

# HELPING ONE ANOTHER / Sunday School- November 18, 2012

## Unifying Topic: PAUL MINISTERS IN MALTA

### Lesson Text

I. Paul And The Crew Arrive On Malta (Acts 28:1)

II. Paul's Life Is Preserved (Acts 28:2-6)

III. Publius' Father Is Healed (Acts 28:7-10)

**The Main Thought:** And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. (Acts 28:8, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** Often we can tell something about the character of people by observing how they respond in difficult situations. What conclusions might others draw from observing our actions? The people of Malta recognized something extraordinary about Paul because through his faith in Christ a man was healed.

**Lesson Aim:** To help participants connect Paul's ministry to the subsequent hospitality offered by the inhabitants of Malta.

**Life Aim:** To encourage participants to demonstrate their faith through ministering to the needs of others.

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28:1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

28:2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

28:3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

28:4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

26:5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

28:6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

28:7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

28:8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

28:9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

28:10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

### **HISTORY:**

Paul, a prisoner had began his journey to Rome placed under the guard of Julius the centurion to see the emperor. There were 276 passengers on the ship when a violent storm had overcome them. Paul had received a word from an angel of God that all would be safe if they stayed with the ship. He encouraged them to eat after not eating for 14 days. They gave thanks and ate meat for their health. They began to throw cargo overboard to lighten the ship. The ship later hit a sandbank and got stuck. The soldiers themselves were held accountable if any of their prisoners escaped, for they would be killed themselves. Now the ship began to break up and those that could swim were to swim to land and the rest were to hang on to boards and broken pieces. All escaped safely to land.

### **LESSON:**

#### **Acts 28:1 Paul And The Crew Arrive On Malta**

**28:1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.** Paul and the crew were safe on land after being forced to abandon the wrecked ship. God had promised to save Paul and He did, and God also saved everyone else on the ship. This trial sent them through the wringer. They were wet and exhausted but now they knew that they were on the island called Melita or Malta. Malta meant "*refuge*" in the Phoenician language. This island was 17 miles long, 9 miles wide, and about 60 miles from Sicily; placed under the province of Sicily by Rome. And this is where God sent them—a place called refuge!

#### **Acts 28:2-6 Paul's Life Is Preserved**

**28:2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.** The people proved to be kind and sympathetic to their need.

Because of the present rain and the cold, they kindled a fire to warm them. They were called barbarians only because they did not follow Greek customs and speak the Greek language, not because they were uncivilized people. All non-Greek and non-Romans were foreigners, a barbarous people. They were also isolated on an insignificant and poor island. Can you see God's overruling protection? The point to see is how God takes care of those who believe His promises and follow His instructions.

**28:3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.** As if the shipwreck wasn't enough for Paul, God's messenger, goes through another trial. As we usually say, *"If it ain't one thing, it's another!"* However, God is still keeping His promise, whether on sea or on land. Paul could have been just sitting and waiting for others to gather the sticks for the fire, but here he's still helping people. He's gathering sticks. A viper, another word for viper is *"snake"*, leaped from the fire and latches its bite onto Paul's hand. The snake had hibernated in the sticks of wood and when it felt the fire, well...

**28:4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.** Everyone sees this snake and knows that this is a poisonous snake hanging onto Paul's hand. And therefore, the barbarians assumed that this punishment of the snakebite was Paul's fate from his misdeeds, (their assumption of him being a murderer). Although he hath escaped the sea, their common concept was that the goddess of justice, *"Dike"*, would use tragedy to catch up with her victims and suffer him not to live. The snake bite was sure death, so they thought. Why did God allow His messenger to be snake bitten? Had he not already suffered and gone through enough? Well for the same reasons I had said in Acts 27:41. And I would like to add another: this is another group of people for Paul to witness to about his God.

**26:5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.** Well, this had to be an unusual sight for the Melitians.

1. God took care of Paul through the trial, healing him instantaneously.
2. God used the trial to reach many for Christ. The Melitians saw the delivering power of God, and by seeing His care for Paul, they were more ready to listen to the gospel. They would soon learn that God was the only true and living God, the God who was truly alive and who saved and looked after all who truly trusted Him.

