

## **Bible Study Notes: Acts 28**

### The Island of Malta and on to Rome

After the great storm at sea God's hand leads Paul and his companions to the Island of Malta. God provided a place of refuge for his faithful people and even extended their sanctification (covering) to those who traveled with them so that no lives were lost.

On Malta they were met with "unusual or extraordinary kindness." This phrase makes me stop and ponder what extraordinary kindness looks like.

For Paul and the brothers it certainly was not what they expected from those who were commonly called barbarians. It appears that once again the grace of God took them by surprise as they found themselves spared from destruction and then in the care of those who met their needs abundantly and without question.

We have no indication that the people of Malta knew the Lord formally. However their actions indicated that they knew the principles of God's heart -- for they were unknowingly obeying one of his primary commands to love your neighbor as yourself.

Most of us are familiar with the Parable of the Good Samaritan where we see another demonstration of extraordinary kindness, cf. Luke 10:30-36.

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down the same road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

So too, when a Levite came to that spot and saw him, he passed by on the other side.

But when a Samaritan on a journey came upon him, he looked at him and had compassion. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him,' he said, 'and on my return I will repay you for any additional expense.'

He tended the man's wounds -- He carried the man to safety and provided shelter -- And he provided for the man's needs while he recovered. Any part of this would be

considered kind, however the Samaritan showed extraordinary kindness, He went far beyond what would normally be considered a good deed. His kindness was sacrificial!

In verse 27b of this account Jesus gave this command, "Go and do likewise." Since this is a command of Jesus, I would do well to hear it soberly and obey. But what does that look like in my own travels? Who around me needs to see the extraordinary kindness, grace, love and mercy of the Lord? I have to admit that this has left me bewildered for a moment -- although I have seen God's mercy flow through me on many occasions. Oh that his love would flow even more. But for that to happen I must be thoughtfully aware to see him at work in unexpected places and with unexpected people.

I was thinking yesterday as I walked among God's people in the congregation, what does God's love look like through me here? The Lord's words came to me saying that I will only love others as much as I love him. He made it clear that he wants me to reach out to others with the kind of extraordinary love, kindness, grace and mercy that he has shown me. For me this revelation changed everything.

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command," (John 14:15). As you continue to read through that passage in John you will see the promises that follow the command: The guidance of the Holy Spirit; eternal security; and the revelation, love, abidance, and the peace of Jesus and his Father. I would like to rest in that promise – How about you?

**Application Question:** What would God's extraordinary kindness look like in your encounters with people? If you're not sure, pray and look for the opportunities that God is going to place along your path this week. I would enjoy hearing your report.

Sometimes it is in the simple things. For example, this week I saw a man I have not seen in a while. At our last meeting he said some very hateful things to me and I was deeply wounded. When I saw him I wanted to shrink back, but the Lord said to go and greet him with a kind word and a hug. When I stepped out in obedience to the Lord, the courage, love and peace of the God flooded my soul.

Paul and his companions stayed three months on the Island of Malta until winter had passed. We are not told if the people of Malta came to know the Lord. One thing we can be sure of is that Paul taught boldly of the Lord Jesus Christ as he had been faithful to do everywhere.

When Paul arrived in Rome he was encouraged when greeted by some brothers that came out to meet him. Three days later he called together the leading Jews in Rome to explain why he was arrested and was sent to Rome. He went on to let them know that it was because of the "hope of Israel" that he was in chains. We know from the book of

Acts and the Old Testament that the hope of Israel referred to the Messiah and the resurrection of the dead.

The Scriptures state that Paul “witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the Kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus,” (Acts 28:23b). As we have seen throughout the book of Acts, when Paul entered a city he would go to the Jews first to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. Like so many other cities, most of the Jews rejected his message concerning Jesus as the Messiah.

Once this rejection took place Paul quoted to the Jews the prophecy from Isaiah:

Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them,” (cf. Isaiah 6:9-10)

After he said this, he proclaimed to the Jews that salvation will now be preached to the Gentiles and that they will listen.

The book of Acts ends by stating that for “two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!”

Although we don’t know for certain what happened after the two years, we are assured by the writer of Acts that the Gospel was preached in Rome. Paul remained in house arrest during this time but had freedom, although in chains, to teach and preach with boldness the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

We also know from what is called the prison epistles or letters to the churches at Ephesus, Colossae, and Philippi, as well as a personal letter to his friend Philemon that many came to know the Lord, including many belonging to the household of Caesar. God was faithful to his call unto Paul to proclaim Christ in Rome and to do so with much grace. Let us be faithful to believe God for that which he called us and has promised us -- so that we too may proclaim Jesus Christ with all the boldness of the Spirit of God.