. [18] The**
14 **first thing next morning, we took Paul to see James. All the church leaders were**
15 **there. [19] After a time of greeting and small talk, Paul told the story, detail by**
16 **detail, of what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. [20] They**
17 **listened with delight and gave God the glory.**

18 **They had a story to tell, too: "And just look at what's been happening**
19 **here—thousands upon thousands of God-fearing Jews have become believers in**
20 **Jesus! But there's also a problem because they are more zealous than ever in**
21 **observing the laws of Moses. [21] They've been told that you advise believing Jews**
22 **who live surrounded by Gentiles to go light on Moses, telling them that they don't**
23 **need to circumcise their children or keep up the old traditions. This isn't sitting at**
24 **all well with them.**

25 **[22] "We're worried about what will happen when they discover you're in town.**
26 **There's bound to be trouble. [23] So here is what we want you to do: There are four**
27 **men from our company who have taken a vow involving ritual purification, but have**
28 **no money to pay the expenses. Join these men in their vows and pay their expenses.**
29 **Then it will become obvious to everyone that there is nothing to the rumors going**
30 **around about you and that you are in fact scrupulous in your reverence for the laws**
31 **of Moses. [24]**

32 **[25] "In asking you to do this, we're not going back on our agreement regarding**
33 **Gentiles who have become believers. We continue to hold fast to what we wrote in**
34 **that letter, namely, to be careful not to get involved in activities connected with**
35 **idols; to avoid serving food offensive to Jewish Christians; to guard the morality of**
36 **sex and marriage."**

37 **[26] So Paul did it—took the men, joined them in their vows, and paid their way.**
38 **The next day he went to the Temple to make it official and stay there until the**
39 **proper sacrifices had been offered and completed for each of them.**

1 James, the half-brother of Jesus, was the head of the “mother church” in Jerusalem. The
2 leaders there accepted Paul but had heard rumors that the great apostle had told gentile
3 believers to forsake Jewish law (which he had never done but taught that no one was
4 saved by keeping the law but by accepting Jesus by faith as Lord and Savior). These
5 church leaders were afraid that rabid Jewish Christians - and other religious Jews, but not
6 believers in Christ, would attack Paul.

7
8 They told him, “We have four believers who have taken a Nazarite vow and would be
9 going to the Temple to undertake it. But it cost money and they didn’t have it. But, oh,
10 if Paul would just go with them and pay their expenses, then the Jewish public would see
11 that he was not such a bad guy after all.”

12
13 Paul knew it was a useless enterprise, but he agreed to bow to their wishes. It was a
14 waste of Paul’s time, but he knew that this time in Jerusalem would lead to the final days
15 of his life at any rate.

16 The Trap

17
18 No one but Jews were ever allowed inside the great Temple in Jerusalem. But Paul’s
19 enemies had seen him in other places with a gentile convert named Trophimus. Now
20 they saw the two again NEAR the Temple and made the charge that Paul had brought a
21 non-Jew into the building (which he had not). A riot broke out and only Roman soldier
22 intervention prevented Paul from being killed. As he was being led into the Fortress
23 Antonia, Paul asked permission to turn and address his raging enemies, which was
24 granted and is covered in chapter 22.

26 CHAPTER 22

27
28
29 Paul gave a brief synopsis of his life, his conversion and his call by Jesus Himself on the
30 road to Damascus. Then something triggered the mob again and:

31
32 Acts 22:22-30

33 **The people in the crowd had listened attentively up to this point, but now they**
34 **broke loose, shouting out, "Kill him! He's an insect! Stomp on him!" [23] They**
35 **shook their fists. They filled the air with curses. [24] That's when the captain**
36 **intervened and ordered Paul taken into the barracks. By now the captain was**
37 **thoroughly exasperated. He decided to interrogate Paul under torture in order to get**
38 **to the bottom of this, to find out what he had done that provoked this outraged**
39 **violence. [25] As they spread-eagled him with thongs, getting him ready for the**
40 **whip, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is this legal: torturing a Roman**

1 citizen without a fair trial?"

