

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Part VI: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To The Ends Of The Earth, Acts 8:26-28:31

E. Christ's Use Of The Apostle Paul To Spearhead Worldwide Outreach, Acts 14:4-28:31

34. Christ's Use Of Paul When He Focused On Faithful Ministry Under Trial

(Acts 28:1-10)

I. Introduction

- A. Often in our Christian walk, humanly unsettling or draining events can tempt us to cease doing God's will.
- B. Even in such times, we must stay focused on God's assignment, trusting that He will still sovereignly enable us to minister effectively in them, and this truth is greatly illustrated in Acts 28:1-10:

II. Christ's Use Of Paul When He Focused On Faithful Ministry Under Trial, Acts 28:1-10.

- A. Christ sovereignly used Paul when he **focused** on his *ministry* on the beach after his shipwreck, 28:1-7:
 - 1. The personal circumstances Paul faced in Acts 28:1-2 would humanly have given Paul every reason to remain seated at the fire made by the island's inhabitants so that he might get warm:
 - a. Paul had been shipwrecked off of Malta, having come ashore in a stormy sea either by swimming or by floating on debris so that he was left soaked and cold in the late fall rain (Acts 27:9, 43-28:2).
 - b. Indeed, the island inhabitants had built a fire for the survivors due to the cold rain, Acts 28:2.
 - c. If we recall that the shipwreck had followed two weeks of trauma at sea where the fear of losing life had been widespread on the ship (Acts 27:20-21, 33 NIV), Paul would have been tempted to stay sitting at the fire to recuperate emotionally and mentally from weeks of continual trauma!
 - 2. However, still focused on his calling as an Apostle to minister to others as a good testimony for Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:31-33), Paul arose to go soaked from the sea back out into the cold and rain to gather up sticks to add to the fire in order to warm other people, Acts 28:3a.
 - 3. Then, upon adding his pile of brushwood to the fire, thus greatly heating it up, a poisonous viper in the firewood reacted, coming out of the sticks to bite Paul, latching onto his hand, Acts 28:3b.
 - 4. The island's inhabitants thought he was thus being judged by their pagan gods to die as a murderer because he had escaped death by shipwreck, so they looked for him suddenly to collapse, Acts 28:4.
 - 5. However, Paul shook off the viper into the fire to kill it so it would not bite anyone else, and suffered no harm (Acts 28:5), so the island's inhabitants thought he was a god, and respected him, Acts 28:6.
 - 6. This respect may have led in part to the island's chief ruler, Publius, inviting the shipwreck survivors to lodge in his home for three days from the rain and cold, Acts 28:7.
- B. Christ sovereignly used Paul when he **kept focusing** on *ministering* to others on Malta, Acts 28:8-10:
 - 1. While at this ruler's estate, Paul learned that Publius' father lay ill of a fever and dysentery, Acts 28:8a; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., ftn. to Acts 28:8.
 - 2. Learning of this, Paul chose to keep ministering as an Apostle by going to visit the sick and laying his hands on him to heal him, Acts 28:8b. Paul was thus shown to be equipped by God not only himself to stay healthy from a lethal viper bite, but to heal others; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 429.
 - 3. These events had the cumulative effect that Christ's healing in His earthly ministry had -- attracting other folk who had physical problems, so many other physically ill people on the island made their way to Paul where he continued to minister to them as an Apostle and to heal them, Acts 28:9.
 - 4. In response to this ministry, the islanders gave the shipwreck survivors many honors, and supplied them with all the material goods they needed to continue their journey toward Rome, Acts 28:10.
 - 5. Essentially, this gave opportunity for Paul to evangelize the island's inhabitants, as well as to leave a quality testimony with his fellow shipwreck survivors who had benefited by the effects of his ministry!

Lesson: *By staying committed to his calling as an Apostle regardless of the humanly unsettling crises and trials he faced, Paul was used of God to keep ministering effectively to all the people around him.*

Application: *(1) If God assigns us a certain task, He wants us to continue faithfully in that work regardless of the trials we face in them, for even the trials fit into His calling for us. (2) Thus, may avoid the human viewpoint that tempts us to quit in the face of trials, and keep walking by faith in God!*