

## Acts 28:7-31

### "So How Does It End?"

How many of you realize that the bible refers to Satan as, "the god of this age" (2 Cor 4:4)? How many of you realize that the sole agenda of the god of this age (Jn 10:10) is, "to steal, & to kill, & to destroy"? But how many of you are aware of the fact that God is able to take what your enemy means for evil (Gen 50:20) & use it for good?

& So often we see it just that way in scripture. God will take the turbulent times & trials in the lives of believers & use them to open doors that glorify God &/or bring salvation to others. The enemy puts it in the heart of Joseph's brothers to destroy him, but God uses it to save, not only them (in the end) but countless millions throughout the world as he provides for them all being effectively the most powerful man in the world, directly under Pharaoh.

The 3 Hebrew boys won't bow before the statue of gold. So the king has them thrown into a fiery furnace, but rather than being consumed *by* the flames, God sustains them in the midst *of* the flames. The faithfulness of God to *them* & their unwavering love & commitment to *Him* (regardless of the cost) makes such an impact on the king that he calls them out of the furnace & (essentially) declares Babylon, one nation under God (the God of Shadrach, Meshach & Abed-Nego). **He makes a decree that if anyone even *speaks* anything amiss against their God that they'll be cut in pieces & their houses would be made an ash heap! (I'm not saying he didn't have some growing to do in his understanding of God, but incredible nonetheless! 😊)**

Daniel won't cease praying; he gets thrown into the lion's den. But again, God sustains him through the trial & when the king checks on him the next morning, there's not so much as a scratch on him. The king pulls him out, exalts the Lord throughout the nation & Daniel is honored throughout the land.

**In our text, Paul has spent two weeks (w/275 other individuals) in the treacherous conditions of the high seas of the Mediterranean w/but a step between them & death as this tempestuous storm drove them hundreds & hundreds of miles over the open seas only to wind up shipwrecked in the cold sea on the shores of the isle of Malta.**

As they swam & washed up on the shore, the people on the island showed incredible kindness, built a fire for them, sought to help them... Paul gathered some sticks to throw in the fire only to have a venomous viper lash out of the bundle & attach itself to his hand... The natives couldn't believe it, he'd survived the storm only to be killed by the serpent...

He must've been a murderer or something to have fate deal him that kind of justice. But he didn't die... he just shook the snake off in the fire & continued to serve. Suddenly, (they concluded) he must not be a murderer, he must be a god!

Paul (no doubt much as he did in Lystra [Ch 14]) made it clear to them that he was no god, but that the God he served preserved him alive & how that even as He had given *him* life that day, He would give to them *eternal* life through His Son J.C. who had loved them & given Himself for them...

But just as God used those trials & tribulations in the lives of those whom I sighted earlier to open up doors that would've otherwise remained shut, God would use this to gain Paul access to the most influential man on that island that He might make Himself real to him as well... notice.

### Vs 7-10

Isn't that incredible? It didn't take long for word of what happened w/Paul to reach the most powerful man on the island, Publius (more accurately "poplious" or "popular", the governor, if you will). & Just like that, Paul (& his companions, perhaps Julius) went from the torturous/treacherous conditions of the high seas... to the best accommodations, the 5-star motel on the island of Malta.

Following the season of struggle & suffering, the Lord gave them a season of relief & replenishment. But family; this is just the way it is when it comes to serving the Lord. Sometimes it's wave after wave of hardship, struggle & uncertainty. Other times it's seasons of reprieve, replenishment & abundance. **This is why it's so important that we not get caught up in the circumstantial happenings that surround our lives as though our lives consist of such things. Listen to me, you may be *in* this world (believer), but your life does not consist (nor does your identity lie) in the things of this world.**

Paul discovered that the secret to contentment was found in that truth. That's why he wrote to the Philippians, **"...I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."<sup>1</sup>** In other words, "Whatever God has ordained for me, be it treacherous seas, or 5-star accommodations, doesn't matter. My life isn't made up of such things, my identity doesn't lie in such things. My life is *bound up* & my identity is *found in*... Christ."

Where do you find your identity? In what lies the substance of your life?

<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Php 4:11-13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But it happened that while Paul was there the father of Publius got sick w/a fever & dysentery. He goes in, prays, lays hands on him & he was miraculously healed! & As you might imagine it didn't take long before everyone who was sick heard of it & wanted in on it! So they all came & were healed as well.