2 [26] When the centurion heard that, he went directly to the captain. "Do you
3 realize what you've done? This man is a Roman citizen!"

4 [27] The captain came back and took charge. "Is what I hear right? You're a
5 Roman citizen?"

6 Paul said, "I certainly am."

7 [28] The captain was impressed. "I paid a huge sum for my citizenship. How
8 much did it cost you?"

9 "Nothing," said Paul. "It cost me nothing. I was free from the day of my birth."

10 [29] That put a stop to the interrogation. And it put the fear of God into the
11 captain. He had put a Roman citizen in chains and come within a whisker of putting
12 him under torture!

13 [30] The next day, determined to get to the root of the trouble and know for sure
14 what was behind the Jewish accusation, the captain released Paul and ordered a
15 meeting of the high priests and the High Council to see what they could make of it.
16 Paul was led in and took his place before them.

17
18 This will begin several years in Israel (primarily in Caesarea) of Paul's appearing before
19 rulers and councils.

20 21 CHAPTER 23

22
23 Immediately the high priest was annoyed by Paul:

24
25 Acts 23:1-9

26 Paul surveyed the members of the council with a steady gaze, and then said his
27 piece: "Friends, I've lived with a clear conscience before God all my life, up to this
28 very moment." [2] That set the Chief Priest Ananias off. He ordered his aides to slap
29 Paul in the face. [3] Paul shot back, "God will slap you down! What a fake you are!
30 You sit there and judge me by the Law and then break the Law by ordering me
31 slapped around!"

32 [4] The aides were scandalized: "How dare you talk to God's Chief Priest like
33 that!"

34 [5] Paul acted surprised. "How was I to know he was Chief Priest? He doesn't act
35 like a Chief Priest. You're right, the Scripture does say, 'Don't speak abusively to a
36 ruler of the people.' Sorry."

37 [6] Paul, knowing some of the council was made up of Sadducees and others of
38 Pharisees and how they hated each other, decided to exploit their antagonism:
39 "Friends, I am a stalwart Pharisee from a long line of Pharisees. It's because of my
40 Pharisee convictions—the hope and resurrection of the dead—that I've been hauled

1 into this court."

2 [7] The moment he said this, the council split right down the middle, Pharisees
3 and Sadducees going at each other in heated argument. [8] Sadducees have nothing
4 to do with a resurrection or angels or even a spirit. If they can't see it, they don't
5 believe it. Pharisees believe it all. [9] And so a huge and noisy quarrel broke out.
6 Then some of the religion scholars on the Pharisee side shouted down the others:
7 "We don't find anything wrong with this man! And what if a spirit has spoken to
8 him? Or maybe an angel? What if it turns out we're fighting against God?"
9

10 It can be said that Paul didn't recognize Ananias at first. Many scholars believe Paul's
11 thorn in the flesh was poor eyesight. The Apostle immediately back-tracked,
12 recognizing the fact that Christ's followers are to be respectful of others in authority -
13 whether we agree with them or not.
14

15 But Paul was clever and he cut the force of his antagonists in half by pitting the
16 Sadducees against the Pharisees. When he said he was a Pharisee himself, the accusers
17 could not rally enough forces to bring the matter to a conclusion and Paul was remanded
18 back to the prison Antonia.
19

20 Acts 23:11

21 That night the Master appeared to Paul: "It's going to be all right. Everything is
22 going to turn out for the best. You've been a good witness for me here in Jerusalem.
23 Now you're going to be my witness in Rome!"
24

25 I think that's what Paul was going for all along; he wanted to represent Christ in the
26 world capital - Rome - and he wanted to face Nero himself.
27

28 The Conspiracy Against Paul's Life

29
30 Acts 23:12-13

31 Next day the Jews worked up a plot against Paul. They took a solemn oath that
32 they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed him. [13] Over forty of them
33 ritually bound themselves to this murder pact
34

35 Acts 23:23-24

36 The captain called up two centurions. "Get two hundred soldiers ready to go
37 immediately to Caesarea. Also seventy cavalry and two hundred light infantry. I
38 want them ready to march by nine o'clock tonight. [24] And you'll need a couple of
39 mules for Paul and his gear. We're going to present this man safe and sound to
40 Governor Felix."

