SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 28

Unhindered — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God brings Paul to Rome exactly as He promised — through a shipwreck, a snakebite and a chain — and the book of Acts ends not with Paul's trial but with the gospel going out from a rented room with all openness, unhindered. Some believe and some refuse, but the salvation of God keeps moving to the nations.

00 The Text

ACTS 28 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 When they had been brought safely through, then we found out that the island was called Malta.

2 ☆ The natives showed us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and received us all.

3 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, ⚠ a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand.

4 When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one another, "⚠ Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, ◷ justice has not allowed him to live."

5 However △ he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm.

6 But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and ⚠ began to say that he was a god.

7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days.

8 And it happened that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and △ after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him.

9 After this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured.

10 They also honored us with many marks of respect; and when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all we needed.

11 At the end of three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, and which had ◷ the Twin Brothers for its figurehead.

12 After we put in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days.

13 From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium, and a day later a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli.

14 There we found some brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome.

15 And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

16 When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

17 After three days Paul called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they came together, he began saying to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18 "And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death.

19 "But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, not that I had any accusation against my nation.

20 "For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel."

21 They said to him, "We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you.

22 "But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere."

23 When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.

24 Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe.

25 And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,

26 saying, 'GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY, "YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;

27 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES; OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'"

28 "Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen."

29 [When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]

30 And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him,

31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

Marked in the text

- **v2** "The natives showed us extraordinary kindness" — Promise / blessing
- **v3** "a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "justice has not allowed him to live" — Time / place / contrast
- **v5** "he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm" — God — His character & actions
- **v6** "began to say that he was a god" — Sin / warning
- **v8** "after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him" — God — His character & actions
- **v11** "the Twin Brothers for its figurehead" — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** "and thus we came to Rome" — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** "he thanked God and took courage" — Command / instruction
- **v16** "Paul was allowed to stay by himself" — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** "I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel" — Promise / blessing

- **v22** “it is spoken against everywhere” — Sin / warning
- **v23** “solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v23** “from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets” — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** “Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe” — Time / place / contrast
- **v27** “THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL” — Sin / warning
- **v27** “AND I WOULD HEAL THEM” — Promise / blessing
- **v28** “this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles” — God — His character & actions
- **v28** “they will also listen” — Promise / blessing
- **v30** “was welcoming all who came to him” — Promise / blessing
- **v31** “preaching the kingdom of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v31** “with all openness, unhindered” — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** “brethren” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

