

Title: Paul's ministry on Malta

Intro: We've now come to the final chapter of Acts. Last week we saw how the apostle Paul having spent 2 years in chains in Caesarea had appealed his case to the highest court in the land. Being wrongfully accused and concerned that he could not get a fair trial there he appealed to Rome. At that time he was delivered into the hands of a centurion named Julius. Julius being a fair man and knowing Paul was a trustworthy man himself treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to see his friends when they reached Sidon. Though Paul was a prisoner and in chains he was not alone on this boat to Rome. We read how Luke (writer) and Aristarchus were with him. Because of the time of year it was and because of the heavy winds against them they slowly left Sidon and sailed close to the coast of Asia minor around the island of Cyprus until they came to a city called Myra. They then changed boats and set sail again on their journey to Rome. Again the time of the year was closely approaching the time when people stop sailing and with much difficulty they reach the island of Crete and come to the city of Fair Havens. It is here Paul begins to address the men in charge by telling them he had perceived if they go any further that this voyage would end in disaster. By this time Paul had been in 3 shipwrecks, spent a night and a day in the deep and had discernment not only because of these prior experiences but I believe for this trip imparticular that going further was going to end in great loss.

But who would want to listen to a man in chains?

Because the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship to press on in an attempt to reach Phoenix, a more suitable and convenient place to winter in, they decided it would be worth it, and they could make it. They were wrong.

But, as we touched on last week, sometimes when we take a step in a wrong direction, or disobey the word of God, or sound council - we may not experience the consequences quickly. Matter of fact we may experience smooth sailing at first, just as they did. (vs 13)

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As they put out further they got themselves caught up into a storm of hurricane proportions. And for 14 days they were tossed back n forth and lost their way. The bible says that “neither sun nor stars appeared for many days”, and they lost all ways of knowing where they were; they lost some of the tackle as they began lightning the ship, and eventually began to lose all hope that they would be saved.

But Paul, encouraged by an angel who stood by him one night, strengthened by a word from the Lord, again addressed them and said to take heart. There would be no loss of life only of the ship. And that God had granted all those who sailed with him. But that they must run aground on a certain island. So they let go of the anchors, cut off the skiff, hoisted the main sail and made for shore off an island called Malta. As they did this the ship did run aground and began to break apart..... read vs 42-44.

We now pick up tonight’s study of Acts Ch 28 where Paul and co have now come to an island called Malta.

Malta is located south of Sicily and was founded by the Phoenicians in 1000 B.C. The name Malta interesting enough means refuge. And what a blessing it would’ve been for these 276 people on board this ship to have reached this refuge after being in this storm for so long.

Though the ship is busted up and fear is gripping their hearts they began jumping overboard, trying to get to land. Some swimming on boards, some on parts of the ship..... they all make it safely. Lets begin , verse 1.....

1-10 I. ON THE ISLAND OF MALTA

1-2 A. A warm welcome

Narrowly escaping this horrible ship wreck, some on boards, parts of the ship they finally make it to land. They literally escape death.

Notice how the Holy Spirit leads Luke to use this word twice in explaining this to us. Vs 44 & Vs 1. When we think of the word "escape" we think of leaving some where.

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1a 1. "escape" {diasozo} This Greek word means= *to preserve through danger, to bring safe through; to save, i.e. cure one who is sick*

a. Not only did they "get away" from the dangers at sea or storm but they were actually preserved through danger.

b. We can apply that to our lives and the storms we face. God is able to preserve us through danger or bring us safely "through" trial. Not just keep us from.

2 2. So they find themselves narrowly escaping death, brought through danger and soaking wet reaching the shores of an island know knowing who's inhabiting this place.

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- a. Imagine if it were cannibals. Or some violent type of tribe.
 3. Luke says it was **"natives"** who showed up with **"unusual kindness"**
This word **"natives"** in some of your bibles may read **"Barbarous"** .
 - a. It didn't meant then what it means today. Back then the Greeks used this word to describe anyone who didn't speak Greek.
 - b. These people did not speak the language of the day. But they did speak the Universal language of kindness.
 - c. They would've been shunned upon or frowned upon by speaking an intelligible language by the Greeks or Romans..... Awwww but crash upon their island and ain't nobody worried about that.
 - d. They showed an "extraordinary" (NASB) amount of kindness.

Charles Swindoll once said ***"kindness is a language that deaf people can hear and that blind people can see"***

4. "They began to kindle a fire and make us feel welcomed". It was raining and cold.
5. These natives didn't know anything about these people. They didn't know why Paul was in chains or that the soldiers were about to kill prisoners, or sailors tried to escape etc.

- a. Sometimes it's just best we don't know everything about some people so we don't hold back kindness. Hospitality
- b. "Get off my island!"

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- c. It says that they made them feel welcome. And that is a phrase that means to take or receive one into one's home.
 - i. They made them feel at home.
 - ii. Imagine how that must of felt after going through so much.

5. Kindness is a characteristic of our Lord.

Titus 3:4-5 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior

toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, **NKJV**

Rom 2:4-5 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and

tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

NASB

a. **Kindness is also a by product of the H.S's work in our lives**

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.

b. **Kindness is something we put on. Like a garment.**

Col 3:12-13 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put

on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

c. **Jesus said we'd be rewarded for our acts of kindness.**

Matt 10:42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a

cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

- 6.** So if these people who weren't considered to be very intelligent could show random acts of kindness how much more the body of Christ? Who have been given the kindness of God.

