

# Acts 28:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

## Analysis

Paul's servant leadership appears as he **gathered a bundle of sticks** (φρυγάνων πλῆθος)—an apostle doing manual labor to help others. **There came a viper out of the heat** (ἔχιδνα)—a venomous snake, likely the Maltese viper, emerged from dormancy and **fastened on his hand** (καθῆψεν). The Greek 'kathapsen' suggests the snake bit and clung tenaciously. This incident recalls Jesus' promise that believers would 'take up serpents' without harm (Mark 16:18), fulfilled literally here. Paul's vulnerability while serving others becomes an opportunity for divine protection and witness. The viper attack echoes Satan's pattern—striking when God's servants are engaged in humble service.

## Historical Context

Mediterranean vipers become sluggish in cold weather, hiding in brush piles for warmth. Paul's collection of firewood was necessary but hazardous work. First-century understanding recognized viper bites as typically fatal, making Paul's survival (v. 5) all the more remarkable to witnesses.

## Related Passages

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. How do you respond when attacked while serving others faithfully?
2. What does Paul's willingness to gather firewood teach about Christian leadership?

## Interlinear Text

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συστρέψαντος δὲ τοῦ Παύλου φρυγάνων πλῆθος καὶ  
had gathered And G3588 when Paul of sticks a bundle and  
G4962 G1161 G3972 G5434 G4128 G2532

ἐπιθέντος ἐπὶ τὴν πυράν ἔχιδνα ἐκ τῆς θέρμης  
laid them on G3588 the fire a viper out of G3588 the heat  
G2007 G1909 G4443 G2191 G1537 G2329

ἐξελθοῦσα καθῆψεν τῆς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ  
there came and fastened on G3588 hand his  
G1831 G2510 G5495 G846

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 23:33** (Parallel theme): Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

**Matthew 12:34** (Parallel theme): O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.