

# Paul Ministers in Malta

**Key Verse:** *“It came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.”*  
—Acts 28:8

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Acts 28:1-10**

## **FOLLOWING THEIR SHIP-**

wreck (see lesson for November 11), the entire crew and passengers, including Paul, reached shore on the island of Malta. “When they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita [Malta]. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.”—Acts 28:1,2

The inhabitants of the land were called barbarians because they did not speak Greek, but rather Phoenician. In any event, they were very hospitable to their sea-soaked visitors instead of rushing out to attack and slaughter them as unwelcome invaders. Paul was quite active in helping to serve the needs of everyone. He gathered sticks for a fire so that the entire company might be warmed and dried following their ordeal. It must have been rather startling for the islanders to observe a viper animated by the heat suddenly fasten itself upon Paul’s hand. They reasoned at first that Paul must have been a criminal, possibly a murderer, who, having escaped from the perils of the

sea, would now receive divine justice and die from the poisonous bite of the viper. When he shook off the serpent and suffered no ill effects, their reasoning abruptly changed, and they concluded that Paul must be a god.—vss. 3-6

There was a man named Publius who was the chief ruler on the island of Malta. He owned considerable property in the area and provided gracious accommodations for these stranded guests for three days. (vs. 7) Our Key Verse reveals that the kindness of Publius did not go unrewarded. Paul learned that his father was ill and he went to him, prayed for him and healed him.

When the news of this miracle spread throughout the island, during the three months Paul and the others remained there, many of the sick inhabitants were brought to him and all of them were cured. The people of Malta demonstrated their appreciation to Paul, and also to Luke who accompanied him, by showering them with gifts that would be useful when they resumed their voyage to Rome.—vss. 9,10

It is interesting to note that there is no record of Paul preaching the Gospel message concerning the heavenly kingdom either to his companions who had traveled with him aboard ship, or to the residents of Malta. This reminds us that during his earthly ministry, our Lord indicated that not everyone who would eventually receive salvation would be part of the present sheepfold or heavenly class. (John 10:16) There would be other sheep that would have the opportunity to receive blessings right here on earth during the “times of restitution.”—Acts 3:21-23

As believers and followers of the Lord, it is not our privilege at this time to actually heal the sick as was done by our Master and Paul at the dawn of the Gospel Age. Let us, however, seek to bless all those we come in contact with by telling them of God’s wonderful kingdom that will end this weary night of sorrow, sickness, sin and death that afflicts mankind.—Gal. 6:10; Ps. 30:5 ■