Whatever trial you're going through, *"shake it off and put it under your feet!"* The enemy may set one trap and then another, *"be not alarmed for God is with you!"* The enemy tried to drown Paul, it didn't work, he escaped; the enemy then tried to bite him, and that didn't work either, he shook it off and felt no harm. There was a calmness about him, because most people would have panicked. But Paul was different; he understood and trusted the promises of God that he would get to Rome in one piece.

**28:6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.** How awesome is our God? The Melitians were really looking for his hand to be swollen, then keel over and die. People will always think;

- That we suffer because of foolishness, wrong-doing, irresponsible behavior, sin etc.
- That we are being punished for our evil deeds.

A man does reap what he sows; however, he does not always bear severe suffering in a personal way. It falls on the just as well as the unjust. The trials of this life are just the result from a corruptible sinful world and therefore hard to avoid. The major or ultimate judgment for sin will take place face to face with God in eternity. The Melitians saw that Paul was unharmed and they changed their minds that he was a victim of their goddess and said that Paul himself was a god. Such divine beings (a god) were believed unreceptive to such trivialities as snakebite. A similar situation is reported in Acts 14:11-18.

## **Acts 28:7-10 Publius' Father Is Healed**

**28:7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received**

**us, and lodged us three days courteously.** The scene switched from the beach to another part of the island. "*In the same quarters*" (*same part of the island*) were possessions (estate or lands). "*The chief man of the island*" (*the leading official*) was Publius who graciously welcomed all 276 passengers from the shipwreck to lodge with him in his estate for 3 days.

**28:8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.** And it so happened, that Publius' father was lying sick with fever and a bloody flux (hemorrhage). "*Malta fever*" is a malady caused by drinking infected milk; of infected Maltese goats. "*Dysentery*" (flux) is disease of the lower intestine caused by infection with bacteria, poor sanitation or parasites marked by severe diarrhea, inflammation, and the passage of blood and mucus. Dysentery and fever were common on the island of Malta and often took many lives. This was a very serious disease. Well, there were so many miracles in this lesson, so here's another. Paul came to the man and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

**28:9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:** Well after the healing of Publius' father, the word spread all over the island and many came with diseases and were healed. They whined-up staying on that island for 3 months (v.11). Paul's destination was always in the right place because he was always following God.

**28:10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.** The people were so grateful that they honored Paul and the others by loading cargo on their ship. They were treated graciously and sent on their way with generous gifts. Since they had lost everything in the shipwreck, the passengers were grateful to have their needs supplied. I just know that Paul had plenty of times to preach the gospel to the people. He couldn't help himself. His miraculous deliverance from the sea, the viper, the power to heal would certainly arouse the interest of the people. Paul would certainly give glory to God for all that was done. According to tradition, the church on Malta dates from this same time, with Publius as its first pastor. In this trial many were helped!

#### SUMMARY:

Paul and the other passengers from the shipwreck are now on the island of Melita or Malta (v.1).

Those that were already on the island showed kindness to Paul and the crew by kindling a fire to warm them (v.2). <sup>1</sup>As Paul was throwing wood on the fire a poisonous snake fastened itself onto his hand (v.3). When the islanders saw what had happened they were horrified. They thought Paul must be a criminal, and that this was a judgment brought upon him. They fully expected that he would become ill or even die (v.4). When he shook the snake off and no ill came to him they changed their minds and thought that he must be a god. It is interesting to note that when the people discovered that no harm had come to Paul, they went from one extreme to another. Instead of a criminal caught by justice, they now thought Paul to be a god on whom snakes had no effect (v.5-6).

Publius, who evidently had an estate on the island near the shipwreck, generously gave hospitality to the castaways (v.7). It seems that the father of Publius suffered from a fever and dysentery that were beyond the medical cures of the day. When Paul found out about this, he went to see the sick man, and after praying and the laying on of hands, the man was healed (v.8). This news spread swiftly throughout the island, and others flocked in to see Paul and to be healed (v.9). It is for certain that he had won the hearts of the islanders. They showered Paul and his friends with honors, and when it came time for them to leave, they loaded them down with provisions for the voyage (v.10).

#### APPLICATION:

When we follow God we will be placed in situations we had no idea of being in. But what if that's the very place someone needed help? What if God wanted to work miracles through you in someone else's life? God won't place us in situations He hasn't already handled. Our handling of them depends on our trust in Him!

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/crisis-averted--gods-will-for-paul-is-evident/>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>