

A LIFE IN OUR DAYS

ACTS 28:11-16 APRIL 21, 2021

Last month, Orlando Bloom was asked in an interview about his daily routine. His response turned a lot of heads and led to quite a few parodies on social media and follow-up articles skewering him.

I'll give you a sample: "I like to earn my breakfast, so I'll just have some green powders that I mix with brain octane oil, a collagen powder for my hair and nails, and some protein...Then I'll go for a hike while I listen to some Nirvana or Stone Temple Pilots."¹ He spends 20 minutes chanting then adds some Buddhist writings to his Instagram Stories.² He says he spends, "a lot of...time dreaming about roles for [himself]." By then it's close to lunch, which consists of "vegetables or a stew. [Orlando says] I will cook at times, but otherwise, there's a team of people." Just a regular guy, right?

Our studies in Acts are coming to a close. The last half of the book has focused on the Apostle Paul, who has, admittedly, had some pretty outlandish and astounding day-to-day experiences, including the last few passages. The shipwreck and the miracles on Malta and all that came before it. But as Acts ends, things become surprisingly routine. Luke will not conclude his account with a big, climactic showdown between Paul and Nero, as we might expect. The story doesn't finish with caesar's conversion or even Paul's exoneration. There will be no more miracles recorded in the verses that follow. No salvations either. As far as events go, there's just a talk with some Jews and a day of preaching to them and a few travel nuts and bolts found in our passage tonight.

We don't see what we might be expecting. But what we *can* see is the Christian faith in operation in regular days and regular circumstances. Of course, 'regular' doesn't mean unimportant or unspiritual. Paul was where he was because God had a specific and important task for him. But though we won't see Paul healing anyone or being busted out of prison, no riots or shipwrecks, yet as he inches toward Rome, the Holy Spirit within him continues His good work. We see in Paul the fruit of God operating in the Christian life. We detect patience, endurance, thankfulness, graciousness, determination, courage, and a willingness to receive help.

This last leg of Paul's trip to Rome isn't all about the fantastic. It's more about the regular faithfulness and family-ness of the Christian life. And it once again shows us how God keeps His promises and moves us forward even when progress may feel slow, or our lives feel routine.

We pick back up in verse 11 as Paul sails out from the island of Malta.

Acts 28:11 - ¹¹After three months we set sail in an Alexandrian ship that had wintered at the island, with the Twin Gods as its figurehead.

After a long wait in Caesarea and after coming through such danger on the high seas, there was *still* some waiting to do. Now, Paul and company have made it through winter, and the Italian mainland is immediately to the north. *Still*, there will be a few delays. A few days here, a week there. And, throughout, Paul continues to model patience and contentment.

¹ <https://www.bodyandsoul.com.au/health/celebrity-profiles/orlando-blooms-daily-routine-is-the-most-la-thing-youll-ever-hear/news-story/0ea1c8f2974661a9a6fc3b4485fd957f?nk=9b9b1c9dc9672645b9a74026444b2f59-1618945000>

² <https://www.insider.com/orlando-bloom-daily-routine-involves-brain-octane-oil-fans-react-2021-3>

Make no mistake about it - he was very determined to get to Rome. He had wanted to get there, not only to preach to the lost but also to encourage the believers for years. He had said in his letter to the Romans, “[I am] always asking in my prayers that if it is somehow in God’s will, I may now, at last, succeed in coming to you [in Rome].”³ He wrote that he had been prevented “many times” from getting to them.⁴ Now he’s closer than ever but still makes progress only a little at a time. But, he remains peaceful and patient, knowing that God will accomplish His good work according to *His* perfect timing.

Luke points out that this new ship had the twin gods of Castor and Gemini as its figurehead. These were said to be patrons of seafarers and that if you were in a storm and could see the constellation Gemini, it was a good omen.⁵

Those who had been on the *first* Alexandrian ship with Paul knew that no painted image could save a ship from the Euroclydon, but there *was* a God who could and *did* save them: Paul’s God. I’m sure they took much more comfort in the fact that he was aboard with them than some mythological characters carved on the prow.