Now; interesting word here. The word for "healed" in Vs 8 is different from the word translated "healed" in Vs 9. If you didn't have a Greek word help, you wouldn't realize that. But the word in Vs 8 points to the miraculous, the word in Vs 9 means more accurately, "to receive treatment or medical attention". Now; we know from the scripture (Col 4:14) that Luke (who was w/Paul here) was a Dr. So it seems that some were prayed for & healed miraculously, others were treated medically, either way God gets the glory.

Medical science & miraculous healings aren't at odds w/one another, they coincide & work wonderfully together. Luke was essentially working as a medical missionary on the island here w/Paul. Listen, if you're ill we're going to pray for you! (& You should pray for people as well; it's not limited to "professional clergy"). It could be that God will heal you miraculously (we've seen it happen). But if you need to, go see the Dr. Perhaps God would heal you medically, either way, we'll give Him the glory.

They were there ministering, God was moving & when it came time to leave, they gave them all they needed. (& My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory).

But isn't it interesting how that hindsight so often reveals the providential hand of God at work in what would otherwise seem to be chaotic or even out of control circumstances? Joseph could see in hindsight God's hand at work in what would otherwise be interpreted as the tragic times in his life. The 3 Hebrew boys, Daniel... here Paul could see the providential, sovereign hand of God in hindsight. The people on board that ship were certain they were all going to die... The truth is that God was guiding through the storm, bringing them to this place where He wanted to use them to minister to these people... & Family, this is why the bible exhorts us, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths."*<sup>2</sup>

**Vs 11-15** (Map)

So they wintered for 3 months in Malta, then when the seas were acceptable they headed north toward Rome (& Luke documents their stops along the way).

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 3:5-6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

As for how exactly the other believers who were there heard that Paul was on route we don't know. It could be that Aristarchus had gone on when the ship ported in Syracuse.

Be that as it may, when they heard that Paul was in the vicinity, they couldn't get there fast enough. A few yrs earlier he'd written a letter to them (any guesses which one? Romans!). & Now they have the opportunity to meet this giant of the faith, face to face.

Evidently the centurion had some business, perhaps offloading the ship or something in Puteoli but they stayed for a week w/some fellow believers (btw, this is one of the beautiful things about the body of Christ, it doesn't matter where you are in the world, if you speak their language, understand their culture, none of that matters, if you know Jesus & they know Jesus there's instant connection, you're family. There's a beautiful bond in the body of Christ).

But when they heard about Paul, they walked (some of them 33 miles, others 43 miles) to meet this man. Most people wouldn't walk 3-4 blocks to meet me, these people walked 43 miles to meet this man! & They honored him by greeting him as the emperors were greeted when they arrived in Rome. **People would walk miles & miles to meet the emperor or a conquering general & escort them back w/fanfare & celebration. These guys, in coming out like this were saying, "Paul, you're our hero, we're so honored to see you & to meet you, we can't believe we get to spend time *with you!*" & This is why we read in Vs 15 that when Paul saw them, he thanked God & took courage.**

Here's another fun fact for ya, the noun translated "to meet" was used in Greek literature of an entourage coming out of a city to meet an official going into the city (we've established that). It's also the same word used in 1<sup>st</sup> Thess 4:17, which speaks of believers being "caught up" (or raptured) "to meet" the Lord in the air! Believers who are alive & remain when the Lord returns for His bride will go up into the clouds (like an entourage) to meet Jesus, coming from heaven to take them to Himself... what a glorious day it will be!

**But listen, this is one more reason it's so critical that we gather as the body of Christ collectively. Why isolation/separation is so unhealthy. There is a very important role that believers play in the lives of other believers. We encourage, strengthen & provoke one another to keep pushing forward. To remain faithful, to finish well, finish strong that God might be glorified in our lives.** Christian connections encourage us... It's so easy to be discouraged in the world we live, refuse to contribute to that, encourage someone (even today), we need it. Even Paul the apostle took courage from other believers...

**Vs 16**

Mission accomplished. Both by the centurion in getting the prisoners to Rome, but more importantly the promise of Jesus to Paul in ensuring him that he would testify of Him in Rome. He was promised years earlier by the Lord. He's waited in prison, out maneuvered attempts on his life, treacherous seas, shipwrecked, serpent bitten, but nothing can stop the promise of the word of God. **Now; God has promised *you* everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord... There might be treacherous seas, shipwrecks & snake bites along the way, but make no mistake, ultimately, you will arrive safely to your eternal destiny.**

In Vs 16 we see that Paul was allowed his own place. Basically, that means he lived in a rented home (probably by working leather as was his trade) but he was on house arrest. A soldier was chained to him 4-6 hrs at a time & they would rotate throughout the day. **& Of course Paul would share Christ w/them w/tremendous success. He actually references that fact in the 13<sup>th</sup> Vs of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ch of the book of Phil. How that the palace guards could see the providential/sovereign hand of God in delivering Paul to them to share the gospel.**

#### Vs 17-20

So after a few days of settling in, Paul calls the Jewish leaders in the area to come & speak w/him (he couldn't go to them, he was on house arrest). & He says, "Listen, I want you to know that I'm not here because of any law I've broken, I've been falsely accused by the Jews. However, I'm not here to make an indictment against Israel (counter suit), to the contrary, it's for of the *hope* of Israel that I'm bound." What is the "hope" of Israel? He's speaking of the message of their long-awaited Messiah as verified by the resurrection of J.C.