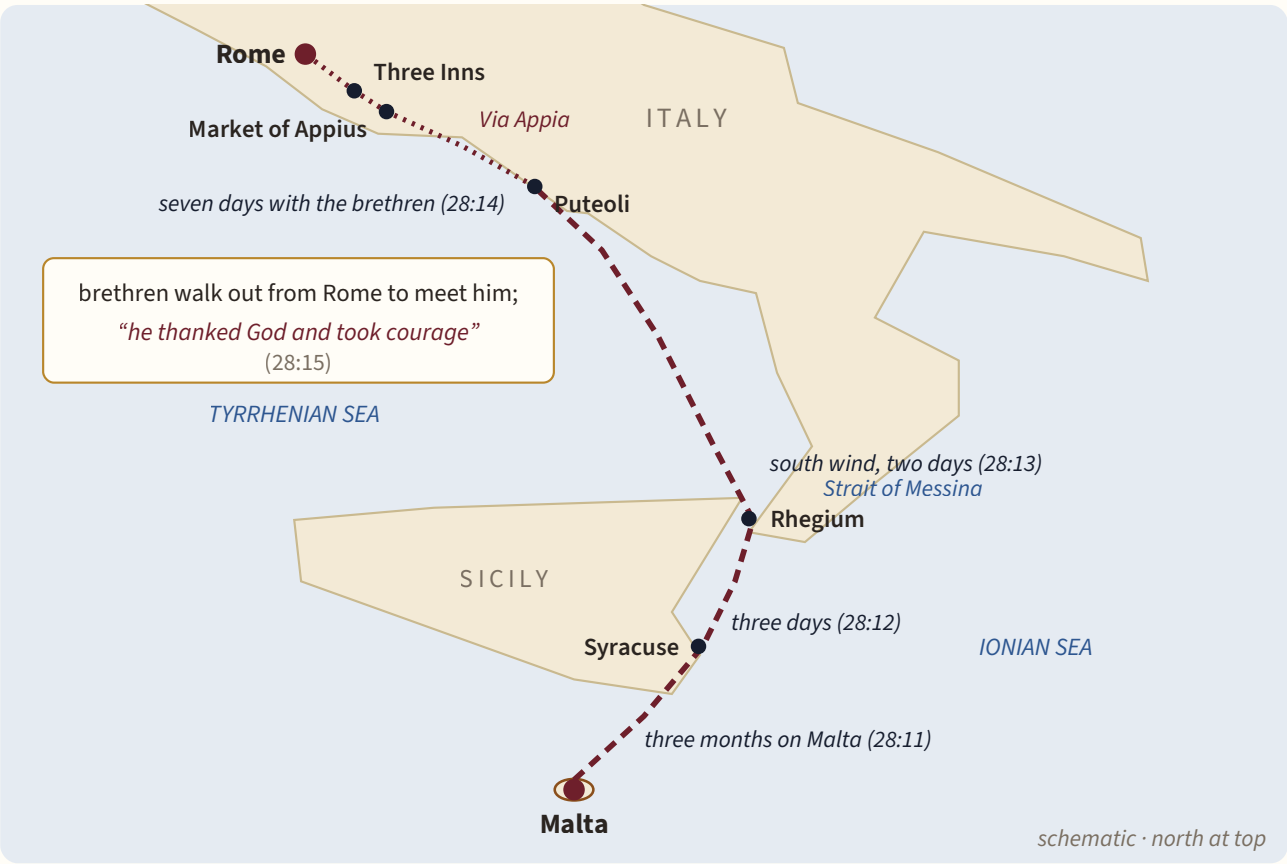
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 28:15

"And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage."

FIGURE · MALTA TO ROME



Follow the dashed line north from Malta by Syracuse and Rhegium to Puteoli, then the dotted line up the Appian Way, where the brethren met Paul at the Market of Appius and Three Inns.

Setting. The survivors of chapter 27 are on Malta (v1), in rain and cold (v2). After three months they sail on an Alexandrian ship with "the Twin Brothers for its figurehead" (v11), by Syracuse and Rhegium to Puteoli (vv12–13), then walk the Appian Way, met by brethren at the Market of Appius and Three Inns (vv14–15). In Rome Paul lives under guard (v16), meets the Jewish leaders twice (vv17–28) and stays two years in rented quarters (v30). Luke's "we" runs through v16.

Structure:

- vv1–10 — **Malta:** the island named (v1); the natives' kindness and a fire (v2); the viper (v3); "a murderer … justice has not allowed him to live" (v4); no harm — "he was a god" (vv5–6); Publius' welcome (v7); his father healed after prayer and the laying on of hands (v8); the island's sick cured (v9); honors and supplies (v10).
- vv11–16 — **the road to Rome:** three months; the Twin Brothers (v11); Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli (vv12–13); seven days with brethren — "thus we came to Rome" (v14); the Market of Appius and Three Inns — "he thanked God and took courage" (v15); Paul allowed to stay by himself with a guard (v16).
- vv17–29 — **the hope of Israel:** after three days, the leading Jews called (v17); innocent, delivered, forced to appeal (vv17–19); "this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel" (v20); no letters, no bad report; "this sect … spoken against everywhere" (vv21–22); a day of testimony from the Law and the Prophets (v23); some persuaded, some not (v24); Isaiah 6 (vv25–27); "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles" (v28); [v29, bracketed in the NASB: the Jews depart disputing].
- vv30–31 — **unhindered:** two full years in rented quarters, welcoming all (v30); preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the Lord Jesus Christ "with all openness, unhindered" (v31).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "said / saying / spoke / spoken / speak / reported" ×12 — vv4, 17, 20, 21 (×3), 22, 24, 25 (×2), 26, 29 (v29 bracketed).
- "came / come / coming" ×9 — vv3, 9, 13, 14, 15, 17, 21, 23, 30.
- "welcomed / received / kindness / entertained / honored / supplied / welcoming" ×8 — vv2 (×2), 7 (×2), 10 (×2), 21, 30.
- "Paul" ×7 — vv3, 8, 15, 16, 17, 23, 25; "see / seeing / seen / saw" ×7 — vv4, 6, 8, 15, 20, 26, 27.
- "hear / heard / hearing / listen" ×6 — vv15, 22, 26, 27 (×2), 28.
- "God" ×5 — vv6 ("a god"), 15, 23, 28, 31; "kingdom of God" ×2 — vv23, 31.
- "three" ×5 — vv7, 11, 12, 15, 17.
- "brethren" ×4 — vv14, 15, 17, 21; "island" ×4 — vv1, 7, 9, 11.
- "chain / prisoner / guarding / soldier" ×4 — vv16 (×2), 17, 20.
- "Jews" ×3 — vv17, 19, 29 (v29 bracketed); "fire" ×3 — vv2, 3, 5; "persuade(d) / believe" ×3 — vv23, 24 (×2).
- "heart" ×2 — v27 (×2); "prophet(s)" ×2 — vv23, 25.

