

RUSSELL SANDERS

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THE APOSTLE PAUL – LESSON 54

THE JOURNEY TO ROME – PART 8

SAFE ASHORE, BUT SNAKE BITTEN

(Acts chapter 28). After the shipwreck, all 276 men on board made it to the obscure, little known island of Melita. The inhabitants there were considered to be uncivilized barbarians (by Roman standards). They were pagan and highly superstitious. However, they were very kind and receptive to these stranded mariners and their passengers.

It was a cold and rainy day and Paul set about to stoke the fire to get warm and to dry out. As he was gathering wood for the fire, a very deadly poisonous snake (viper) bit him and fastened its fangs onto his hand. The natives knew that its poison was fast acting. They figured that Paul must be an evil man and this was the punishment of the gods meted to him. He had escaped the sea, but surely there was no escape from this death sentence. They kept watching for him to fall. They had never known anyone to survive this particular kind of viper bite.

Paul shook it off into the fire. They continued to watch but no swelling occurred. The longer they watched, the more amazed they became as he showed no ill effects at all. Reckoning that no human could survive this kind of snake bite, they soon changed their minds about Paul. Surely, he must be a god in human form. (v. 6.) God's miraculous deliverance gained great respect for Paul.

This is exactly the kind of situation Jesus spoke of when he said in Mark 16:18, ***"They shall take up serpents and...it shall not harm them."*** That does not mean we are to tempt God by deliberately handling poisonous snakes, or drink poison on purpose. We are told in Deuteronomy 6:16, ***"Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God."*** And it was quoted by Jesus to Satan in the 40-day wilderness period in Matthew 4:7 where Jesus said, ***"It is written (again I say) 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God'."***

We are not to do anything deliberately that is known to be harmful to us. However, if something harmful should happen beyond our choice, God will deliver us. We must use wisdom.

Are you deliberately doing anything, or eating anything, or drinking anything that has been known to cause harm to people? If so, search your heart about it.