

Acts 28.1-14

Shackled to Serve



1. Daylight on the Calm Sea

DARK and STORMY Night has ENDED > Ch 28 – NEW DAY of LIFE!

a. Arrived Alive v. 1 Once safely on shore

‘Arrive Alive’ – ROADSIGNS on INTER-STATE HiWays in USA

College 2000 Miles from Home / Seminary 3000 – LOTS LONG Distance Driving

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you... For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. Isaiah 43.2-3

READ God’s PROMISES, NOT God’s PROVIDENCE

Paul Trusted God in All Circumstances > thru SHIPWRECK and SNAKEBITE

Christians must INTERPRET Scripture NOT CIRCUMSTANCES

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 29.29

WHY Questions are SECRET Things – Trust Father in Heaven who Knows Best

NOT All Christians are ALWAYS SAVED from STORMS > Some DIE

PROMISES No LESS TRUE in DEATH than in LIFE > God is ETERNAL

If God has work for us to do, then God will keep us alive to do it. And if you have finished the work that God has given you to do, why should you want to linger around here any longer?

James Boice

ONLY Guarantee > GOD is with US > In LIFE and in DEATH

How BIG is your GOD? How BIG is your FAITH in HIM & HIS Purposes

BIBLE – God has ALL - Wisdom – Love – Power – Justice

GOD is God of ALL CIRCUMSTANCES > TRUST Him for Details of LIFE

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Romans 8.32

b. Blessed by Barbarians

v. 2 The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.

GREEK for ISLANDERS = BARBARIANS / Anyone NOT Greek was Barbarian
 STRANGE Way they SPOKE – BAR / BAR --- NEVER Even got to AUSTRALIA
 Luke's Emp FAVORABLE Conditions: EXCEEDING Kindness / HOSPITALITY
 Paul, Luke, Aristarchus TREATED like MISSIONARIES on GOOD FURLOUGH

v. 7 ...Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably.

Paul & M Team

ALL 276 People into Governor's Home?? PROBABLY NOT > Special Kindness!

In almost every city that Paul visited, Luke mentions the person who was the magistrate in charge...not only does he...get their names right, he even gets their titles right, in spite of the fact that these varied from place to place and changed from time to time. Luke shows accurately and in a way that would commend it to the readers of his time the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to infuse and eventually to transform the world.

James Boice

v. 10 They honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

v. 12 We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days.

EVEN the WIND was IN THEIR FAVOR – Sea Voyage was PLEASANT

v. 13 The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli.

v. 14 There we found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them.

CONFIDENT UNDERSTATEMENT - v. 14 And so we came to Rome.

DID you EXPECT Any LESS? God SAID Paul would get to ROME!

Over 2 years in JUDEAN Prison – 6 Different Ships – 1 SHIPWRECK! – Rome!

2. Darkness over the Cause of Suffering

MALTESE Islanders > Try and INTERPRET CIRCUMSTANCES...

v. 4 When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live."

This Text & Mark 16 – PROOF Texts for CHRISTIAN SNAKE-Handlers!

Even REMOTE Islanders Ask SEARCHING Questions: Life/Death/Judgment

Christians Today: Bad Happens > ‘he is a secret sinner...skipping devotions??’

CanNOT ALWAYS draw CLEAR Line between Circumstances & CAUSES

a. Common Suffering – NATURAL Course of Life on Planet Earth

For hardship does not spring from the soil, nor does trouble sprout from the ground. Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward. Job 5.6,7

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. 1 Corinthians 10.13

RESULT of LIVING in FALLEN World / Troubles facing ALL HUMANITY

vs. 8,9 His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery...the rest of the sick on the island

...Maltese Fever, a recurring illness caused by bacteria that was common to goats on the island...like malaria...an acute phase when the afflicted would be desperately ill. This phase was followed by a recovery that would last six months to a year, after which the acute phase would occur again...recurring bouts of the illness throughout his lifetime.

R.C. Sproul

UNCLE got CANCER – Healthy Man – Clean Living – Fit, Healthy, RAN Daily Rigorous DIET > EAT Healthy to BEAT Cancer > Lived on FRUIT JUICES!
Lived MORE Years – Lived WELL, SERVED God FAITHFULLY – Now DEAD!
ONE Thing we can be CERTAIN About > Eventually > EVERYONE Dies!

b. Corrective Suffering – God gets us BACK on the RIGHT PATH!

"...the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Hebrews 12.5-8

Call to SELF-EXAMINATION – How is your LIFE with God? Faithful? Fruitful?
NOBODY is Perfect – LYING if we Think you ARE – Moving Forward? Progress?
...set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity...
devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.
Do not neglect your gift...Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, *so that everyone may see your progress* 1 Timothy 4.12-15

If NO PROOF in your Life that you are FOLLOWING Jesus, Maybe You're NOT!

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test? 2 Corinthians 13.5

c. Constructive Suffering – CHARACTER Developing – Making us Stronger

we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Romans 5.3-5

Modern HERESY > Holy Spirit = Wealth, Comfort, PAINLESS JOY

SUFFERING Not just for SINNERS > Suffering makes us BETTER SAINTS

Link between PAIN of SUFFERING and PRESENCE of HOLY SPIRIT

...they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God...yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Acts 7.54-58



John WESLEY – was M. BEFORE he was a REAL Christian!

On Mission to America, SHIP across ATLANTIC, Terrible Storm!

English IMMIGRANTS SCREAMING in Panic, Fear –

Wesley EXAMINED Self

“I found to my horror that I was afraid, mortally afraid of dying” John Wesley

ALSO on Board that Ship – GERMAN, MORAVIAN Christians > VERY CALM

Men, Women, Children SINGING HYMNS thru the TERRIBLE STORM

Wesley asked with GREAT SURPRISE: Were you NOT AFRAID? Women? Kids?