Contrasts: Saved from the sea ⟷ "justice has not allowed him to live" (v4). Murderer ⟷ a god (vv4, 6). A prisoner ⟷ welcomed like a dignitary (vv15–16). Nothing against our people ⟷ delivered to the Romans (v17). Persuaded ⟷ would not believe (v24). Keep on hearing ⟷ will not understand; keep on seeing ⟷ will not perceive (v26). A heart grown dull ⟷ "I would heal them" (v27). Chained (v20) ⟷ unhindered (v31).

Shape of the chapter: two journeys and two meetings. Malta (1–10) and the road (11–16) finish the voyage; the meeting with the Jews (17–29) and the two years (30–31) finish the book. It moves from a fire on a beach to a door open in Rome.

A note on verse 29. The NASB prints v29 in brackets — its sign for words probably not in the original writings. The oldest Greek manuscripts lack it; the later text behind the KJV has it. It repeats what v25 already says, so I read it and lean nothing on it.

Chapter theme (my words): God keeps His word to Paul all the way to Rome, through kindness and a viper, healing and a chain. Paul preaches the hope of Israel to his own people first, grieves over hardened hearts, and keeps preaching Jesus to whoever will come — and Luke ends the book with the gospel unhindered.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 28:28

"Therefore let it be known to you that △this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; ☆they will also listen."

FIGURE · THE VERDICT TURNS

THE ISLANDERS' VERDICT TURNS · ACTS 28:3–6

VERSE 4	VERSES 5–6	VERSE 6
"Undoubtedly this man is a murderer" Justice has caught him	he shook the creature off and suffered no harm; they waited a long time	*"he was a god"* they changed their minds

Both verdicts were wrong. Paul was neither a murderer nor a god, but a servant of *"the God to whom I belong and whom I serve" (27:23)*

Henry: "See the uncertainty of popular opinion, how it turns with the wind"

Read left to right: the same crowd that called Paul a murderer called him a god a few hours later; the truth is in the band beneath.

Why does Luke tell us about the viper? Not to make snake-handling a test of faith. Jesus had promised His disciples "authority to tread on serpents" (Luke 10:19), and Luke shows God protecting His witness on the way to Rome. Henry draws the human lesson — "See the uncertainty of popular opinion, how it turns with the wind" — and Guzik notes that "For these natives, Paul had to be seen in extremes." Paul was neither a murderer nor a god; he belonged to and served the living God (27:23).

Healing on Malta. Paul prays first, then lays on hands, and Publius' father is healed (v8). Henry: Paul came "not as a physician to heal him by medicines, but as an apostle to heal him by miracle." Guzik notes that the word for the others "getting cured" (v9) "more literally means, "to receive medical attention"" — some think Luke the physician helped. Either way, Guzik's summary fits: "God did the work, but Paul made himself ready and available for the work."