#### Vs 21-22

In brief, "We don't know what you're talking about Paul. We haven't heard of you, or any accusation against you, but what we *have heard* is that concerning this 'sect' you're speaking of, people speak ill of it. So we'd like to hear news of the situation straight from you." They're saying, "We don't know much about Christianity other than people are speaking negatively about it, so, what say you?"

#### Vs 23-24

& Ladies & Gentlemen that's always the way it is. Whenever you share the gospel of J.C., the works/word of God there will be those who believe & those who don't. It's interesting how the same word, the same facts, the same information can impact two different people in two different ways.

But Paul gave them an exhaustive study (not for 45 minutes, not for an hour) from morning till evening! I can only hope that we get the mp3 or the video file when we get to heaven. He took them from Genesis through Malachi (Moses & the prophets) pointing out all the foreshadows that Jesus fulfilled.

What was foreshadowed in Isaac (in the sacrifice of Ab's only son whom he loved) was fulfilled in Jesus. He spoke to them of the Passover Lamb of God, the blood shed for the salvation of all who believed. He showed how Jesus is our sin offering, the trespass offering, our peace offering. He took them through Ps 22, Isaiah 53, to showed them how he would be born in Bethlehem, come out of Egypt, ride into Jerusalem on the appointed day as spoken by Daniel, in the appointed way as spoken by Zechariah. How He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, the money would be used to buy a potter's field... on & on from morning till evening persuading them concerning Jesus.

Some were persuaded, others didn't believe. I'm of the persuasion that w/an honest evaluation of the facts, it takes more faith *not* to believe. But there's a reason people choose not to...

#### Vs 25-27

What does all this mean? Essentially it means that should you reject Jesus, you may hear, but you'll never understand. You may see, but you'll never truly perceive. Your heart is hard, your ears closed, your eyes shut... why? Because you don't really want to turn to God & be healed of your sin...

Let me break it down even farther. The reason many people reject J.C. is simply because more important to them than receive God's forgiveness, is hanging on to their own sin. & They'll use all kinds of smoke & mirrors to turn your attention from that fact. They'll talk seeming injustice... "How could a God of love \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)?" But more than not, those are diversionary tactics used to cover up the fact that they just don't want to stop some area of sin in their life... The irony is that their sin has enslaved them. If they'd just believe on the Lord J.C. they'd know true freedom. Such is the deception of sin.

#### Vs 28-29

Hey, if you don't want to hear it, that's fine. God will send the message to someone who will.

#### Vs 30-31

He's already spent 2 yrs in Caesarea, now 2 more yrs in Rome on house arrest. But again, it would be during this time he'd write Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.

Definitely not wasted time (again a hindsight kind of thing). We may not always sense it, but God doesn't waste our time, He redeems our time.

Now; the fact that the book ends before his trial leads many to believe (& it makes sense to me) that the primary reason Luke wrote both his gospel & the book of Acts was to give the Roman court information & understanding as to who Jesus was, what happened in Paul's life & why he was there to begin with.

But meanwhile Paul was free to receive & minister to any & everyone who would drop in, the word of God being completely unhindered.

& Though the record we have ends w/Paul in Rome, there's a since in which it's still an unfinished account. Because the Holy Spirit is still working. It's been said that God's workers pass on, but His work carries on. **The record is still being recorded in your life & in mine. & It will continue until Jesus comes to receive His bride & we'll be called up to meet w/Him in the air. That's how it ends! Oh, not the work of God, but the work of God through the church in the world. What a glorious day it will be. & So we say, "Even so... come Lord Jesus!"**

### Prayer Points:

God we're so grateful for Your word. The truth contained in it, the application of it. My prayer is that You continue to shape us, mold us, grow us into all that You've called us to be. Empower us by Your Spirit to lead lives that give You glory.

You've heard the word, if you're ready to believe, than receive J.C. today. He'll heal you of your sin & make you brand new. The promise of everlasting life awaits you in Christ. Believe today & be saved.