1 To safeguard Paul, the garrison in Jerusalem sent him with 470 military escorts to
2 Caesarea. Why Caesarea? Because that was the headquarters for the Roman military in
3 Israel and the place where the Roman governor lived (Pilate once lived there and now the
4 governor was a man named Felix.)
5

6 **GOVERNOR MARCUS ANTONIUS FELIX:**

Felix ruled Judea from 52-58 AD. His cruelty and licentiousness, coupled with his accessibility to bribes (Acts 24:26 - KJV - **He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.**) led to a great increase in crime in Judea. The period of his rule was marked by internal feuds and disturbances which he put down with severity. He was married 3 times and one of his sons was killed when Vesuvius erupted in August of 79 AD.

7
8 **CHAPTER 24**
9

10 Not since Jesus had appeared before another cruel, abusive Roman governor named Pilate
11 had a such a noble figure stood before another crook in power – Paul before Felix. He
12 waited for a contingent of religious Jewish leaders from Jerusalem to come to Caesarea
13 with official charges against Paul
14

15 Acts 24:1-9

16 **Within five days, the Chief Priest Ananias arrived with a contingent of leaders,**
17 **along with Tertullus, a trial lawyer. They presented the governor with their case**
18 **against Paul. [2] When Paul was called before the court, Tertullus spoke for the**
19 **prosecution: "Most Honorable Felix, we are most grateful in all times and places for**
20 **your wise and gentle rule. We are much aware that it is because of you and you**
21 **alone that we enjoy all this peace and gain daily profit from your reforms. [3] [4]**
22 **I'm not going to tire you out with a long speech. I beg your kind indulgence in**
23 **listening to me. I'll be quite brief.**

24 **[5] "We've found this man time and again disturbing the peace, stirring up riots**
25 **against Jews all over the world, the ringleader of a seditious sect called Nazarenes.**
26 **[6] He's a real bad apple, I must say. We caught him trying to defile our holy**
27 **Temple and arrested him. [7] [8] You'll be able to verify all these accusations when**
28 **you examine him yourself."**

29 **[9] The Jews joined in: "Hear, hear! That's right!"**
30

31 What baloney! Felix? Honorable? Gentle? Wise? Indulgent? Felix was a
32 criminal among criminals! But Ananias wanted Paul dead and would butter up anyone
33 to get it done.

1 Paul was given an opportunity to tell his story which he did in verses 10-20.

2
3 Acts 24:22

4 **Felix shilly-shallied. He knew far more about the Way than he let on, and could**
5 **have settled the case then and there. But uncertain of his best move politically, he**
6 **played for time. "When Captain Lysias comes down, I'll decide your case."**

7
8 (Lysias was the commander of the Jerusalem garrison who, in fact, had probably saved
9 Paul's life during the riot there (chapter 21).

10
11 Note the terrible conviction on Felix as he talked to Paul: Acts 24:24-25 (KJV) **And**
12 **after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he**
13 **sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. [25] And as he reasoned**
14 **of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come Felix trembled, and answered,**
15 **Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.**

16
17 Just for your record: Felix's wife Drusilla was the daughter of King Agrippa I who
18 killed James (Acts 12:1-2 **Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his**
19 **hands to vex certain of the church. [2] And he killed James the brother of John with**
20 **the sword.) Felix and Drusilla - a "gruesome twosome!"**

21 22 CHAPTER 25

23
24 Paul has cooled his heels as a prisoner in Caesarea when Felix was replaced by the new
25 governor Festus (who later had a great career on Gunsmoke - just kidding!!!)

