

## Acts 28 Not the End

We have all heard it said before – and we have probably said it ourselves – God works in mysterious ways!

A) Very true – often ways that don't make any sense to us.

B) We could classify the working of God in one word – Providence

Timely preparation for future eventualities.

The idea takes on a vastly larger dimension because God not only looks ahead and attempts to make provision for his goals, but infallibly accomplishes what he sets out to do.

C) We have seen that to be true throughout the book of Acts and once again here in the final chapter

### Recap

Saw in our study last week – Paul was on his way to Rome – Prisoner – ship – Shipwreck –

Pick up

Ch. 27:42

<sup>42</sup> And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. <sup>43</sup> But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump *overboard* first and get to land, <sup>44</sup> and the rest, some on boards and some on *parts* of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.

It just struck me here how these people end up safe by God's preservation.

A) It's interesting that some of them were saved by way of a plank or a piece of wreckage.

B) I see a picture here Some people have come to church just holding a piece of the wreckage of your life.

C) Guess what? God wants to bring you safely to shore.

The Providence of God is seen in the fact that Paul and the crew were shipwrecked on the Island of Malta V.1

Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta.

A) They did not run aground in some random location. -They ran aground on Malta.= Refuge

B) Malta is an island 50 miles south of Sicily, 207 miles north of Libya. It's a very tiny target.

C) Malta only covers an area of 122 square miles.

1) And yet, that's exactly where they ran aground.

D) You see, God was going to get Paul to Rome, just as he promised.

1) But God wanted to use Paul along the way as an instrument of His mercy to people on the isle of Malta.

2 And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.

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

### Paul's example -

A) There were 276 people on the ship – plenty to gather the wood – but who was doing it? PAUL

B) Paul's servant heart was always evident.

1) Jesus example – Phil 2

C) While gathering – A viper – poisonous snake came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand:

D) Paul was faithful to God and living as a true servant. But this did not keep him from this trial.

### The Islanders reaction

4 So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live."

A) They know there are prisoners on the ship and that Paul is one –

B) Noted last week – many of these prisoners were on their way to Rome to be executed

### C) They See Paul gets bit by the Viper – Karma –

1) He escaped the storm by not this Justice is actually a reference to the Greek goddess of justice, Dikee.

D) Justice is being served by their goddess!

#### Paul's reaction

5 But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

A) Paul doesn't scream – Paul is not like – REALLY GOD – first a shipwreck now a Viper

B) Here I am trying to serve you – you keep allowing one thing after another – I'M OUT!

C) Paul doesn't do that – he isn't that way - He just shook it off! –

1) LOVE THAT - Shake it off Salvato –

D) Sometimes that is the best thing we can do – Shake it off!

1) Get back up and keep going!

6 However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god. 😊

Not a prisoner – he is a god!

### The Providence of God is seen in how the Lord gives aid through a wealthy man named Publius V.7-8

7 In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, This "is the exact technical term for the person who represented Rome in that place; whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days.

A) What a great blessing and a strong contrast to the misery of the previous two weeks at sea.

B) God gave Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus a season of relief and replenishment.

### The Providence of God is seen in how the Lord uses Paul to heal the father of Publius V.8

8 And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.

Willing vessel – hears of the Problem – assumes maybe God wants to use me – Reason for this DETOUR –

ROMANS 8:28 All things work together for good....

### This work of God leads to others being healed!

9 So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. Soon, the work Paul did went to many other

### Wow! God wanted to use Paul as an instrument of His mercy, to bring healing to every sick person on Malta!

A) Now I doubt that any of that transpired without Paul pointing everyone to Jesus.

B) As we've been watching Paul as He served Jesus, every time God did something miraculous, 1) and people wanted to pin it on them, Paul made sure that everybody was looking to Jesus.

### The Providence of God is seen in how a thankful Island supplies what was needed for the rest of the Journey. V.10

10 They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.

### Now besides God using Paul as an instrument of His mercy to the people of Malta –

A) The people of Malta were going to be the instruments of God's provision for Paul and those with him.

