**Acts 25-28** - November 9th

Today’s Summary: Paul was shown such favor by God and so many miracles happened so that he could preach to the Emperor and all of high officials in Jerusalem and Rome in the Jewish and Roman governments. God had to orchestrate so many details to make all of the events we are reading about today happen. He is doing the same in your life. So endure hardship, because what God has in store, you wouldn’t believe even if He told you. He is working out the impossible and miraculous in every one of our lives. Believe that and wait for it by seeking Him and being still and knowing He is God. And as we will learn today, God healed people by laying hands and speaking truth. The exact area he was gifted in by God, is the exact area Satan came to attack him. He was not accused and tried because of evil actions or lies, but because he was boldly proclaiming the Good News about Jesus. And the serpent in today’s story came in the fire and attacked Paul’s hands – the second area where he was doing the miraculous. But in the same way Satan uses the fire, the Holy Spirit is our true fire and a bigger blaze than anything the enemy can do. Amen? Amen and Hallelujah!!!

Paul’s Trial Before Festus

**25**Three (3) days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, **2**where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and presented the charges against Paul. **3**They requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. **4**Festus answered, “Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. **5**Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there.”

**6**After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. **7**When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them.

**8**Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.” **9**Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?”

**10**Paul answered: “I am now standing before Caesar’s court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. **11**If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!” **12**After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!”

Festus Consults King Agrippa

**13**A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. **14**Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul’s case with the king. He said: “There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. **15**When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.

**16**“I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over anyone before they have faced their accusers and have had an opportunity to defend themselves against the charges. **17**When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. **18**When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. **19**Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive. **20**I was at a loss how to investigate such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. **21**But when Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor’s decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar.” **22**Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear this man myself.” He replied, “Tomorrow you will hear him.”

Paul Before Agrippa

**23**The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high-ranking military officers and the prominent men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. **24**Festus said: “King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. **25**I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. **26**But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. **27**For I think it is unreasonable to send a prisoner on to Rome without specifying the charges against him.”

**26**Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.”

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: **2**“King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, **3**and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

**4**“The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. **5**They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. **6**And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. **7**This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. **8**Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

**9**“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. **10**And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. **11**Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

**12**“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. **13**About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. **14**We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ **15**“Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. **16**‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. **17**I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them **18**to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

**19**“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. **20**First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. **21**That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. **22**But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen - **23**that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

**24**At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.”

**25**“I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. **26**The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. **27**King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

**28**Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” **29**Paul replied, “Short time or long - I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

**30**The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. **31**After they left the room, they began saying to one another, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.”

**32**Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

Paul Sails for Rome

**27**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 *(Yom Kippur)*. 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.

The Storm

**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.”

The Shipwreck

**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.

Paul Ashore on Malta

**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.

Paul’s Arrival at Rome

**11**After three (3) months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island - it was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. **12**We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three (3) days. **13**From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. **14**There we found some brothers and sisters who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome. **15**The brothers and sisters there had heard that we were coming, and they traveled as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these people Paul thanked God and was encouraged. **16**When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.

Paul Preaches at Rome Under Guard

**17**Three (3) days later he called together the local Jewish leaders. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: “My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. **18**They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. **19**The Jews objected, so I was compelled to make an appeal to Caesar. I certainly did not intend to bring any charge against my own people. **20**For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”

**21**They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of our people who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. **22**But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.”

**23**They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. **24**Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. **25**They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

**26**“‘Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.” **27**For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’ *(Isaiah 6:9, 10)*

**28**“Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” **29** After he said this, the Jews left, arguing vigorously among themselves.

**30For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. 31He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ - with all boldness and without hindrance!**