

Rome at Last!

1. How would you state your life's purpose?

Bow in Prayer: "Our great God and Father, may our confidence in You be so affected by the way You fulfilled Your purpose in Paul's life—against all odds—that we too will go forth boldly proclaiming the glorious news of Jesus Christ!"

Read the amazing account of Acts 28:1-10. Find Malta on Map 7 and observe how far the ship had been driven off course during the storm. [*Trace their voyage from Fair Havens to Malta, recalling in your mind all the crew had experienced.*]

2. When the men staggered out of the pounding surf and onto the beach, how were they greeted? Why was Malta a good place to be shipwrecked?
3.
 - a. What occurred that brought Paul to the attention of the people in a spectacular way?
 - b. How did this incident pave the way for an expanded ministry on Malta?
4. In light of the fact that God wanted Paul to get to Rome, why do you think He allowed all the events of 27:1-28:9 to happen?
5. Review briefly the obstacles Paul had faced since he set out for Rome (Acts 19:21). How long did it take? (See Acts 20:3; 21:4; 24:27; 27:33; 28:11.)
6. What can we learn from Paul about endurance, faith, courage, patience, and hope as we head toward God's goals for us in our lives?

Thoughtfully *read* and *reread* Acts 28:11-31. Think about how this passage relates to the overall purpose of the book. Consult the Chart of Acts for an approximate date of Paul's arrival in Rome.

After years of hindrances and hardship—Paul begins the final lap of his voyage on a third ship. Sailing from the island of _____, the ship sailed north eighty miles to the main port of Sicily, _____, where they stayed three days. The ship then sailed another eighty miles north to the port of _____ on the “toe” of Italy. They were forced to wait one day for a favorable wind strong enough to allow them passage through the treacherous straights between Sicily and Italy's toe and then up to the western coast of Italy. Sailing for two days and one hundred eighty miles on this final leg of their voyage, the ship put in at its final destination, southern Italy's main seaport _____.

7. What delightful experience awaited Paul at Puteoli?

With the conclusion of the stopover at Puteoli—the final leg of Paul's journey begins: a 140 mile trek to Rome. Julius, his soldiers, and their prisoners, along with Paul's friends, Luke and Aristarchus, set out on the Appian Way. [*Trace their journey from Malta to Rome on Map 7.*]

Luke, in almost breathless fashion, states—“And so we came to Rome” (Acts 28:14 NIV)

8. What remarkable event happened before Paul reached the city (Acts 28:15)? In what way was Paul encouraged?

Even as a prisoner, Paul was being afforded something like his own triumphal entry into the capital city!

9. What do you learn about Paul's relationship with the believers in Rome from the following passages?
Romans 1:11-13

Romans 15:14-29

Romans 16:1-16

At this time Rome had a population of about 1,500,000. Half were slaves, half were free. The society was divided into roughly three classes: a small upper class, a large class of the poor, and slaves. The Jewish community in Rome in the mid-first century is estimated at about 40,000-50,000. When Paul came to Rome, the Coliseum had not been built. The prominent buildings were the temple of Jupiter, the palaces of Caesar and a temple to Mars, the god of war. Nero had been on the throne since October of A.D. 54. –Compiled from Peloubet’s Bible Dictionary

10. Being a prisoner, how was Paul able to share the Gospel with the Roman people (Acts 28:16)?
11. After settling into his new accommodations, what was Paul’s first act in Rome?
12. If Paul was to have a hearing with the Jews, he must first overcome the impressions the Jews would have of him as a prisoner. How does Paul seek to vindicate himself (Acts 28:17-20)?
13. In light of all that Paul had been through, how do you think he felt when he heard the Jews’ response in verse 21?
14. How do you account for the difference in the attitude of the Jews in Jerusalem and the attitude of the Jews in Rome?
15. Surprisingly, the Jews want to hear more about Paul’s views. A meeting was arranged and Luke tells us that *great numbers* of Roman Jews came to hear Paul. What two things does Paul concentrate on during his day-long discussion with the Jews?
16. At the end of the day how are Paul’s listeners responding to his message (verse 24)?
17. **Reread** Acts 28:25-31. As the gathering was breaking up we have the record of Paul’s last warning to his own people. What was significant about Paul’s use of the passage from Isaiah?

18.
 - a. How does Stephen characterize those who continue to resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51)?
 - b. Can you think of an area in your life where God desires to give, but you continue to resist? If so, please elaborate.
 - c. What specific steps will you take to keep your heart from becoming callused?
19. Look carefully at Acts 28:28. In what way does this verse fulfill Isaiah 49:6b; Acts 13:46-47 and Acts 1:8?
20. ***Stop and Reflect*** on the circumstances of Paul's life. Paul was an innocent man—yet he had been a prisoner of Rome for several years. When limitations are placed upon you by circumstances beyond your control, how do you usually react? Explain.
21. How can you begin to serve the Lord within these limits?

Paul never just “marked time”—waiting until he reached a certain place to begin his witness. His total purpose in life was to bring the knowledge of the truth of eternal life through Jesus Christ to every person who crossed his path. During Paul's house arrest in Rome it is believed that he wrote the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.

22. Who were Paul's companions during those years? (See Acts 27:2; Ephesians 6:21; Philippians 1:1, 4:18; Colossians 1:1, 4:10; Philemon 23.)
23.
 - a. What were the advantages of Paul being a prisoner (Philippians 1:12-14)?
 - b. What does this teach us about God's ways?

24. Take a few moments now to contemplate the final picture that is given of the apostle Paul in Acts 28:30-31. Record your thoughts and feelings.

Under circumstances hardly anticipated, the risen Christ fulfilled the apostle's dream and His own word to Paul: "You must bear witness also at Rome." (Acts 23:11)

And now, the story that began in Jerusalem more than thirty years ago comes to a triumphant finish in Rome! The story of Jesus Christ—the crucified and risen Savior, miraculously swept across the world. The Gospel was now being preached without interference in the most influential city of the Roman Empire.

"Today we live in perhaps the greatest expansion of Christianity in the history of the church. About 70 percent of the church's outreach since Pentecost has been accomplished in this century alone, with hundreds of thousands coming to Christ every day! The explosive church expansion has resulted in a leadership crisis of epic proportions." (see WORLD Biblical Education by Extension)

25. In what way would you like to contribute to the continuing story of Acts in the next two years?

There are some very obvious facts that are not given to us in Acts before the book ends. We are not told of Paul's fate, or the outcome of his trial before Caesar. It is generally accepted that Paul was acquitted about A.D. 63 or 64. It seems likely that Paul enjoyed a few more years of freedom until the time that Nero turned against Christians. Then Paul was re-arrested, imprisoned, condemned and finally executed in Rome, (probably in A.D. 66), four years before the fall of Jerusalem.

26. Quietly read 2 Timothy 2:1-7, 4:1-8. Listen to these words with an open and sincere heart. These passages are part of Paul's farewell letter to Timothy, written within weeks, or perhaps even days of his martyrdom. *How do these instructive words resonate with you? How will they make a difference in the way you live out the rest of your life?*

Live your life in such a way that those who know you but don't know God, will come to know God because they know you. . .

Bev Horn