Moravian COURAGE & CONFIDENCE in X – Led toward Wesley’s Conversion

d. Christ-Glorifying Suffering – Stephen is GREAT EXAMPLE

They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. Acts 5.40-42

Even Disciples Link BLINDNESS with BADNESS – WHO SINNED?

Rabbi’s > God PUNISHED Children for SIN Committed in Mother’s WOMB

Some of those LITTLE KICKERS Acting OUT their SINFULNESS

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life" John 9.1-5

Baby BORN BLIND – Grew Child to Manhood STUMBLING in Blindness

ALL So on That Day – Jesus Christ could HEAL him for Glory of God? YES!

OLYA from Kyrgyzstan – Late 20's / Masters from Columbia University, NY

Parents ANGRY about her FORSAKING ISLAM – Following JESUS

BRAIN Tumor – CANCER / BAD / SURGERIES / CHEMO / RECURRENCE

7 November: Olya's parents have become Christians. She had been praying for years for their salvation. She thought that they would surrender their lives as a result of God sparing her life as well as the love and the support that the family of God had shown her. But they seemed really resistant. A few weeks ago, her parents and her invited an older Christian man to tea. He had an opportunity to share his faith with them. At the end of the conversation they prayed to receive Christ. You can imagine Olya's joy.

Bible has ETERNAL Focus – NOT on BRIEF Span of this Life on Earth

e. Cosmic Suffering – Classic Story of UNEXPLAINED Suffering: JOB

ONE Terrible Day – Loses Cattle / Servants / Sons / Daughters

At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." Job 1.20-21

In Job's case God was demonstrating before Satan and all the fallen and unfallen angels that a man will worship and serve God for who God is and not merely because God takes care of him and prospers him. James Boice

3 Friends – Make him FEEL MORE MISERABLE – MISTAKEN Theories

God: "Enough of your COMPLAINTS – Let ME Question YOU?"

POP BIOLOGY QUIZ – Basics of Creation – Job SWALLOWS his PENCIL!

Then Job replied to the LORD: "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted...My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42.1-6

COSMIC Suffering of JOB – NEVER EXPLAINED

God NEVER gives a REASON – He does not HAVE TO! He is God!

GOD gets BIGGER, BIGGER – PROBLEMS of Job grow Smaller, Smaller

COSMIC Suffering – Determines ETERNAL Destiny of HUMAN Race > JESUS

"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? `Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again"... But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. John 12.27-33

COSMIC Dimension HERE on Malta – WHO is God? Maybe PAUL is God?

vs. 5,6 Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

ONE who OVERCOMES Suffering and DEADLY-Snake Bite is DIVINE!

Paul PICTURE of Jesus Power of LIFE – MORTAL Man – Soon DIE in Rome

CENTER of Heaven's Throne – ULTIMATE Example of SUFFERING & Glory

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne Revelation 5.6

3. Delight in Christian Service

a. Tranquility in Turmoil – Paul & Team getting MUCH NEEDED Island R&R

Long Voyage to Jerusalem: Riot, Beaten, Arrested, Prison, Voyage, Ship-Wreck

HARDLY Notice Element of HUMAN Suffering – Pain, Difficulty, Misery

NOT Emphasized by PAUL or LUKE > Story of GOSPEL-ADVANCE

The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." Acts 23.11

When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved. After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island." Acts 27.20-26

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4.11-13

MOST Hopeful phrase ME "I have LEARNED" NOT Natural, even for APOSTLE
NATURALLY Selfish – Discontent / Jesus IN US brings CONTENTMENT

b. Steadiness in Uncertainty – Everyone Else Lost their Heads, Paul kept his
Paul KNEW his CALLING – Circumstances DID NOT Change his CALLING
the God whose I am and whom I serve Acts 27.23

LUKE Never EXPLICITLY Says that Paul PREACHED Gospel of Christ here
But NO Evidence that Paul could KEEP QUIET about JESUS...ANYWHERE!

Paul believed GOOD NEWS of Jesus was Presentation in WORD and DEED

what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by
what I have said and done Romans 15.18

so that all nations might *believe and obey* him Romans 16.20

Join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace...And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am 2 Timothy 1.8-12

STEADINESS of LUKE – Took NOTICE of PRECISE Details -

v. 11 After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island. It was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux.

Every ship from that time had a name derived from the decoration or adornment carved on its prow. R.C. Sproul

c. Service in Suffering

MONTH was NOVEMBER – COOL, AUTUMN Temperatures on MALTA

PAUL was HERO of VOYAGE > Saved All > SERVANT of ALL

v. 2,3 They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire...

It is only the little man who refuses the little task. William Barclay

Paul was THE LORD'S FREE MAN SERVING even while in SHACKLES

NO Bargain Struck > NO AMNESTY DEAL > CALLING Servant of Christ

vs. 8,9 Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.

Paul...an integrated Christian, who combined spirituality with sanity and faith with works. He believed that God would keep his promises and had the courage to say grace in the presence of hard-bitten pagans. But his trust and godliness did not stop him seeing either that the ship should not take risks with the onset of winter, or that sailors must not be allowed to escape, or that he needed to gather wood to keep a beach fire burning. What a man! He was a man of God and of action, and man of the Spirit and of common sense. John Stott

Delight in Christian Service!

Acts 28

1 Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. 2 The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. 3 Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. 4 When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." 5 But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. 6 The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. 7 There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably. 8 His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. 9 When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. 10 They honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed. 11 After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island. It was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. 12 We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. 13 From there we set sail and arrived at Rhegium. The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli. 14 There we found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome.