

LESSON 12

Equipped for Ministry: Paul on Malta and in Rome

Acts 28

*He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ
with all boldness and without hindrance*

Acts 28:31.

Class Overview: After surviving the storm and shipwreck, Paul's journey to Rome continued under God's faithful care. Acts 28 recounts the final scenes of the book: the apostle's ministry on the island of Malta, his arrival in Rome, and his ongoing witness while under house arrest. Although still a prisoner, Paul was anything but silent. His words, actions, and endurance show that no circumstance can stop the work of the gospel. This lesson teaches that God equips His servants to serve effectively wherever they are—whether in hardship, limitation, or freedom—so that His kingdom advances “without hindrance.”

Class Objectives: By the end of this class, you should be able to—

1. Describe Paul's ministry on Malta and how God used miracles to open hearts.
2. Explain how Paul's arrival and ministry in Rome fulfilled God's promise.
3. Recognize that gospel work continues regardless of personal limitation or circumstance.
4. Understand the importance of perseverance and faithfulness in ministry until life's end.
5. Apply Paul's example by remaining faithful and fruitful in whatever season or situation God places us..

Introduction

AFTER TWO WEEKS IN THE STORM AND A SHIPWRECK that nearly cost him his life, Paul and everyone aboard the vessel washed ashore safely in Malta, just as God had promised. Although cold, wet, and exhausted, they quickly received kindness from the islanders, who built a fire and welcomed them. What began as a tragedy turned into another opportunity for ministry.

As Paul gathered sticks for the fire, a viper bit his hand. The locals thought he must be a criminal whom justice had finally caught. But when Paul shook the snake into the fire and was unharmed, their fear turned to amazement. Soon, Paul was invited into the home of Publius, the island's chief official. When Publius' father was sick with a fever and dysentery, Paul prayed and healed him. Others on the island came, and God used Paul to bring healing and hope to many.

After three months in Malta, Paul and his companions finally set out for Rome. There, under house arrest, Paul received visitors, preached the gospel, and taught about God's kingdom for two full years. Although chained to a Roman guard, he remained spiritually free. His courage and conviction turned his confinement into a mission field.

The final chapter of Acts ends not with defeat but with victory. The gospel that began in Jerusalem has now reached the heart of the empire. Luke's closing words, spoken *boldly and without hindrance*, remind us that God's word cannot be chained. Paul's example encourages every Christian to keep serving faithfully, even when life doesn't go as planned. Ministry doesn't stop when circumstances change; it simply takes a new form.

Historical Background

After the shipwreck described in Acts 27, Paul and his companions, 276 people in total, found refuge on the island of Malta, located south of Sicily in the Mediterranean Sea. The name "Malta" probably comes from a Phoenician word meaning "refuge," which fits well with what God provided there. The people of the island, though pagan, were unusually kind. Luke calls them *unusual in kindness*, showing God's providence in surrounding Paul with compassion after months of danger.

Paul's miraculous survival from the viper bite quickly drew everyone's attention. The Maltese people believed in divine justice (possibly under the name "Dike"), so when Paul was unharmed, they concluded he was under divine favor. This opened the door for ministry, and soon Paul was invited to the home of Publius, the leading Roman official on the island. When Publius's father was ill, Paul prayed, laid hands on him, and healed him. The result was a flood of requests from the sick all over the island, and Paul ministered to many before leaving three months later.

In the spring, when sailing was safe again, they boarded an Alexandrian ship. Their journey took them north to Syracuse, Rhegium, and finally Puteoli, near Naples. From there, they traveled by land along the Appian Way toward Rome, greeted by groups of believers who came out to meet Paul at the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns. Their warm reception greatly encouraged him: *When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.* (v. 15).

In Rome, Paul was placed under house arrest, guarded by a soldier but allowed to receive visitors freely. His first act was to meet with the Jewish leaders, explaining that he was imprisoned for the hope of Israel and that he had done nothing against the law or his people. Some believed, while others rejected the message. Yet Paul kept teaching anyone who would listen, Jews and Gentiles alike, about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts ends with Paul still under guard but fully active in his ministry. Luke's final words, *with all boldness and without hindrance*, serve as a fitting conclusion to the book. The gospel has triumphed. The kingdom of God has reached the world's capital, and no human authority can silence its message. The story of Acts concludes, but the mission of Christ continues. Every believer is called to the same boldness, perseverance, and faith that carried Paul from storm to shore to Rome.

Equipped to Serve Wherever God Leads (28:1–10)

When Paul and his companions washed up on Malta, they had nothing, no ship, no supplies, and no plan. Yet God had already prepared a new

mission field. What seemed like a detour was actually divine guidance. Sometimes the Lord's greatest work happens in places we never planned to go.

The islanders showed remarkable kindness by building a fire to warm the soaked survivors. As Paul gathered sticks, a viper bit him. The locals assumed this was a sign of judgment, that Paul must be a murderer escaping the sea only to be struck by fate. But when he suffered no harm, their opinion changed instantly. They went from seeing him as cursed to viewing him as divine. Paul's calm response showed both faith and perspective. He didn't panic, boast, or explain. He simply trusted God and kept on serving.

Soon, Paul was invited into the home of Publius, the island's chief official. When Publius's father fell ill with fever and dysentery, Paul visited, prayed, laid his hands on him, and healed him. After this, others came from across the island to be healed as well. Through Paul's presence, the people of Malta saw the compassion and power of God. For three months, Paul ministered there, teaching, praying, healing, and serving. When it was time to leave, the islanders honored him and supplied everything needed for the rest of the journey. What began as a shipwreck became a season of fruitful ministry.

