

“Following the Pattern of Paul”
Acts 28:1-10
(Preached at Trinity, January 21, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As Paul stood before the judgment seat of Festus he knew that if he was returned to Jerusalem his chances of a fair trial were nil. It was then that he appealed to Caesar.
Acts 25:12 – “Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.”
2. After standing before King Agrippa and preaching the Gospel once again Paul was loaded onto a ship to set sail for Rome.
After a few days at sea they were faced with a terrible storm that raged day after day. All seemed hopeless, yet Paul continued to hold faith in God.
Acts 27:25 – “Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.”
3. Finally the ship ran aground on the island of Malta. Melita is the Latin name for this island located in the Mediterranean Sea. Malta still exists today. It became a British colony in the early 19th century and was a strategic port during WWII. Malta gained its independence in 1964.
4. All 276 people on board made it to shore shivering in the cold and were immediately received by the inhabitants of the island. Luke refers to them as a barbarous people from the Greek word **βάρβαροι**. This term is not meant to cast a negative light upon this people. A barbarian is any person who is not a Greek.
Instead of being barbarous people these people instead prove to be quite hospitable.
5. As I stated before, the last chapters of the Book of Acts are a narrative of Paul’s experiences from Caesarea to Rome. I’ve been setting before various observations as we’ve been making our way to the end of the book. Tonight I want to direct your attention to Paul’s experience with these pagan people as we consider our own experience with the people of this world.
 - I. Paul always applied Biblical theology in order to understand the people he met. A proper understanding of human behavior is essential in evangelism. Paul found that these Maltese people were kind, honorable people, yet unbelievers.
 - A. God has written His Law upon the hearts of all people
 1. These people knew nothing about the Scriptures. They knew nothing about the Law of Moses. Yet, they maintained a certain code of behavior.
Acts 28:2 – “And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.”
 2. Where did this behavior come from?
How is it that lost pagan people can be hospitable, kind, and generous?

3. In **Romans 2** Paul sets forth an important theological axiom.
Romans 2:14-15 – “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: ¹⁵ Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)”
 4. Because God’s Law has been written upon the hearts of all there is a universal morality.
 - a. This explains how even lost, depraved people can be good parents, how they can be honorable people, can have a high work ethic – they can be decent people.
 - b. This makes our world a tolerable place. If all men were as lawless as they were capable of it would be an unbearable world.
 5. Because of our depravity human beings continue to rebel against the Law.
 - a. This manifests itself to different degrees.
 - b. Although the lost man can be kind and honorable he can also be wicked and dangerous
 - c. His conscience can become hard calloused
1 Timothy 4:1-2 – “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ² Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;”
Ephesians 4:18 – “being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”
- B. God has also revealed His divinity to all men
1. We call this natural revelation
Romans 1:19-21 – “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. ²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: ²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”
 2. All man have an innate sense of justice
Acts 28:4 – “And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.”
 3. All men have these religious inclinations, although no man has the ability to approach the one true God. This leaves all men blinded with religious vanity and superstition.

Acts 28:6 – “Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.”

- C. We have to understand this is what we are surrounded with
1. First, lost men can be honorable and moral people. They can be very religious.
 - a. Total depravity does not mean men are as bad as they can be. Lost men can be good people as men consider goodness
 - b. Paul describes their kindness in high terms

^{ESV} **Acts 28:2** – “The native people showed us unusual kindness”

^{NAS} **Acts 28:2** – “And the natives showed us extraordinary kindness”
 - c. There are some people who are very kind, gracious, moral people
 - d. We must not confuse carnal morality with Christian conversion.
 2. Second, all men have a knowledge of God. They suppress Him, they resist Him.
 - a. This means we are declaring the demands of the Creator whom they cannot deny
 - b. This means that they inwardly understand the demands of God’s Law. All men have an inward understanding of justice
 3. Praise God for His wonderful mercy in restraining the hearts of sinful men

II. Paul was always mindful of his actions before the people of this world

- A. Paul demonstrated absolute trust in God
1. This was true while the storm was raging –

Acts 27:25 – “. . . be of good cheer: for I believe God”
 2. This was true after Paul was bitten by the snake – there was no sign of panic with Paul
- B. Paul demonstrated a Godly life before these men
1. He demonstrated the virtue of hard work
 - a. Notice in **Verse 3** that Paul gathered sticks for the fire
 - b. He was an apostle. He had manifested leadership on the ship. He could have sat back and allowed the others to work.
 2. Paul gave himself in service to all men

Notice in **Verse 8** Paul ministered to this man who was sick – he prayed over him and cared for him.
- C. How we live before others is of great importance
- 1 Peter 2:11-12** – “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; ¹² Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”
1. We must demonstrate a life of thrift, of hard work

^{NAS} **1 Thessalonians 4:11** – “and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you;”

2. We must demonstrate compassion, mercy, kindness. If a lost man can demonstrate kindness how much more should we demonstrate love and compassion to others?

III. We must bring the Gospel of Christ to all men

- A. Paul would have preached to these lost people
 1. We've seen this over and over with Paul's life. He took every opportunity to preach the Gospel of Christ.
 2. How do we know he brought the gospel to these Maltese people?
- B. Miracles were used for the purpose of authenticating the gospel
 1. Jesus healed to authenticate that He was the Christ
Acts 2:22 – "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:"
Matthew 4:23-24 – "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. ²⁴ And his fame went throughout all Syria . . . "
 2. The Apostles also exercised the gift of healing to validate the gospel
 - a. Signs and wonders were consistent with the office of Apostle
2 Corinthians 12:12 – "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."
 - b. **See Acts 3:1-12** – Peter used it to press the Gospel upon them
 - c. Paul stated that at times God granted unto him signs and wonders to accompany his preaching
Romans 15:81-19 – "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ."
- C. We too must share the good news of Christ with as many people as possible
 1. We must live holy lives before them
 2. We must bring them the Word of God with confidence
 3. Miracles today are no longer needed today to validate the Gospel
 Today the Word of God is powerful
Hebrews 4:12 – "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Romans 10:13-17 – “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? ¹⁷ So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Conclusion:

1. This was Paul’s pattern wherever he went. He met with lost people. Some were gracious honorable people. Some were stiffnecked and wicked. We will also meet both types.
2. Paul gave himself in service to these people. We must see ourselves as servants—servants to Christ. Servants to other men.
3. Paul gave himself to laboring for the souls of men. He saw this as his chief work. This must also be a priority in our own life.
May God grant us to follow the pattern of Paul.