26
27 After a particular cruel onslaught against Jews led by Felix, a request was made from
28 Israel to Rome to send a new governor. The request was granted and Festus now arrived
29 on the scene. He visited Jerusalem and heard the complaints against Paul and asked the
30 Apostle if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem for an official trial. Paul knew that his
31 chances of surviving the trip were minimal instead opted as a Roman himself to appeal
32 his case to Nero.

33
34 Acts 25:10-12

35 **Paul answered, "I'm standing at this moment before Caesar's bar of justice,**
36 **where I have a perfect right to stand. And I'm going to keep standing here. I've done**
37 **nothing wrong to the Jews, and you know it as well as I do. [11] If I've committed a**
38 **crime and deserve death, name the day. I can face it. But if there's nothing to their**
39 **accusations—and you know there isn't—nobody can force me to go along with their**
40 **nonsense. We've fooled around here long enough. I appeal to Caesar."**

1 [12] Festus huddled with his advisors briefly and then gave his verdict: "You've
2 appealed to Caesar; you'll go to Caesar!" Thus it was that Paul would soon begin the
3 nearly year-long voyage to Italy, Rome and Nero.
4

5 But before that happens, chapter 25 introduces one of the most fascinating interludes in
6 Paul's life:
7

8 Acts 25:13-22

9 A few days later King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice, visited Caesarea to welcome
10 Festus to his new post. [14] After several days, Festus brought up Paul's case to the
11 king. "I have a man on my hands here, a prisoner left by Felix. [15] When I was in
12 Jerusalem, the high priests and Jewish leaders brought a bunch of accusations
13 against him and wanted me to sentence him to death. [16] I told them that wasn't the
14 way we Romans did things. Just because a man is accused, we don't throw him out
15 to the dogs. We make sure the accused has a chance to face his accusers and defend
16 himself of the charges. [17] So when they came down here I got right on the case. I
17 took my place in the courtroom and put the man on the stand.

18 [18] "The accusers came at him from all sides, but their accusations turned out to
19 be nothing more than arguments about their religion and a dead man named Jesus,
20 who the prisoner claimed was alive. [19] [20] Since I'm a newcomer here and don't
21 understand everything involved in cases like this, I asked if he'd be willing to go to
22 Jerusalem and be tried there. [21] Paul refused and demanded a hearing before His
23 Majesty in our highest court. So I ordered him returned to custody until I could
24 send him to Caesar in Rome."

25 [22] Agrippa said, "I'd like to see this man and hear his story."

26 "Good," said Festus. "We'll bring him in first thing in the morning and you'll
27 hear it for yourself."
28

29 That meeting is detailed in the next chapter, 26.
30

31 CHAPTER 26

32

33 It should be clearly noted that Paul did not offer a defense of himself in this chapter, but
34 rather gave a proclamation of the Gospel to Agrippa. This chapter is a classic!
35

36 On our trip to Israel several weeks ago, we stood on the marble floor of the chamber
37 where Paul stood to address the king. I love what one write gave us concerning this
38 confrontation:
39

40 *The appearance of Paul before Agrippa is, in my judgment, the high point in the entire*

1 *ministry of the Apostle. It is a fulfillment of the prophecy that he should stand before*
2 *kings and rulers. Undoubtedly it was God's will that he should come before Agrippa.*
3 J Vernon McGee / Acts / Thru the Bible / Nelson Publisher / page 625

4
5 We need to note that even King Agrippa had no authority to condemn Paul because he
6 had already appealed to Caesar Nero which took precedence. The occasion was filled
7 with pomp and ceremony, a state function there in Caesarea filled with fanfare, with the
8 blowing of trumpets. Note how Luke described it: Acts 25:23 **The next day**
9 **everybody who was anybody in Caesarea found his way to the Great Hall, along**
10 **with the top military brass. Agrippa and Bernice made a flourishing grand entrance**
11 **and took their places. Festus then ordered Paul brought in.**