Ministry isn't restricted by location or circumstances. Whether shipwrecked or sheltered, in hardship or comfort, God can use His people anywhere. The Spirit equips us to serve faithfully in unexpected places, to see opportunity in inconvenience, and to demonstrate Christ's love through both words and actions. Every detour can be divine when we invite God to lead.

Equipped to Encourage and Build Up Others (28:11–16)

After three months on the island of Malta, the winter storms subsided and sailing became safe again. Paul and his companions boarded another ship from Alexandria and continued toward Italy. The vessel had a figurehead of the Twin Brothers, Castor and Pollux, sons of Zeus, believed to be protectors of sailors. Ironically, the true protection of that

voyage came not from pagan gods but from the living God who had guided Paul every step of the way.

The ship briefly stopped at Syracuse in Sicily, then at Rhegium, and finally reached Puteoli, a major port near modern Naples. There, Paul found fellow Christians, a reminder that the gospel had already reached Italy before he arrived. Luke notes that these brothers and sisters welcomed them and invited them to stay for seven days. What must that have meant for Paul after months of hardship and travel? Christian fellowship refreshed his spirit and renewed his courage.

From Puteoli, Paul and his group started the final part of their journey along the Appian Way, the famous Roman road that leads to the capital. As they traveled, more believers came out to meet them at the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns, two well-known rest stops along the route. When Paul saw them, Luke records, *he thanked God and took courage.* (v. 15)

Even the strongest servants of God need encouragement. Paul, the great apostle and missionary, was still human. The sight of faithful believers waiting for him lifted his spirit. Ministry is never a solo journey. God strengthens His people through the presence, prayers, and fellowship of others.

When Paul finally reached Rome, he was allowed to live alone under guard. The chains were still there, but his mission went on. The Spirit had equipped him not only to endure the storm but to come out stronger through the love of fellow believers. God still works this way today, using encouragement and shared faith to renew our courage when the road feels long.

Equipped to Proclaim Without Hindrance (28:17–31)

When Paul reached Rome, he wasted no time continuing his mission. Though under house arrest and chained to a Roman guard, he remained free in spirit. Within three days, he called together the local Jewish leaders to explain his situation. He assured them that he had done

nothing against his people or their customs, but that he was in chains because of “*the hope of Israel*,” (v. 20) the promise of the Messiah fulfilled in Jesus.

Some of the leaders were curious, so they arranged another meeting to learn more. On that day, *many came to him at his lodging*. From morning until evening, Paul explained the kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus using the Law of Moses and the Prophets (v. 23). Some were convinced, while others refused to believe. Paul reminded them of Isaiah’s prophecy, that hearts would grow dull and ears be deaf to the truth, but he also declared that God’s salvation had now been sent to the Gentiles, and they would listen.

Not even rejection could stop the gospel. Luke concludes the book of Acts with these words: *Paul stayed two whole years in his own rented house. And he welcomed all who visited him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.* (vv. 30–31). That phrase, *without hindrance*, is striking.

Paul was confined, yet the gospel was not. The Roman guards who rotated shifts in his house heard the message of Christ. Visitors came and left encouraged. Letters written during this time—like Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon—would go on to strengthen generations of believers.

Acts does not end with closure but with continuation. The story of the church does not stop at Paul’s imprisonment; it continues through every believer who carries the message forward. Walls, chains, or governments have never limited God’s mission. Wherever His people live, in freedom or under restriction, He equips them to proclaim His word boldly and faithfully. Paul’s example calls us to the same commitment. Ministry doesn’t depend on perfect circumstances. We can serve, teach, and influence others wherever God places us. The gospel is still advancing today, “without hindrance,” through all who trust and obey the Lord’s call.

Lesson Summary and Reflection

Key Truths from Malta and Rome:

- God turns detours and delays into new opportunities for ministry.
- The Spirit equips believers to serve faithfully, even in hardship or limitation.
- Encouragement and fellowship strengthen courage for the work ahead.
- The gospel cannot be chained—God’s word advances “without hindrance.”
- Faithful service in every season leaves a lasting impact on the kingdom of God.

Acts 28 concludes Paul’s journey and the book of Acts with a victorious note. What began with a storm ended with the gospel firmly planted in the heart of the Roman Empire. Throughout every trial, God’s faithfulness shines through. Paul never reached Rome in comfort, but he arrived in victory, bringing the message of Christ to places no one could have foreseen.

In Malta, God used Paul’s compassion and faith to open hearts through healing and service. In Rome, God granted him influence even while he was chained. Every obstacle became an opportunity for ministry. Paul’s faithfulness demonstrates that the effectiveness of ministry is never based on our freedom or environment but on our willingness to serve wherever God puts us.

Luke’s final words capture the spirit of the entire book: *He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.* The gospel that began in Jerusalem now reached the world’s greatest city and kept moving forward. No prison, persecution, or power could stop it. This lesson, along with the book of Acts as a whole, reminds us that the mission continues. God equips each believer to serve faithfully in their own “Rome,” wherever that may be. Our task isn’t to control the outcome but to stay bold, steady, and surrendered to the Lord who still works “without hindrance.”

Memory Verse and Weekly Challenge

*He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ
with all boldness and without hindrance.*

Acts 28:31 (CSB)

Weekly Challenge: Wherever you are, see it as your mission field. Ask God how you can serve, encourage, or speak for Him today. The gospel advances through daily faith and courage—serve boldly, trusting God to work through you “without hindrance.”

For Discussion

1. How did Paul’s time on Malta show that God can turn difficulty into opportunity for ministry?

2. What can we learn from Paul’s calm faith and servant heart after the shipwreck?

3. Why do you think Paul found such encouragement when he met the believers on the way to Rome?

4. How does Paul’s ministry in Rome demonstrate that the gospel cannot be stopped by circumstance?

5. What would it look like for you to serve “with all boldness and without hindrance” in your own daily life?