Why did Paul need courage at Three Inns? He had just been through a shipwreck and was walking into Rome in chains to face Caesar. The brethren who came out to meet him were God's answer. Henry: "It put new life into him, cheered up his spirits, and banished his melancholy." Strong men still need brothers.

What is "the hope of Israel" (v20)? The Messiah and the resurrection God promised the fathers (23:6; 26:6–7). Guzik: Paul was a prisoner "because of his belief in Israel's Messiah, the hope of Israel." Paul never saw faith in Jesus as leaving Israel's faith; he saw it as its fulfillment.

Does verse 28 mean God is finished with Israel? No. Paul turns to the Gentiles in Rome as he did in Pisidian Antioch (13:46) and Corinth (18:6), yet he went to the synagogue first every time. Guzik: "It just meant that God would find those who would hear it." Henry: "Paul made intercession for them, but never against them." Paul himself wrote to this same city that "a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:25–26). I hold, with Romans 11, that God has a future for national Israel — the disciples' question about "restoring the kingdom to Israel" (1:6) was answered "not yet," not "never." Guzik's "spiritual kingdom" describes what Paul preached in Rome; it does not cancel the promises still to come.

Why does Acts 28:26–27 read differently from Isaiah 6:9–10 in my Bible? Paul (and Luke) quote the Greek Old Testament, which makes the people's own hearts the subject ("the heart of this people has become dull"); the NASB of Isaiah translates the Hebrew command to the prophet ("Render the hearts of this people insensitive"). Both say the same hard thing: persistent refusal ends in inability to hear. Jesus used the same text (John 12:40).

What about verse 29? It is bracketed in the NASB because the oldest manuscripts lack it; the KJV includes it from later manuscripts. Henry, reading the KJV, comments that "they had great disputes among themselves." Nothing is lost if it is not original — v25 already says they disagreed and began leaving.

Why does Acts end without Paul's trial? Guzik reports the early tradition that Paul was likely acquitted and later executed under Nero around A.D. 66–67, but Luke does not tell us. Luke's subject is the word, not the man: "The word of God was unhindered" (Guzik). Sproul's next sermon framed Paul's aim in Rome as preaching "the gospel of the Kingdom." "The Book of Acts really is a never-ending story" (Guzik).

Word study (Greek):

- **brought safely through — *diasōzō* (G1295):** 28:1, 4; 27:43, 44.
- **natives — *barbaros* (G915):** non-Greek speakers; Rom 1:14.
- **kindness — *philanthrōpia* (G5363):** love of mankind; compare 27:3.
- **viper — *echidna* (G2191):** the snake of v3.
- **Justice — *Dikē* (G1349):** the islanders' goddess of vengeance.
- **Twin Brothers — *Dioskouroi* (G1359):** Castor and Pollux, sailors' gods.
- **thanked — *eucharisteō* (G2168); courage — *tharsos* (G2294):** v15; *tharsos* only here.
- **hope — *elpis* (G1680); chain — *halysis* (G254):** v20.
- **sect — *hairesis* (G139):** v22; 24:5, 14; 26:5.
- **solemnly testifying — *diamartyromai* (G1263); persuade — *peithō* (G3982):** vv23–24.
- **become dull — *pachynō* (G3975):** v27.
- **salvation — *sōtērion* (G4992):** v28; Luke 2:30; 3:6.
- **rented quarters — *misthōma* (G3410); welcoming — *apodechomai* (G588):** v30.
- **openness — *parrēsia* (G3954); unhindered — *akōlytōs* (G209):** v31.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Kindness from unexpected people** (v2).
2. **Crowds swing between extremes** (vv4–6; Henry).
3. **Shake it off into the fire** (v5).

4. **God does the work through a willing man** (v8; Guzik).
5. **A pagan figurehead, a sovereign God** (v11).
6. **Even apostles need brothers** (v15; Henry).
7. **The chain is for the hope of Israel** (v20).
8. **A hardening that is partial** (vv26–27; Rom 11:25–26).
9. **Luke closes the circle** — "the salvation of God" (v28; Luke 3:6).
10. **The last word is "unhindered"** (v31).