12
13 As I stood on that marble flooring in Caesarea several weeks ago, right where Paul
14 probably stood, I tried to imagine the door swinging open and a prisoner in chains
15 between two guards, approaching the Roman governor and the provincial king. Paul's
16 opening lines were clever: Acts 26:2-3 **"I can't think of anyone, King Agrippa,**
17 **before whom I'd rather be answering all these Jewish accusations than you, [3]**
18 **knowing how well you are acquainted with Jewish ways and all our family**
19 **quarrels."**

20
It's not a sin to use your brain when witnessing. When Pastor Henry Gericke of St.
Louis - an evangelical Lutheran - was named to be the chaplain for the 21 Nazi war lords
on trial for their lives at Nuremburg, the first thing he did was shake their hands.
Critics jumped all over him. But he responded, "How can I get these men to love my
Lord unless first of all they like me?" Magnificent logic! One that Paul certainly
understood.

21 Paul then continued his address to Agrippa by telling him his own encounter with Christ.

22
23 Acts 26:13-21

24 **...right in the middle of the day a blaze of light, light outshining the sun, poured**
25 **out of the sky on me and my companions. Oh, King, it was so bright! [14] We fell flat**
26 **on our faces. Then I heard a voice in Hebrew: 'Saul, Saul, why are you out to get**
27 **me? Why do you insist on going against the grain?'**

28 **[15] "I said, 'Who are you, Master?'**

29 **"The voice answered, 'I am Jesus, the One you're hunting down like an animal.**
30 **[16] But now, up on your feet—I have a job for you. I've handpicked you to be a**
31 **servant and witness to what's happened today, and to what I am going to show you.**

32 **I'm sending you off [17]**

33 **[18] "'to open the eyes of the outsiders so they can see the difference between dark**

1 and light, and choose light, see the difference between Satan and God, and choose
2 God. I'm sending you off to present my offer of sins forgiven, and a place in the
3 family, inviting them into the company of those who begin real living by believing in
4 me.'

5 [19] "What could I do, King Agrippa? I couldn't just walk away from a vision like
6 that! I became an obedient believer on the spot. (King James: "I was not
7 disobedient to the heavenly vision!") [20] I started preaching this life-change—this
8 radical turn to God and everything it meant in everyday life—right there in
9 Damascus, went on to Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside, and from there
10 to the whole world.

11 [21] "It's because of this 'whole world' dimension that the Jews grabbed me in the
12 Temple that day and tried to kill me.

13
14 Primarily...Paul talked to the king about Jesus. Later he would write to the church he
15 founded in Philippi: Philip. 3:7-8 KJV But what things were gain to me, those I
16 counted loss for Christ. [8] Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the
17 excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the
18 loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ...

19
20 To Paul, everything was about Jesus! And Agrippa responded, Acts 26:28 Then
21 Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

22
23 Almost....never achieves but always fails.

24
25 Acts 26:31-32

26 (The king rose up and the governor and Bernice) and went into the next room to
27 talk over what they had heard. They quickly agreed on Paul's innocence, saying,
28 "There's nothing in this man deserving prison, let alone death."

29 [32] Agrippa told Festus, "He could be set free right now if he hadn't requested
30 the hearing before Caesar."

31 32 CHAPTER 27

33
34 Acts 27:1

35 As soon as arrangements were complete for our sailing to Italy, Paul and a few
36 other prisoners were placed under the supervision of a centurion named Julius, a
37 member of an elite guard.

38
39 These men could not just jaunt down to Tel Aviv and hope a 2 hour flight to Rome.
40 Paul, now a full prisoner of Rome, got on board a ship headed west into the

1 Mediterranean Sea for the “eternal city.” On board with him were other prisoners
2 doubtless some of them headed for execution in Rome or the gladiator pits. They were
3 hopeless men, except for Paul, who used this lengthy trip to continue his missionary
4 witness for the Lord. I have gone by boat across the Mediterranean many times over the
5 past fifty years, including a perilous voyage in 1952 on the ill-fated Greek freighter
6 *Sounion* that three months later would lie on the floor of the sea near Beirut, victim of
7 terrorists bombs.

