

# UNSTOPPABLE CHURCH

*Then* and *Now*  
in 30 Minutes



## Episode 38 - Protected

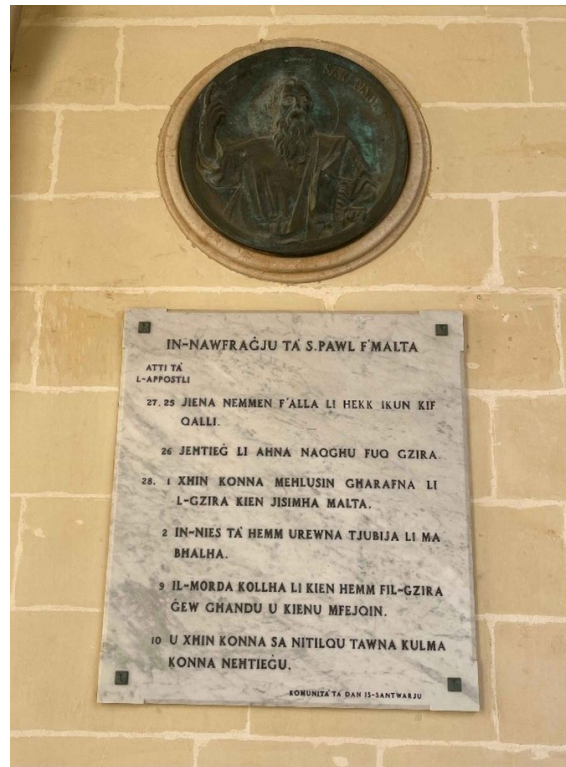
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## THE SETTING

We've arrived at **Saint Paul's Bay, Malta**. Sitting on the jagged coralline limestone of the mainland, we are looking across the bay to a small, uninhabited island that juts out of the Mediterranean which is thought to be where Paul's shipwreck occurred. In the nearby town by the water's edge is St Paul's Shipwreck Church, or St Paul's Bonfire Church as it is sometimes called, that was built in the 14th century at the traditional site where the survivors came ashore and where a bonfire was built for them.



The craggy coast of St. Paul's Bay  
looking out to the island  
on which Paul is said to have been  
shipwrecked



St Paul's Shipwreck Church has the words of Acts 27:5-6, 28:1-2, 9-10 engraved on marble plaques in many different languages on its outer walls. This one is in Maltese.



# BIBLE READING

[Acts 27:1-28:10](#)

# KEY IDEAS



The final six chapters of Acts are one long story of how God protected Paul to ensure he reached his goal of appearing in Rome.

- Previously, we left Paul in the Roman barracks in Jerusalem. The next day, Paul's nephew heard of an assassination attempt on Paul; but he found himself protected - as the commander promptly transferred him to his headquarters in Caesarea Maritima (chapter 23).
- Five days later, the religious leaders came to Caesarea for Paul's trial before the Roman Governor, Felix (chapter 24). Paul took the opportunity to share his story and the gospel once again, even challenging the Governor about "the judgment to come" ([24:25](#)). Once again God protected him by getting the Governor to allow him some freedom and to have friends take care of his needs.
- This dragged on for two years (24:27), for Felix was hoping that Paul would bribe him. But Felix was then recalled to Rome to answer charges of irregularities in his rule and was replaced by Festus, a man of more integrity - another divine protection. Another trial followed,

where Paul had finally had enough and exercised his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar ([25:11](#)).

- When Herod Agrippa visited, Festus took the opportunity to discuss Paul's case with him and the next day Paul got to share his testimony with him (chapter 26). Agrippa acknowledged Paul could have been freed, had he not already appealed to Caesar. Over two years had passed; but God had protected Paul through it all.

- Paul knew that God had said he would get to Rome - but he probably never imagined it happening like it did! Paul and other prisoners were handed over to a centurion, Julius, who was kind to Paul (27:3) – God's protection once again! They first took a coastal ship and then transferred to an ocean-going ship heading for Rome. They encountered unfavourable weather for it was after "the Fast" (the Day of Atonement) which falls in late September/early October, and Romans considered sailing after Sep 15th to be suicidal. Paul warned them not to travel; but the ship's owner, thinking only of money, insisted they press on.

- A fierce storm hit them as they sailed between Crete and Malta. The sailors did everything they could (27:14-21), and Paul said they should have listened to his advice. However, he promised that none of them would be lost, for he knew he was protected and had a destiny (27:21-26).

- Fourteen days into the storm, they were shipwrecked ([27:27-44](#)). The boat ran aground and was broken up by waves, leaving them to swim ashore on Malta ([28:1](#)). All survived - once again, God's incredible protection. And that protection continued through the "unusual kindness" that the Maltese showed them.

- While gathering brushwood for the fire, Paul was bitten by a viper. The islander thought that justice must have caught up with him at last - but he was protected once again ([28:1-6](#)).

- Paul was welcomed by Publius, the island's chief official and Paul prayed for his sick father, who was healed, which led to the rest of the sick on Malta coming for prayer and also being healed. Paul was honoured and provided for - yet more protection - until, after three months, when the weather improved,

they finally left and set off once again for Rome. What an incredible catalogue of protection!

- This wasn't the only shipwreck or life-threatening situation that Paul experienced as Paul notes in [2 Cor 11:24-26](#), showing that protection doesn't always mean we won't experience difficulties or hardships at times; but it does mean that we will always be protected to be able to do what God has called us to do.



1. Paul shows us the importance of trusting God in the storms of life. What 'storm' do you need to trust him in at this time?
2. Paul was able to go through all this because he was able to stand on the promise that God had given him. Is there some promise that you need to stand on at this time?
3. How might a renewed confidence that we are ultimately, always protected empower the Church to become unstoppable once again?



For a behind-the-scenes glimpse into what was involved to create this podcast series listen to Mike and David recounting their experiences!

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