

“ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD”
(Even when everything seems to be going wrong)

Acts 28:7-10

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INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul was fairly quick at making friends and building relationships. He had only been on this trip to Rome for a few weeks and already he was beloved by Julius, the Centurion in charge, and by his fellow traveling companions and prisoners. They had come to trust his judgment and wisdom for giving them good advice and for really saving all of their lives:

- 1) He had warned them not to leave Fair Havens in the pursuit of a better port.
- 2) He had informed them all that none of their lives would be lost; he trusted God and God had told him so.
- 3) When some tried to escape he warned them that they must all stay on the ship so that no lives would be lost.
- 4) He had encouraged them all to eat in order to gather their strength so that they could handle the events of the day of the shipwreck.
- 5) Because of Paul everyone made it safely ashore.

Now that they had landed on the island people had come to regard him as a deity because his life had been spared after he had been bitten with the poisonous viper.

Now the chief ruler on the island of Malta showed amazing hospitality to Paul, his companions, the Centurion, and all the others who had been on the ship. It is likely that he had heard about the incident with the viper. That is the positive side of all this; let's look at all of the negatives!

It seemed that everyone liked and appreciated the apostle Paul – with the exception of his fellow countrymen who constantly harassed him and tried to kill him everywhere he went. Jesus had warned his disciples that their enemies would be the members of their own household.

Yet it's just amazing how the Lord can turn even the most adverse of circumstances into blessing, and along with the blessing he gives the believer an opportunity to serve Him and others.

The past several weeks of Paul's life had been horrific:

- 1) Because of the insistent threat against his life by his Jewish countrymen in Jerusalem, he had appealed to Caesar for justice in his case.
- 2) He had been loaded on a ship with other prisoners, many of an unsavory sort, and they headed for Rome.
- 3) After changing to a larger grain ship at the port of Myra, they were hit with adverse winds and were forced to sail under Crete eventually harboring at Fair Havens.
- 4) While pursuing a safer and more favorable port on Crete at a place called Phoenix, they were confronted with powerfully violent winds called Euraquilo.
- 5) For two weeks they were at the mercy of these winds until finally they had been shipwrecked in St. Paul's Bay on the island of Malta.

- 6) Once they made it safely to shore, soaking wet and cold, they built a fire with the assistance of the island's natives and tried to dry out.
- 7) While Paul was gathering a bunch of sticks for the fire and was about to throw them on the fire a poisonous snake came out of the bundle and latched on his hand and dangled there until Paul shook it into the fire.
- 8) Everyone on the island assumed the worst concerning Paul and was sure that he was a horrible criminal with whom Justice had finally caught up.

How could things possibly get any worse?

The answer is we serve a wonderfully loving and all wise God who has everything under control!

In this passage we see how God turned all things together for good for his servant who loved him (Rom. 8:28).

- I. HOSPITALITY SHOWN BY THE HIGHEST RULER ON THE ISLAND (7)
 - Luke once again is accurate in giving Publius' title as "first man"
 - He welcomed Paul and his companions ("us"; and likely everyone else too).
 - He probably had responsibility for the Centurion and his soldiers and the prisoners in their custody; but he likely had heard about Paul's amazing experience with the serpent.
 - He treated everyone "lovingly minded." He entertained the strangers.
 - After three days he likely provided more permanent housing until the time for sailing had returned.
- II. HEALING PROVIDED FOR PUBLIUS' FATHER (8)
 - Reports of fever and dysentery occur together in the writings of Greek and Roman physicians.
 - Malta fever is a known malady endemic to this island and caused by bacteria in goat milk.
 - This whole passage evidences the presence and involvement of Dr. Luke.
 - However the healing provided was the gift of God through the hands of the apostle.
- III. HELP AND HEALING GIVEN TO THE REST OF THE PEOPLE ON THE ISLAND (9)
 - "Being healed" involves therapeutic treatment and likely evidences Dr. Luke's involvement.
 - It is quite likely that Paul took advantage of all these contacts to preach Christ and win people to Him.
 - God had turned a horrible situation and to a time of witness and loving help.
- IV. HONORED WITH MANY HONORS (10)
 - These must not be considered to be actual fees charged by Paul in Luke.
 - They are more likely similar to our honorariums today.
 - This is especially the case when we consider Luke's involvement.
 - The people also supplied whatever the passengers needed for the rest of their trip.

CONCLUSION

Hospitality, healing, help, and honor-- unlikely circumstances following what Paul had experienced.

Truly, our God knows how to turn "all things together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose."

Love God and live according to his purpose for your life.