

2101 - PAUL in MALTA - Acts 28:1-10

PRELIMS. Paul has been shipwrecked on the way to Rome to be tried on false charges. All the prisoners have had to leave the boat and either swim or 'float' on pieces of wood!! God obviously had a special **purpose** for the people of Malta to hear the gospel - for Paul had no intention of evangelising the people of Malta.

HUMAN NATURE

Having scrambled ashore, they were greeted by the local people with unusual kindness [2]. They *welcomed* complete strangers and lit a fire for them! Do you find that **surprising**? Perhaps we should not!

For...we are all made in the image of God and it is therefore **not surprising** that **kindness** should be at the centre of our being – because kindness and love is the heart of God. There is in our nature something which **wants** to **respond** to human **needs**! *This week: amazing video of a child rescued from rubble on 'DAR's Wee Flea'!

Unlike the animal world, where an injured animal is seen as 'easy prey' and falls victim of its own kind, the 'God' element in humanity reveals itself. Here in this chapter we have a perfect example of the plight of man drawing out the original kindness God put in the human heart of mankind. There **are still** some **remnants of good** in man, and it is **this** element in us **ought** to be nourished and fostered!

Before the **Fall** Adam\Eve were lovely- in **every** respect! They were kind! But the Fall **changed** their **nature** and **disposition**! They became **self-centred**! **Greedy. Jealous. Selfish. Angry.** And yet, they still retained in general, the image of God and they, of course, could be **restored** – not just to their original state but to a **better** state in which they could never be lost again! Our state is **fixed** forever!

Initially it was **not** something **within** man that ruined him! God made man **upright** and **holy**. It was something **outside** of man that ruined him. It was an **idea**/suggestion/proposal from Satan - that God was lying about eating from the Tree! That **seed-thought** ruined Adam/Eve and their children! We are now all **born** with that evil seed within us! '**Ideas** have **consequences**'! Yes, very serious consequences! Thus the importance of **doctrine**! True **propositions**!

We had DVD meeting years ago on Darwinism! It showed Darwin did **not** write ‘The Origin of **Life**’ but ‘Origin of **Species**’ (variety of life). Darwin, Dawkins, or no one can account for the origin of life! They admitted they did **not know** how life began! The DVD showed how evolution **influenced Hitler** and his **attitude to humans** who could not do so well as others – just **get rid of them. Holocaust!**

Darwinism is also the root behind **euthanasia**. Natural selection was an idea which percolated in the mind of Darwin, so after experiments it ‘grew’ and developed. It gets rid of the weak and the less useful and the unwanted amongst us so we will have a wonderful society! ‘Lets have a **perfect** society even if it **costs** the lives of **innocents**’! Ideas have consequences! Look at the awful crimes of **human trafficking!** Wicked people who see children only as an opportunity to make ‘money’! See book ‘This Immoral Trade’, Baroness Cox! So **opposite** to **Christ/Gospel-** humans are **worth saving and dying** for!

That is the **exact opposite** of how God sees **poor** people. God’s heart goes out in love to them. God’s thoughts when He saw the weak, the vulnerable, the poor is to **help** and **save** them! At no cost to **them!** I will pay the cost – and wonder of wonders, the Son is willing also! What **kindness!** *I looked, but there was **no one to help**; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so **My Own arm** brought Me **salvation** [Isa 63:5] Look at **God in ‘the flesh’** *When He saw the crowds, He had **compassion** for them, **because** they were harassed and **helpless** [Mat 9:36]!* Yes, this is the one we are to image!!*

Well, believe it or not, but at the root of our nature there still is this element of kindness. True, it has been virtually **destroyed** by the corrupt nature of the evil one, but it is still there! Even sympathy about a missed train, a **failed exam**, a lost job! **Sympathy** is a **gift** from **God**, not from the evil one! Satan does not know anything of sympathy! God is the **inventor** of **love/kindness/sympathy** – and **help!** That sympathy is clearly seen in the *unusual kindness* of the Maltese people who *welcomed us all* [2]. Sometimes the people of **the world** are an **example** to Xns in kindness! Jesus said *the children of this world are in their generation **wiser** than the children of light* [L16:8 AV] Luther ‘rather marry a **wise Turk** than a foolish Xn’! **APP** Now there must be some **lesson for us** regarding the many

shipwrecked refugees in the **Mediterranean** looking for **asylum**. What an **example** of hospitality from ‘barbarians’ (actual word).