8
9 Note in this chapter how close to coastlines the ship stayed. Paul warned the captain of
10 an impending storm, but he paid scant attention. Then: Acts 27:14 **But they were no**
11 **sooner out to sea than a gale-force wind, the infamous nor'easter, struck.**

12
13 The King James uses the word “Euroclydon” to describe the storm. The storm came
14 down from Europe. Acts 27:17-20 **[18] Next day, out on the high seas again and**
15 **badly damaged now by the storm, we dumped the cargo overboard. [19] The third**
16 **day the sailors lightened the ship further by throwing off all the tackle and**
17 **provisions. [20] It had been many days since we had seen either sun or stars. Wind**
18 **and waves were battering us unmercifully, and we lost all hope of rescue.**

19
20 I have been on that sea in a violent storm; but nothing like this nor'easter. The crew
21 and passengers feared for their lives. Paul warned them not to leave the ship: Acts
22 27:31-34 **Paul saw through their guise and told the centurion and his soldiers, "If**
23 **these sailors don't stay with the ship, we're all going down." [32] So the soldiers cut**
24 **the lines to the lifeboat and let it drift off.**

25 **[33] With dawn about to break, Paul called everyone together and proposed**
26 **breakfast: "This is the fourteenth day we've gone without food. None of us has felt**
27 **like eating! [34] But I urge you to eat something now. You'll need strength for the**
28 **rescue ahead. You're going to come out of this without even a scratch!"**

29
30 There were 276 total on the ship according to verses 36 and 37. Paul said, by anointing
31 of the Holy Spirit, “Stay on ship - not the lifeboats - and no one will be lost.”

32 33 CHAPTER 28

34
35 The ship eventually cracked up on the shore of Malta, an island in the Mediterranean 75
36 miles south of Italy. Acts 28:1-6 Luke reports: **Once everyone was accounted for**
37 **and we realized we had all made it, we learned that we were on the island of Malta.**
38 **[2] The natives went out of their way to be friendly to us. The day was rainy and**
39 **cold and we were already soaked to the bone, but they built a huge bonfire and**
40 **gathered us around it.**

1 **[3] Paul pitched in and helped. He had gathered up a bundle of sticks, but when**
2 **he put it on the fire, a venomous snake, roused from its torpor by the heat, struck his**
3 **hand and held on. [4] Seeing the snake hanging from Paul's hand like that, the**
4 **natives jumped to the conclusion that he was a murderer getting his just deserts. [5]**
5 **Paul shook the snake off into the fire, none the worse for wear. [6] They kept**
6 **expecting him to drop dead, but when it was obvious he wasn't going to, they**
7 **jumped to the conclusion that he was a god!**

8
9 Some kind of viper bit the apostle and hung on - unusual for most snakes but not some
10 vipers. It was a miracle Paul did not die. But many who saw the event were saved and
11 some were healed.

12
13 Three months later, another ship came by and the delegation headed north to Italy and
14 Rome. Upon arriving there, Paul was granted permission to remain a prisoner but in a
15 private home, guarded by a Roman soldier.

16
17 We are not told much else. We know Nero acquitted Paul and he was free to minister for
18 another year or two, perhaps as far west as Spain. By now Nero was completely crazy
19 and a monster and may have been the culprit who burned much of Rome - for which
20 Christians were blamed. Once again Paul was arrested and this time sentenced to death
21 by beheading. This martyrdom was done shortly after just north of Rome at a place
22 called Tres Fontaines (Three Fountains). Paul was killed - as was Peter, by crucifixion,
23 but the work of God continued on - and does to this day!

24
25 Next week: The marvelous book of ROMANS!