



Walking with the Spirit through the Book of Acts

Pastor Michael Cranford

Copyright © 2024 Michael Cranford

Schedule

April 7	The Holy Spirit	Sept 8	Acts 9:32-10:48
April 14	Acts 1:1-9	Sept 16	Acts 11:1-12:25
April 21	Acts 1:10-26	Sept 22	Acts 13:1-14:7
April 28	Acts 2:1-13	Sept 29	Acts 14:8-16:10
May 5	Acts 2:14-47	Oct 6	Acts 16:11-17:23
May 12	BREAK (Mother's Day)	Oct 13	Acts 17:24-18:28
May 19	Acts 3:1-26	Oct 20	Acts 19:1-20
May 26	Acts 4:1-21	Oct 27	Acts 19:21-23:11
June 2	Acts 4:22-5:11	Nov 3	Acts 23:12-26:32
June 9	Acts 5:12-42	Nov 10	Acts 27:1-28:30
June 16	BREAK (Father's Day)		
June 23	Acts 6:1-15		
June 30	Acts 7:2-60; 8:1-4		
July 7	Acts 8:5-25		
July 14	Acts 8:26-9:31		



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

1. Paul was put on a vessel bound for Rome, along with other prisoners. They took a northern route, landing at Sidon, Myra, Cnidus, and Fair Havens (Crete). The wind was blowing east (which is why Paul normally travels by road when he is west-bound) which makes the voyage difficult. (Acts 27:1-8)

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. 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. (Acts 27:1-2)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

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. From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. 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. We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. (Acts 27:3-8)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

2. The weather conditions become worse as they approach winter and continue to press west. Paul warns the centurion but they continue, and attempt to reach harbor in Crete. The waters around Crete are known to be disastrous, even in the best weather conditions. They are unable to make port and pass into open waters where they are caught in a violent storm. (Acts 27:9-20)

Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Day of Atonement. So Paul warned them, “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.” But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship. 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. (Acts 27:9-12)

To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island. The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure, 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. We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved. (Acts 27:13-20)

To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

3. The ship was driven across the Adriatic and entered shallow waters. Some of the sailors attempt to abandon the ship at night for fear of it coming aground, but Paul warns the centurion, who cuts the lifeboat free to prevent them from leaving. (Acts 27:21-32)

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. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me 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.’ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.” (Acts 27:21-26)

To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. 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. Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. 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. Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.” So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away. (Acts 27:27-32)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

4. Paul tells them that they should eat because their rescue is near and no life would be lost. They all believe him and are encouraged. They spot a bay and run the ship aground on the island of Malta. The ship is destroyed but the passengers are saved, just as the Lord told Paul. (Acts 27:33-41)

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. 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.” 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. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. Altogether there were 276 of us on board. When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea. (Acts 27:33-38)

To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

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. 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. 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. (Acts 27:39-41)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

5. Normally, the Romans would kill prisoners rather than let them escape, but the centurion stopped the guards and permitted everyone to reach the beach alive. (Acts 27:42-44)

The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. 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. The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely. (Acts 27:42-44)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

6. The islanders provide fire and welcome the shipwrecked passengers. While on the island, Paul is bitten by viper but nothing happens to him. The islanders are so surprised that they consider him a god. (Acts 28:1-6)

Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. 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. 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." But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. 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. (Acts 28:1-6)

To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

7. They stay with Publius, the chief official of the island. Paul prays for his father who is dying of dysentery, and the man is healed. Paul similarly prays for the sick people on the island, and they also are healed. (Acts 28:7-10)

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. 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. When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed. (Acts 28:7-10)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

8. After the winter months have passed, they get passage on a ship from Alexandria and finally arrive in Rome. Paul is put under house arrest. (Acts 28:11-16)

After three 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. We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. 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. There we found some brothers and sisters who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome. 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. When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him. (Acts 28:11-16)

To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

9. Paul makes his case to the Jewish leaders in Rome, who have not received word of the charges against him and want to hear about Paul's position on Christianity. Paul witnesses to them, and some believe. Paul's final appeal is to the fact that Israel has hardened itself to the truth, but this has provided an opportunity for the Gentiles to hear. (This is the primary argument of Romans 9-11.) Acts 28:17-28

Three 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. They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death." (Acts 28:17-18)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

“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. 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.”

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. But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.” (Acts 28:19-22)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

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. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. 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:



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

“Go to this people and say,

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”

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.’

“Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” (Acts 28:23-28)

To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

10. Paul continues ministering for two years in Rome (AD 61-62) while under house arrest, awaiting his trial before Caesar (Acts 28:30-31). This is mostly likely the time Paul writes letters to Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians. It is also possibly the time that Luke writes Acts, which is why the narrative ends here.

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance! (Acts 28:30-31)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

11. Since there is no mention of charges being brought against him (and since Luke has been clear that no Roman laws were broken), it is likely that Paul is released after the two years. Some have theorized that Paul completes his objective of traveling to Spain (Romans 15:24) and then returns to Rome a few years later. Most likely, Paul is simply traveling to the same churches he founded earlier in his ministry (i.e., a fourth missionary journey). It is during this timeframe that 1 Timothy and Titus are written.

But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. (Rom 15:23-24)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

12. Paul is (again) in prison when he writes 2 Timothy. This is very different than the house arrest in Acts 28; Paul is facing death and expects to die soon (2 Tim 4:6-8). He mentions that only Luke is with him, and asks Timothy to come to see him and bring Mark (2 Tim 4:9-11). The likely timing (AD 66-67) means that Nero's persecutions of Christianity have begun. (Rome was burned in July AD 64, and Christians were blamed for the damage.)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. (2 Tim 4:6-11)



To Rome and the Ends of the Earth

- Martyrdom of Paul and Peter under Nero (AD 66-67)
- The beginning of the Jewish Revolt against Rome (AD 66)
- Josephus surrenders to the Romans (AD 67)
- Nero commits suicide (AD 68)
- Vespasian prevails as Emperor amidst civil war (AD 69)
- Destruction of the temple under Titus (AD 70)



The Spirit in Acts: Takeaways

1. The Spirit is rational, purposeful, and personal. He is God and does not change. He is actively involved in the lives of those who serve his purposes.
2. The Spirit works powerfully for his purposes, which center on the kingdom—adding men and women to God’s people, bringing salvation to the ends of the earth.
3. The Spirit works powerfully (even miraculously) in connection with certain preconditions.
 - a) The Spirit works in support of the authenticity of the message of the kingdom.
 - b) The Spirit works in the lives of people whose hearts are aligned with his (who do what he directs them to do).
 - c) The Spirit works when he receives the glory.

The Spirit in Acts: Takeaways

4. Difficulties which arise to oppose the Spirit (and those who serve him) are expected. The Spirit is always opposed by the enemy, who utilizes both flesh and blood (culture) and counterfeits (demonic spirits) to oppose the work of the kingdom. The Spirit will expose the counterfeit and confound the power of culture when it suits his purposes. Hardships do not mean the Spirit is absent or that things are going wrong; quite the opposite. Those who follow the Spirit should buckle in and prepare for a battle. We should not expect things to always be smooth.

5. The work of the Spirit is not done. It will continue as long as necessary until the Lord's objectives are completed. This means he is always looking for men and women who fit the pattern of people like Peter and Paul.