After showing up on the shore of Malta, the taste of salt still in their mouths, wet clothes and all, they are greeted with kindness and the warmth of a fire by the natives. But now a bit of confusion begins because of a situation concerning Paul.

3-6 B. Confusion surrounding Paul's snake bite

So Paul, while everyone else is trying to get warm, is gathering sticks to put on the fire and a snake comes out because of the heat and not only bites him but fastened onto his hand. I want to stay right here for a few minutes....

At this point if anyone would've been the most respected or most important person out of the 276 castaways it would've been Paul. Paul had perceived and warned them though they didn't listen, he was given prophecy from the Lord concerning them and their safety because of him. If it wasn't for him the sailors would've escaped. If not for Paul they would've never survived.

And now they reach the island and Paul, rather than resting himself, giving into the temptation of being the head dude and being served..... he humbly continues serving others.

- 3**
- 1.** Gathering sticks to put on the fire to keep others warm.
 - a.** No one had to tell Paul to do this. Paul's not trying to become center of attention, although he will be, he's just simply doing something that needed to be done.
 - 2.** That's the mark of a good servant. How do you know a true servant? By the way they respond when treated like one.
 - a.** Paul doesn't have to be the one being served. He's just quietly serving when seeing the need.

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- b. Having a servants heart doesn't necessarily apply to "just" your calling.
 - c. Jesus said....."You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

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- 3. Pastor Bob Davis said " You cannot fake a servants heart, You can serve without a servants heart but you'll always burn out"

- a. The reason why Paul has not "burned out" even after a storm caused by others is because He's kept that servant heart.

- b. Getting wood to keep others warm.

- c. **Phil 2:4** Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

3b

- 4. **"a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand"**

He's out gathering sticks and now he's bit by a snake.

Out of the 276 people that could've happened to, this happens to Paul
And as he is serving others and just trying to be a blessing in their lives,
he's bit.

- a. If you have been in ministry or have been privileged to serve others for any amount of time you have probably experienced being bit aswell.
- b. Satan will try and discourage us in anyway possible from keeping a servants heart and serving others.
 - i. Discouragement; or sickness; or resentment.
 - ii. Many ways Satan shows up as a snake.

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- c. But what Satan means for bad God will turn around for good and use it to draw attention to himself if we let him.

Paul is suddenly bit by this venomous snake and though it had to of hurt, he somehow shakes it off Read 4-5

4-5

- 5. **"no doubt this man is a murderer"**. You know one of the most misunderstood men in all the bible besides Jesus is Paul.

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- a. And yet he shakes it off.
 - b. (explain what they're thinking)
 - c. You know we can misunderstand or misjudge someone as to why things happen to them too.
 - i. Pretend to have answers we don't.
- 6. There are doctrines out there that tell people that if you are suffering there must be some sin in your life. God don't allow suffering.
 - a. We should be in divine health
 - b. That's dangerous doctrine because we see here how Paul will pray for healing in others and they get healed but couldn't heal himself.
 - c. He very practically told Timothy to drink wine for his stomach sake.

d. So we need to be careful when prejudging someone's condition. They thought Paul was a murderer but God was allowing this to draw these natives to Himself.

7. So Paul, while serving gets bit by a snake, they think it's because of some sin in his life, he's being punished, but he shakes it off and suffers no harm. Vs 6 says they're expecting him to swell up or suddenly fall dead so they stay staring at him.
- a. Ever have that happen? People just staring at you? I do
 - b. Anyways they see that no harm comes to him so they now began say he must be a god.
 - c. The people are very superstitious. Obviously they know nothing about God so we see now why God led them to this particular island.
 - i. God's not willing that anyone should perish but that all should come to repentance.

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8. **"But after they looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god."**

People can be so fickle. One moment they judge him as a murderer and the next say he's a god.

Back in Acts Ch14 while in Lystra (turn) Paul seeing that a man had faith to be healed, healed him and they all thought Paul and Barnabas were gods. They even tried sacrificing to them – but just a day or so after they tried stoning Paul to death. Left him outside the city. People's estimation or judgements can change rapidly.

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- a. Paul's not a man who puts a whole lot of stock in other people's estimations of himself. He doesn't even put stock in his own estimations of himself.

b. 1 Cor 4:3-5 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

7-9 C. God's will for Paul on Malta

Here we read how Publius the magistrate or governor of that island had received and entertained them for 3 days. And within that time Publius' father laid sick. Paul with the heart to always serve had went to him and prayed for him. Laid his hands on him and healed him. This then opened the doors for more ministry, in that many all over the island brought this sick and diseased to be healed.

We've seen throughout the book of Acts how Paul always used healing as an opportunity to give the gospel. Paul never healed anyone just to heal someone or bring glory to himself. It was always to share the truth of the gospel. (Tradition says that Publius pastored the first church in Malta)

1. If Paul would've never went to Jerusalem he would've never been taken captive. If he had never been taken captive he never would've gone to Caesarea. If he hadn't gone to Caesarea he wouldn't have been able to preach the gospel to Festus, Felix, and Agustus and Agrippa. If he had not of preached to them he wouldn't have had the opportunity to appeal to Caesar. If he hadn't appealed to Caesar he wouldn't have been put on this boat.

If he was never on this boat he wouldn't have been in this storm. And if he wasn't with them in this boat, in this storm, the others wouldn't

have made it alive on this island. And if he had never been on this island he wouldn't have been able to heal this man and if not this man then not this others and the gospel wouldn't have come to Malta.

a. God's in control