

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

MALTA (ACTS 28:1-10) ON THE ISLAND OF MALTA

God had gotten Paul to shore safely along with roughly 276 other people. While Paul helped gather wood for a fire, he was bitten by a snake. The natives instantly put a spiritual connotation to the event, saying Justice was now being served.

- Notice Justice is capitalized, implying God was punishing this escaped criminal.

PAUL JUST SHOOK IT OFF

Paul not only shook off the snake into the fire, he also shook off the accusation of being punished by God as well. Paul understood that God had brought him this far and had no intention of taking his life on the beach.

- We tend to go to extremes. Either God is a tyrant or a pushover. **God is just, but He is also a gracious loving Father.**

HE MUST BE A GOD

Since the snake didn't hurt Paul, the natives then thought "he was a god." **People not only go to extremes, we're quick to make idols.**

PUBLIUS

The "leading man of the island," Publius showed up and greeted Paul and the other shipwrecked survivors. This Roman man invited Paul and his team to his house. Publius' father who was very sick also lived in the house.

- We see where this is heading. Paul prayed and laid hands on him and he was healed. This set off a chain reaction.

HEALING COMES IN SEVERAL WAYS

Luke writes, "the rest of those on the island came and were healed." Though some probably didn't come, the point is clear; lots of people were healed. Also, two different words are used for healing, *iasato* and *therapeuo*.

- ***iasato* is miraculous healing. *Therapeuo* is medical healing. Luke, a physician, was used by God too.**

THE NATIVES WERE GRATEFUL

We don't read of any conversions, but we do read that the natives were thankful for the ministry Paul and Luke did on Malta. They "heaped many honors...and gave [Paul and his team] what [they] needed."

- **Good works go a long way. They can lead others to salvation and change the hearts of savage people.**

ROME (ACTS 28:11-16)

THEY MADE A COUPLE STOPS ON THEIR WAY

The first stop in Italy was Syracuse in Sicily, then on to Rheggium near the toe of the boot. Now on a more relaxed timetable, Paul and his team could spend time with different believers as they make their way northwest.

- **Paul had unusual liberties for a Roman prisoner. Another way we see God's provision in his story.**

PAUL DIDN'T TAKE THE GOSPEL TO ITALY

The gospel had not only made its way to Italy, but had spread from south to north. Paul met with believers from Sicily all the way up to Rome. When they came into the area of Rome, they were encouraged, prayed for, and supported by the Christians in the region.

- **Christians are called to strengthen, not tear down other believers!**

ACTS 23:11 HAD BEEN FULFILLED

Jesus told Paul in a vision that he'd "testify in Rome." As the deep-thinking apostle and his inquisitive doctor sidekick worked their way north through Italy, they find themselves living with tremendous freedoms in Rome.

- **If we will learn to listen to Christ and be obedient, we will be shocked at where He takes us.**

CONVERSING (ACTS 28:17-24)

PAUL NEVER STOPPED THE PATTERN

Paul consistently went to the Jews first and then the non-Jews. Because of his situation and his influence, he called the Jewish leaders of Rome together to share the gospel and his story with them.

- The beginning of the conversation is Paul declaring his innocence against any accusations.
- **Matthew 24:38-40 (HCSB)**

ODDLY ENOUGH, THEY HADN'T HEARD ANYTHING

The Jews in Rome told Paul that they hadn't received any negative letters or gossip about Him. This is probably because the Jews were just getting reestablished in Rome after their banishment in 50 A.D.

- They had heard of the "sect" (heresy) of Christianity though, and they wanted to know more about it.

THE "HOPE OF ISREAL"

Paul's message was of the utmost importance. He was communicating the message that would lead to eternal life for the Jews in Rome.

- A large group stayed with Paul all day as he explained the connection of the OT to Jesus. He spoke of the **origin, death, resurrection and second coming of Christ.**

A CONSTANT STILL TODAY

Luke records, "Some were persuaded...but others did not believe." This is not only a constant in the NT, but a staple of humanity in general.

- Jesus promised He'd come back when everyone has had the opportunity to hear the gospel (Matthew 24:14). **Unfortunately, many will hear but not receive the message because it isn't a priority.**

VICTORY (ACTS 28:25-31)

THE JEWS DEBATED, THEN SOME LEFT

As they debated the identity and message of Jesus, no one actually left until Paul quoted Isaiah 6:9-10. Jesus had also quoted these verses to explain why He taught in simple parables.

- **Isaiah, Paul and Jesus pointed out mankind's biggest obstacle; their lack of humility and willingness to change.**

THE WORD GIVES A DIAGNOSIS

When one reads the Bible, it identifies what separates us from God. This can be very painful to hear and deal with, but **we must first be broken before we can be built back up.**

- **When we refuse to let the Word guide us, we reach a point where we're incapable of change and we suffer greatly in this life and the next.**

ROME WASN'T IN A HURRY

Paul stayed in Rome 2 years in a rented house and welcomed visitors that came to hear about Jesus and "the kingdom of God." During this time, Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

- Luke finished the Book of Acts before Paul was sent to the Mamertine prison in Rome.

ENDING ACTS WITH A HUGE VICTORY

Luke concludes this book with a note of victory. Paul made it to Rome and taught the Word "with all boldness and without hindrance" to all the Romans that would listen.

- Luke was not recording the life of Paul, but the expansion of the gospel to all parts of the earth. **Acts isn't about Paul, it's about the Gospel.**

AN UNFINISHED STORY ?

Acts focuses on certain people, but only to tell a bigger story. Acts is the genesis of the church and the advancement of the gospel.

- The ending of Acts doesn't tell us about Paul's beheading at the hands of Nero because **the message (Jesus) is bigger than the messengers (Christians).**

THE MESSAGE IS ETERNAL

We all gravitate towards selfishness, thinking that satisfying self will bring us fulfillment. The beauty of a life with Christ is we're free from depending on ourselves to be fulfilled.

- **It is only when we lay down our lives that we find out what living really is!**

This doesn't remove responsibility, but amplifies it. **When one holds the key, one is responsible for opening the door!**

- This means we are to think beyond just our salvation. **We are to live, share, give, teach and model Christ.**

INVENTORY TIME

- Do we acknowledge that we are selfish, broken, and need help?
- Are we letting the Word diagnose our sickness (sin)?
- When the Word speaks to us, do we respond?
- **Do we use grace and love as an excuse to continue to sin?**
- Are we being responsible with the knowledge we have?
- Are we aware that we are symbiotic and our decisions always affect others?
- **Do we understand that what we see now is not eternal, but the choices we make now affect the eternal?**