B) Here's the point - On the heels of the storms and shipwrecks that we encounter in life,

1) in the face of detours and delays in life - we need to be sensitive to where we are.

C) Where are we at that moment?

It's not a coincidence that we have been through the storm,

A) That we find ourselves somewhat shipwrecked at a particular place in particular moment.

B) Instead of asking – What are you doing Lord?

1) Why is this happening –

C) We need to ask – what is the plan - We need to be sensitive to where we are,

1) and sensitive to what God wants to do through us in that place and for us in that place!

**The providence of God is seen in how the Lord provides safe passage for Paul to finally make it to Rome. V.11-14**

11 After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island.

12 And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days.

13 From there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli, 14 where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome.

A) Here we get a wonderful note. There at Puteoli Paul was met by Christians.

**B) As best we can determine this was about A. D. 60. Paul had never been to Italy before.**

1) Nor, to our knowledge, had any of the other apostles.

C) And yet there were Christians in many of the cities of Italy as well as in Rome itself.

1) A great testimony to the power & the spread of the gospel.

**The Providence of God is seen in how Paul is encouraged to find believers in Rome v.15**

**15 And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.**

**The site of Christians in Rome filled Paul's heart with thankfulness and courage to know that the Gospel had gone before him – it was doing a work**

**The Providence of God is seen in how the Lord provides “special quarters” for Paul to dwell in and have “special freedom” V.16-20**

**16 Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.**

**Paul wasn't in a normal prison. He was allowed to dwell by himself and provide his own living space (a rented house according to Acts 28:30)**

**Yet he was constantly under the supervision of a Roman guard, and often chained.**

A) The rotation of the guards gave him a constant supply of people to talk to.

17 And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: “Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, 18 who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. 19 But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. 20 For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.”

**Paul's address to the Jewish People**

**Paul called the leaders of the Jews together:** Paul followed his consistent practice of going to the Jews first in every city he came to as an evangelist. It took him only **three days** to have a meeting with the **leaders of the Jews** in Rome.

**Men and brethren:** Paul wanted them to know that he had not forsaken Israel and that they were still **brethren** to him. As Paul explained to the crowd on the temple mount at the beginning of this ordeal, *I am indeed a Jew* (Acts 22:3).

**I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers:**

A) Paul wanted them to know that he was innocent of any crime against the law or the Jewish people.

**B)When they had examined me, wanted to let me go:** Paul wanted them to know that the Romans were ready and willing to release him.

**C)Not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation:** Paul wanted them to know that he did not make a counter-suit or accusation against the Jewish leadership that had accused him.

**D)Because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain:** Paul wanted them to know that he was a prisoner because of his belief in Israel's Messiah, the hope of Israel.

**God Providence in seen in the fact that the Jewish leaders in Rome had not received word about Paul. V.21-23**

**21 Then they said to him, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere."**

Acts 28:23a So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging,

**It is rather revealing that these Jews in Rome had received no word about the apostle.**

**A)It is possible the word was sent to them in the ship that went down. – Wouldn't that be ironic?**

B)Paul is going to get a chance to speak to these Roman Jews with out prejudice.

**The Providence of God is seen in how the Lord creates this opportunity for Paul to Preach Jesus V.23-24**

**V.23b he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. Jesus on the road to Emmaus –**

**C)So Paul beginning with the law, and going through the prophets, he explained the kingdom as it related to Jesus.**

**24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.**

**That is always the case – some believe and some don't – but we keep preaching.**

**A)Sometimes it can feel like more don't – Don't lose heart**

**B)Guy in England – streets of Bradford – 40 yrs**

**C)Before he died God raised up another**

**Galatians 6:9,10**

<sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

**Don't grow weary in Sharing**

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

**Paul before leaving is going to direct his attention toward those who didn't believe**

25 So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, 26 saying, 'Go to this people and say: 'Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; 27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' "

28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.