Of course, there are people out there who put some sort of stock in constellations. They check their horoscope every day and define parts of their personality according to the zodiac. In that same article, Orlando Bloom said, “I’m a Capricorn, so I crave routine.” That’s to be expected out in the world. The heart without Christ is desperate for help and guidance and protection. But let’s look within for a moment. Christians today, in some traditions, put some stock in patron saints. Some branches of the Church suggest you pray to saints, that sort of thing. Even in evangelical protestantism we find God’s people effectively making political figures like patron saints. Sometimes we see people putting the hope and guidance of their lives in the hands of these characters. None of that is necessary or helpful. If you’re a Christian, the Holy Spirit of God lives within you. And day and night, you have Jesus Christ as your Advocate, interceding for you. If you needed a job done at your house, would you ask the high school woodshop student to do it if a professional contractor was willing to do it for free? You don’t need a horoscope or a patron saint.

This scene illustrates real-world experiences for us. We’re surrounded by Godless individuals and companies. We have to make choices about our liberties and how to be in the world but not of it. Can you sail on a ship that has idols on it? Paul acts in a gracious way here. He didn’t refuse to board the ship because of its figurehead.⁶ Nor did it defile him in some way to sail on it. Christians are called to be holy *and* winsome. Let’s be thoughtful when the next boycott comes around.

Acts 28:12 - ¹²Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed three days.

This first little jog was 80 miles, putting them onto the island of Sicily. It had been founded by a Corinthian and was, at this point, the capital of the island. Cicero had once called Syracuse “the greatest and most beautiful of all the cities of [the Greek Empire].”⁷

Acts 28:13 - ¹³From there, after making a circuit along the coast, we reached Rhegium. After one day a south wind sprang up, and the second day we came to Puteoli.

³ Romans 1:10

⁴ Romans 15:22

⁵ *CSB Study Bible: Notes | Bible Knowledge Commentary*

⁶ Joseph Benson *Commentary Of The Old And New Testaments*

⁷ *Gill’s Exposition Of The Entire Bible*

The ship passed between Sicily and the boot of the Italian mainland. They were having a bit of trouble with the wind until a helpful south wind arose.

This wind brings two principles to mind. First, the Bible talks about the importance of not being a person “blown about by the wind.” Meaning we’re not to be driven by circumstances or by various teachings and doctrines, from one breeze to another. These south winds of Acts 27 and 28 give us a picture. One wind led to disaster, the other to the hoped-for destination. Instead, we’re to grow in our knowledge and intimacy with Christ. We’re to be taught by Him and conformed to His image. His word is unchangeable, and so we are to moor our lives to it and navigate by it.

Second, as the breeze started to blow, I wonder if some of the survivors of the last wreck found their anxiety rising. After all, the south wind had started their long disaster back in chapter 27. Just because we weather one storm doesn’t mean there isn’t another one brewing over the horizon. We tend to think (or hope) that once we’ve made it through a trial, then we no longer have to deal with that kind of difficulty again. But, so many of you know that isn’t true. Sometimes cancer comes back. Sometimes relational breaks aren’t mended. The struggles we face as Christians aren’t like achievements in a video game, where once you beat a level, you’re done with that for good. After all, Paul endured *four* shipwrecks! Life is full of trouble. But the Lord is always present, and we can always trust Him, just as Paul did as he boarded this boat.

From Malta to Rome is about 500 miles. By Puteoli, they’re about 75% of the way there.

Acts 28:14 - ¹⁴There we found brothers and sisters and were invited to stay a week with them. And so we came to Rome.

The way it’s written makes it seem that Paul and his friends went on a hunt to see if there were any Christians in town. There were, and not only were they there, but they were ready to shower love on these newfound brothers who came in from the docks. We don’t know who started the church there, but we admire the readiness to serve. You know, we read about the Bereans, and we are rightly impressed by their devotion to Scripture. We name ministries after them still today. At the same time, we should be stirred up by the faithful brotherly love of the Puteolians. It’s certainly not always easy to be welcoming and warm-hearted to strangers, but what a precious part of the life of the Body that we’re all invited to participate in. To be *ready* to be in relationship with believers around us.

The verse ends with a momentous sentence: “And so we came to Rome.” So much had led up to this. So much waiting and so much struggle, and now they were finally taking the walk into town. Between Paul and Luke, there must’ve been a lot of excitement *and* apprehension. Paul *had* to assume that he might die after his talk with Nero. And yet, despite the danger and the unknown, they could rejoice in the faithfulness of God. God had *kept* His promise. God had given Paul the desire of his heart. Despite the false charges and being beaten nearly to death, despite being abandoned by the Christians in Jerusalem and the attempted assassinations and the red tape and sitting in a jail cell for two years and the raging sea and almost being killed by the soldiers and then the shipwreck and then being bitten by a viper, despite *all* that, nothing could stop the will of God from being accomplished. They could not be separated from God’s love or God’s work in and through them.

Acts 28:15 - ¹⁵Now the brothers and sisters from there had heard the news about us and had come to meet us as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

We don't know who exactly came or how many were in the group, but Paul probably knew at least *some* of these folks. There's a very probability they had all read Romans (which had been written and sent to them about three years earlier). In Romans 16, Paul sent greetings to 26 friends there, including Priscilla and Aquila, who were living in Rome and had a church meeting in their home.⁸

What a wonderful moment this would have been for Paul, who had been so isolated for multiple years. Yes, on the voyage from Caesarea to Malta, he was joined by Luke and Aristarchus, but now to see his brothers and sisters, who walked some 35 miles, some 45 miles, so that they could turn around and usher him into Rome. What a beautiful act of love and fidelity.

Luke references the Three Taverns. Ancient historians describe that town as being "full of boatmen and cheating innkeepers."⁹ The sleazy shops and idolatrous shops remind us that we Christians have to navigate a pagan world. Sometimes it will come against us. Sometimes it will try to entice us. Sometimes it's just doing its thing in the background. We get to shine the bright light of God's love and truth in all the Appi Forums we find ourselves. *That includes online forums, by the way.*

There's something important for us here: The Apostle Paul is an amazing figure. Who can we think of that was more mature and more full of God? He's working miracles and writing Scripture and having face-to-face chats with Jesus Christ. And *even he* needed Christian fellowship! To be gathered with other believers filled up his heart with courage and motivated him to praise and thank the Lord.

All of us need actual, genuine, Christian fellowship. It's not just a good thing - it's a *necessary* thing. It is one of the gifts God has given us so that we might receive ministry and help and repair. Let's treasure it, involve ourselves in it, and guard it.

Acts 28:16 - ¹⁶When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

I almost forgot that Paul had a soldier in tow. In fact, for the last two years and for the *next* two years, he will spend every day chained to a Roman soldier. Even this dehumanizing inconvenience would have spiritual benefits thanks to the power of God. Paul would later report that the whole imperial guard would hear his testimony for Christ. And, if you're the kind of person who people often conspire to kill, it was probably nice to have a personal bodyguard.

Paul was shown grace in this first Roman imprisonment. We'll learn in verse 30 he was allowed to rent his own house rather than be thrown in some dungeon. That's what would happen the second time. For now, he's going to live a regular, routine life. But even though it wasn't fantastic, it was still full of God. There he was able to write Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philipians.¹⁰ He was able to preach to the people around him - some of them peasants, some of them rulers. Most importantly, he was just as able to draw closer to his Lord. God isn't only near during the shipwrecks or during the healing miracles. He's there with you moment by moment. While Orlando Bloom is mixing up his brain octane oil, the Lord is moving around in our hearts, bringing us into specific positions, working all things together for the good for those who love God and are called according to His unstoppable purposes. Embrace His leading and allow His Holy Spirit to cultivate those precious riches of patience, grace, endurance, fellowship, and usefulness in your life.

⁸ Romans 16:3, 5

⁹ https://theodora.com/encyclopedia/f/forum_appii.html

¹⁰ *CSB Study Bible: Notes* | See also: <https://www.gotquestions.org/prison-epistles.html>