MAN by NATURE is RELIGIOUS

Atheists **define** religion by saying that their ‘belief system’ does not believe in the **supernatural** whereas all religions **do believe** in the supernatural. But belief in the supernatural is **not** the **defining** point of religion. Atheism like all religions believe in what is said to be the **unverifiable!** (Unprovable)! Something that cannot be proved beyond any doubt. Eg. evolution! It **requires faith** that the missing links **are** there! Religion has faith – thus atheists too have faith as they **cannot prove** evolution! It is **unverifiable!** Requires **faith!**

Religion also includes **worship!** Atheists will say, but we don’t worship **anything!** Wrong! Worship means **devoting time, resources, confidence, hope** in whatever we are **trusting** in! Everyone has hope – even in ‘nothing’! They’re hoping/trusting that there is **no ethical God (jie, nature)** to whom they will an account!

When the viper fastened on to Paul’s hand the Maltese people cried out **No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, ‘Justice’ has not allowed him to live** [4]! We see here, that all people have **faith in something**, either fate, or God or **justice** [4]! Deep in the heart of all humans is this sense of ‘Justice’ in God, or some ‘Power’ over us to whom, from time to time, we **have** to make an **appeal**, in the **hope/belief** that things **will** ultimately ‘**somehow**’ turn out better in the future! (They have not ‘worked’ it out ‘**how**’!)

Man believes in **ultimate** justice! Justice ‘in the end’! People cry outside as well as inside Court Rooms for **justice!** Everybody believes in justice - which means that **there is a standard of Truth** and justice - else they **would not** be crying ‘Its **unfair**, its **unjust**’! Most people appeal to the **Government** to set up a standard!

Solomon **assures** us that there **will be** ultimate justice: *Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, **yet I know** that it **will be well** with those who fear God, because they fear before him. But **it will not be well** with the **wicked**...because he does not fear before God* [Ecc 8:12,13]

One ‘**real life experience**’ can **change everything!** *However... they were **waiting** for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead...they **changed their minds** and said that he was a **god!*** [5,6] How **fickle** humans are! At **Lystra** they said Paul was a **god**, but changed their minds when the Jews came and persuaded them and then **stoned** them! [14:11-19] Amazing! Now the **reverse** happens - here they think Paul is a **murderer** - he **survives** - and they make him a **god!**

APP It is **important** that the world see **in us** something that is **different/godly!** Not only did Paul **not panic**, but he did not fall ill! To the Maltese this was a sign of someone from heaven! A godly life, **more than anything**, is the means God uses to **convince** people of the **reality** of saving faith! Look at how Paul, no doubt tired/weary, but he nevertheless **helps** with the making of a fire [3] **Kindness!**

But more – as **soon** as Paul **learns** about the father of the *chief man of the island* lay **sick**, he immediately goes to **help!** *Paul visited him and **prayed** and putting his hands on him **healed** him* [8]! I really do wish we had **that power!!** However, we **can do** many things that are **equally** beneficial and convicting for unbelievers! We can **pray**, we can **visit**, we can bring a **present**, we can **offer** whatever we can offer! It is to show **mercy** and **love** - that **does** make a difference!

The power of experienc! Look at what happens next! When the island learn of how Paul **helped** Publius’ father, *the **rest** of the people on the island who had diseases **also came** and were **cured*** [9]! When people **witness for themselves**, the goodness of God, they are impressed and want to come and receive the blessings that are available! When we cannot perform miracles, be sure, yes **be sure**, to **help** them in whatever way you can!

Missionaries are wonderful. They heal and cure people through **medicines** (maybe some through miracles – fine – but don’t say healed when not healed). That, it seems to me, is the **main way** that **God**, yes **God** heals now! It is **God’s power** in **medicine** that heals and relieves pain! Some Xns maintain there ought not to be missionaries **unless** there are **also** doctors/hospitals to join the preachers to bring **physical** healing to the locals! **APP** Who are **you** trusting to **save** you? What **experience** have **you** had?