Cross-references: Isa 6:9–10; Luke 2:30; 3:6; 10:19; John 12:40; 16:33; Acts 1:6–8; 4:29–31; 9:15; 13:46; 18:6; 19:21; 23:6, 11; 24:5, 14; 26:6–7; 27:23–24; Rom 1:14–16; 10:1; 11:1, 25–26; 15:23–24; Phil 1:12–14; 2 Tim 4:17; Heb 10:24–25.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 28:30–31

"And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and ☆ was welcoming all who came to him, △ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ ◷ with all openness, unhindered."

FIGURE · THE ROAD TO ROME



Read the top row, then the bottom: promise, purpose, appeal, arrival — and a book that ends with the word still going out.

Eight verses trace the promise from Jesus' commission to the last word of Acts; Rome was never an accident.

Example to follow — the man at the fire (v3). Paul had just survived a shipwreck, and the first thing Luke shows him doing is gathering sticks. No speech, no title — just work. When the snake bit, he shook it off and went on. A lot of the men I serve have had something fasten itself onto them — an addiction, a record, a reputation. You can shake it off into the fire and keep serving.

Sin to confess — living by the crowd's verdict. I have let people's opinions swing me like the islanders' — up when they praise me, crushed when they condemn me (vv4–6). I confess caring more about what people call me than about whose I am. Neither "murderer" nor "god" is the truth about Paul or about me; I belong to God and serve Him.

Truth to face — I need my brothers. Paul, the apostle, took courage when he saw the brethren (v15). I am not too strong for that. This week I will show up for the men God has given me, and I will let them show up for me.

Command to obey — keep preaching, keep welcoming. Paul spent two years "welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ" (vv30–31). I may not be free to go where I want, but I can open the door where I am. Chained or not, I can talk about Jesus to whoever walks in.

Promise to trust — the word is not chained. Paul's circumstances "turned out for the greater progress of the gospel" (Phil 1:12). The last word of Acts is "unhindered." Whatever limits are on me, they are not on God's word. And I trust that God is not finished with Israel or with me (Rom 11:1, 26).

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The islanders called Paul a murderer, then a god (vv4–6). Whose opinion of me swings like that — and whose opinion am I actually living for? (28:3–6; 27:23) *See the uncertainty of popular opinion, how it turns with the wind (Henry).*
2. Paul gathered sticks for the fire like any castaway (v3) and prayed for a sick man in a stranger's house (v8). What ordinary service is God asking me to do where I am right now? (28:3, 8–9) *God did the work, but Paul made himself ready and available (Guzik).*
3. Paul took courage when he saw the brethren (v15). Whose face do I need to see this week — and whose face does someone else need to see? (28:14–15; Heb 10:24–25) *It put new life into him and banished his melancholy (Henry).*
4. Some were persuaded and others would not believe (v24). How do I keep loving and praying for people who have heard and refused? (28:24–27; Rom 10:1) *Paul made intercession for them, but never against them (Henry).*
5. Paul was chained to a soldier, yet the word went out "unhindered" (vv16, 31). What chain in my life — a record, a limit, a sentence — have I treated as a reason God can't use me? (28:16, 30–31; Phil 1:12–14) *My circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel (Phil 1:12).*
6. Acts ends without telling us what happened to Paul. If the story keeps going, what is my chapter supposed to look like? (28:30–31; 1:8) *The Book of Acts really is a never-ending story (Guzik).*

Worship. The God who kept Paul through the sea kept him from the viper, healed an island through his prayers, sent brothers down the Appian Way to meet him, and opened a door in Rome that no chain could close. His salvation has been sent to the nations, His promises to Israel stand, and His word runs unhindered.

Prayer. Lord, thank You for bringing me this far, through storms I did not choose. Free me from living by the crowd's verdict; I belong to You. Thank You for my brothers — help me take courage from them and give it back. Soften hard hearts, beginning with mine, and save Your people Israel. Make my room, my cell, my table a place where anyone who comes hears about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, with all openness, unhindered. Amen.

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