**Do you see the heart of the Lord in this quote from Isaiah – I wanted to draw you in – heal you.**

**A)You wouldn't listen**

**B)The heart of this people has grown dull is an interesting idea that is repeated four times in the Bible.**

A heart that has grown dull

- Isaiah 6:10 – The Lord said this toward Israel
- Matthew 13:15 Jesus toward the religious leaders

- Acts 28:27 Paul toward the Jewish leaders in Rome
- Hebrews 5:11 toward Jewish believers in Jesus

**Which is an interesting thing to consider – as believers our hearts can become dull to the things of the Lord.**

A) **Grown dull** - Hebrews 5 says they had become dull of hearing.

B) **It is a progression** Not on fire one day and cold the next – gradual decline.

**Being dull of hearing is not a problem with the ears, but a problem with the heart –**

A) It is when you aren't really interested in what God has to say to you.

B) Dullness = being sluggish, a laziness, apathy and complacency that prevents spiritual development.

CONTRAST Jesus said Matthew 5:6 *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness ... filled*

A) This is the opposite of that - hunger is gone

B) It describes a person who's **appetite for Word** has been replaced by a desire for other things /

1) The fire that once burned bright in life: dim flicker

C) The zeal and excitement that once characterized their desire for God,

1) His Word, things of Kingdom / is gone

D) Replaced by sense of duty, routine even boredom

**What causes the heart to grow dull? Note Few insights from Scripture:**

A) #1 **Spiritual pride**: Rev 3 - Church of Laodicea they said *we are rich and had it together!*

B) But Jesus perception of them was quite different

**C) Poor, miserable, blind, and naked! LUKE WARM**

1) They were so blinded by their spiritual condition they had no idea – Jesus was outside the church

D) He was knocking on the door wanting back in – wanting – fellowship.

1) Great Reminder there is always hope.

E) Warning – I wish ...hot cold - ....vomit .....

**#2 Cares of the World! - Parable of Sower!**

A.) Seed sown among thorns Word choked out - become unresponsive to it by getting focused on cares of world! Pursuit of Riches

B) DISTRACTED

**#3 A lack of exercise - Hebrews 5**

A) **Problem was a lack of use.**

B) Be does not just hearers – Physically only eat never exercise – fat – lethargic.

1) Thanksgiving day: B- Ball. Williams's sisters

C) Red Sea verses the Dead Sea – Out flow is the Key

1) Life – vs death

A U.S. Army officer told of the contrast in his pupils during two different eras of teaching at the artillery training school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

In 1958; the attitude was so lax that the instructors had a problem getting the men **to stay awake** to listen.

But During the 1965; classes, the men, hearing the same basic lectures, were alert & took detailed notes.

**The reason for the difference in 1965: those men knew that in less than six weeks they would be facing the enemy in Vietnam.**

**Christian life a playground vs a battle ground. ARE U IN the Battle?**

**The Providence of God is seen in how God gives Paul time: V. 30-31**

30 Then Paul dwelt **two whole years** in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, 31 **preaching the kingdom of God and teaching** the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

**So the Book of Acts comes to an end with a shout of triumph.**

A) In times past movies and books closed with these words in large letters: "THE END."

B) If that practice was applied to the Book of Acts Luke would have written: "NOT The End."

C) Two-thirds of the way through the 1st Century AD was NOT "The End".

D) It's still NOT The End at the beginning of the 21st Century!

**The work of the church has not yet been completed; it is a continuing story.**

A) Jesus is still at work through the agency of the church.

**B) The Book of Acts will not come to a close until Jesus returns!**

C) Acts 29 – 30 The Story is still being written

**The Purpose of the book of Acts was to reveal**

A) the **Acts of the Holy Spirit** working through believers – men and women called the Church.

B) Still is working today: You at your work –

1) IN your home –

2) Mission field

C) See The record is not concluded.

1) It is a continuing story – Revolution continues

**Be a part of the Revolution**

**Harden heart and live for self – or die to self and surrender your heart – live for Jesus**

**Holy Spirit working thru you.**