

Woodland Baptist Church
 September 18, 2013 - Wednesday Night in the Word
 Acts 28:1-30 - Paul Arrives in Rome

1) OPENING REMARKS

2) READ ACTS 28:1-30

3) Verses 1-2 The Kindness of the Natives

a) **After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. 2 The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.**

i) Malta is only 18 miles long (29 km.) and 8 miles wide (13 km.), and is situated about 58 miles (93 km.) south of Sicily and 180 miles (290 km.) northeast of Africa. [PNT]

ii) Luke actually calls these islanders 'barbarians' (vv. 2, 4, barbaroi; NRSV, NKJV 'natives'), since Greek was not their first language and they were uncultured from a Greco-Roman perspective (cf. Rom. 1:14; 1 Cor. 14:11; Col. 3:11). [PNT]

iii) *Keeping it in perspective* - how many people did the natives build a fire for? How many survived from the ship? All, totaling...276.

4) Verses 3-6 Paul Survives a Viper Bite

a) **3 When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. 4 When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice[b] has not allowed him to live." 5 He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 6 They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.**

i) **Paul gathered sticks** - Paul was not too good to gather sticks to keep the fire going, but as he did, a viper came out and bit him on his hand.

(1) "because of the heat" - the snake, as most snakes, was somewhat paralyzed due to the cold climate, but once it got close to the fire and felt

the warmth, plus being close to Paul's body, the heat revived the snake and it struck Paul and held on to his hand.

ii) Reaction of the islanders illustrates the instability of paganism:

- (1) "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live."
- (2) But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.
 - (a) So, when he got bit by the viper, they assumed that he had lucked out of dying in the shipwreck...but now on land the god of Justice used a snake to punish him for his crimes (since Paul was most likely in chains).
 - (b) When he did not die - *They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead* - they changed their minds, thinking he was some sort of god, able to withstand a bite from a viper.

iii) It is interesting to note that even the heathen have a moral sense, Romans 2:14-15 -14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them" [Rice]

- (1) Justice was not catching up with Paul. Quite the contrary—providence was preserving him [Polhill]
- (2) Throughout Acts miracles are always shown to be in service to the word. They provide the occasion and opportunity for sharing the gospel. [Polhill]

5) **Verses 7-10** Paul heals the Chief Man of the Island

- a) **7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. 8 It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. 9 And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. 10 They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.**

- i) **Received us and entertained us for three days...**The stay in Publius's house afforded Paul the opportunity to reciprocate on his host's hospitality. Publius's father was sick with fever and dysentery. It may well be that this involved a sort of gastric fever caused by a microbe in goat's milk which was at one time so common on the island that the disorder was named "Malta fever." Paul healed the man by laying his hands upon him and praying. This is the only time in Acts when both prayer and the laying on of hands accompany a healing. [Polhill] James 5:13
 - b) The emphasis on the Maltese hospitality is striking. It is recurrent throughout the account of Paul's stay on Malta: the Maltese welcomed the shipwrecked party with "unusual kindness" (v. 2); Publius received Paul's group and entertained them "hospitably" (v. 7); on their departure, the travelers were "honored" and amply fitted for their journey (v. 10).
 - i) It is the same sort of hospitality (*philanthrōpōs*) shown by the Christians of Sidon (27:3). Perhaps in this manner Luke was drawing attention to the fact that simple pagan "barbarians" like the Maltese have a genuine potential for becoming Christians. *Their hospitality would in any event be in stark contrast with the reception Paul found from the Jews of Rome.* [Polhill]
- 6) **Verses 11-16** Paul leaves from Malta to Rome
 - a) **11 After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead. 12 Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. 13 And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. 14 There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome. 15 And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. 16 And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.**
 - i) **After three months** - the 276 crew were in Malta for three months until they found a ship that they could take to Rome.
 - ii) **A ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead** - the gods' names were Castor and Pollux, though the Greek text is not so specific. These so-called sons of Zeus were regarded as the deities responsible for ensuring the smooth sailing of ships (Epictetus, Disc. 2.18.29; Lucian, Navigium 9). 'Their constellation (Gemini) was a sign of good fortune in a storm (Horace, Od.

1.3.2; 3.29.64).’ ‘Implied readers can only smirk at such a reference in the present narrative, since it has become abundantly clear that Paul’s security has everything to do with the benevolence of his God and nothing to do with the whims of pagan deities, whether Dikē (“Justice”, 28:4) or Dioskyri (“Twin Brothers”).’ [PNT]

iii) Syracuse...Rhegium...Puteoli [7 days]...Rome

- (1) **There we found brothers...And so we came to Rome** - It is not strange that a church existed there. Puteoli had a Jewish colony. Perhaps Roman Christians had planted this church, or perhaps Jewish converts had done so. The local Christians were very generous with their hospitality to Paul and his companions. "And thus we came to Rome" expresses Luke's eagerness to reach Paul's goal city. They had not really arrived in Rome (cf. vv. 15-16). However, Luke viewed Puteoli as close enough to warrant this enthusiastic announcement of their arrival, even though Paul still had 130 miles to travel. [Constable]
- (2) **came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us** -News of Paul's arrival preceded him to Rome. An entourage of believers travelled down the Appian Way, one of the major roads in Italy, 33 miles south to the Three Taverns, a resting spot. There some of them waited while the more energetic among them proceeded another 10 miles to Appii Forum, a market town. There Paul met his first Roman Christians. He had sent them his epistle to the Romans three years earlier (in A.D. 57) from Corinth during his third missionary journey. This group of greeters would have been a great encouragement to Paul who had looked forward so long to ministering in Rome (Rom. 15:22-29). Their reception led Paul to thank God. The trip from Malta probably took three weeks. [Constable]
- iv) Tannehill suggested that Luke's purpose in his account of Paul's voyage to Rome was to illustrate the cooperative relationships that are possible between Christianity and pagan society. This may have been part of his purpose. The journey from Caesarea to Rome probably covered about 2,250 miles and took well over four months. [Constable]

7) Verses 17-22 Paul calls together the Roman Jewish Leaders

- a) **17 After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had 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 When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for**

the death penalty in my case. 19 But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. 20 For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.”

21 And they said to him, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

i) **Called together local leaders of Jews** - Apparently, Paul thought is a wise and political move to invite the local Jewish leaders to visit him. He couldn't go to them so they came to him in his rented lodgings. He thought it wise to explain the entire situation to them, giving his side of the story before his accusers came to Rome. [Barnhouse].

(1) Paul wasted no time - although his case was now over two years old, he knew that somewhere out there was a group of Jews that were out for his death, so he immediately requests for the Roman Jewish leaders to come and talk to him before the accusers had a chance to poison their minds.

8) **Verses 23-28** Paul preaches to the gospel to the Roman Jews

a) **23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. 24 And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. 25 And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: 26 “Go to this people, and say, “You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.” 27 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ 28 Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”**

i) As the book of Acts comes to a close, we realize that the big city Jews would be no different than those Paul had been battling with his entire life - there would be those that would believe and those that would not.

ii) They departed after Paul had made one statement:

- (1) "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:
- (a) 26 "Go to this people, and say, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." 27 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' 28 Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."
- (i) Isaiah 6 is repeated in the following gospels and Acts - Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8; John 12:39-40
- (2) **Romans 11:25** - Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.
- 9) **Verses 30-31** Paul's continues to preach the gospel to any that will listen
- a) **30 He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.**