

## God's Hand Acts 27:44-28:10

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-9-2010

### Introduction

I think most of you have gotten my emails the last couple of days. And for those of you who haven't, my brother John contracted malaria on his last trip to Sierra Leone, and he has had a raging case of malaria for the last eleven days. It was destroying his liver, keeping his pancreas from producing insulin, and shutting down his kidneys. A lot of people don't realize that Malaria is extremely serious. It is the number one killer in Africa, claiming over one million lives every year. That's one of the reasons why I am such a strong proponent of DDT in Africa. Just that one pesticide would save millions of lives.

Anyway, John is in the intensive care unit at a Minneapolis hospital, and up until yesterday afternoon was in a pretty serious condition. This has taken him away from family and ministry opportunities. And whenever painful detours like this happen to God's people, there is a tendency for us to question, "Why?" We know doctrinally that nothing God does is wasted; yet from a human perspective there appears to be a great deal of waste in life.

That certainly seems to be true in the beginning of this passage. On this last voyage of the apostle Paul, there were all kinds of slow-downs that wasted his time; and the owner of the ship ignored Paul's warnings, which wasted much energy; and there was this shipwreck that wasted valuable possessions. Everything they owned except for the clothes on their backs was likely lying on the bottom of the ocean. Certainly all the *cargo* was lost. And when you are in the middle of a situation like that, it is sometimes hard to see God's hand. Vance Havner said, "The Unseen Hand may be obscured at times by the fogs of circumstance but just because we can't see the sun on a cloudy day doesn't mean that it isn't there."<sup>1</sup>

In the book of Genesis, Joseph may have wondered where God's hand was when his brothers sought to kill him, and then later to sell him into slavery. "Where are you Lord?" But we see God's hand in the waterless pit, and in the Midianite traders coming at just the right time, and in the desire of

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<sup>1</sup> Vance Havner, *Fourscore* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1982), p. 23.

Potiphar to purchase Joseph, and in every sequence of the story. This is why the Puritan writer, Henry Law, said,

“No sparrow falls, no leaf decays, but in accordance with His ordering mind. He wills, and things occur. Chance is a figment of a dreaming pillow. It never was. It never can be. Thus to the child of God, there is no trifle or unimportant event. Momentous issues often hang on rapid words, on sudden looks, on unintended steps...”<sup>2</sup>

And that is so true. A mosquito bite has brought momentous changes into my brother’s life. But you never know – through his witness, it may have affected a nurse for the rest of her life. We don’t know what God’s purpose was, but by faith we can say that God’s hand was in that mosquito bite as surely as God’s hand was in the painful events that Paul has gone through in these two chapters. We need to get used to viewing life providentially. Vance Havner said, “If you know how to read between the lines of secular history, you will see that God is writing another history.”<sup>3</sup>

## I. God’s hand in Providence (27:42-28:1)

### A. *A commander likes Paul*

Let’s look at a couple of examples of God’s hand in providence. Starting to read in chapter 27:42.

**“And the soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape.**

That would have been the end of the apostle Paul. But strangely, this centurion has grown to really like Paul. Verse 43 says,

**But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.”** (vv. 42-44)

God’s hand moved this hardened soldier to take a fancy to Paul. How, we are not told. Then because of a desire to save Paul, the commander decides to issue a command for *all* the prisoners to swim to shore. He could have just as easily spared Paul’s life and not spared the lives of the others,

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Law, *The Gospel in Exodus* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967), p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Vance Havner, *In Times Like These*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1969), p. 113.

but God had prophesied that everyone would be saved, so everyone *must* be saved. An Unseen Hand had barred the normal Roman practice.

***B. All the swimmers make it to shore***

Secondly, in those verses we just read we see two groups of people: those who can swim and those who cannot. It is possible even for a good swimmer to drown under such stormy conditions, but the swimmers all made it.

***C. There is a floatation device for each one who can't swim***

And it would have been easy for the non-swimmers to lose their flotation devices or to not find any. With the violence of the ship heaving, and the ease with which a board could slip between your arms when you jumped into the water, or even the difficulty of ensuring that every person who fell into the water actually getting a board, one would expect at least a couple of losses.

***D. They all got to shore, just as God said they would.***

But not one of those 276 people died. There is something remarkable going on here. God's Hand is at work.

***E. They lost the ship***

Fifth, God could have made it possible to beach the ship in a way where the ship *itself* would have been spared, yet God guarantees in verse 41 that the ship would get stuck in a place where two currents are battering it, and in a fashion where it would be totally destroyed rather than being saved. According to Paul's prophecy, they had to lose the ship.

***F. They had run aground on an island***

Sixth, it is providence that makes them run aground on an island rather than on a reef or on a coastland. Anything could have happened. Captain Smith points out that the waves in this section of Malta "are specially violent there in a northeast wind."<sup>4</sup>

***G. The island was Malta***

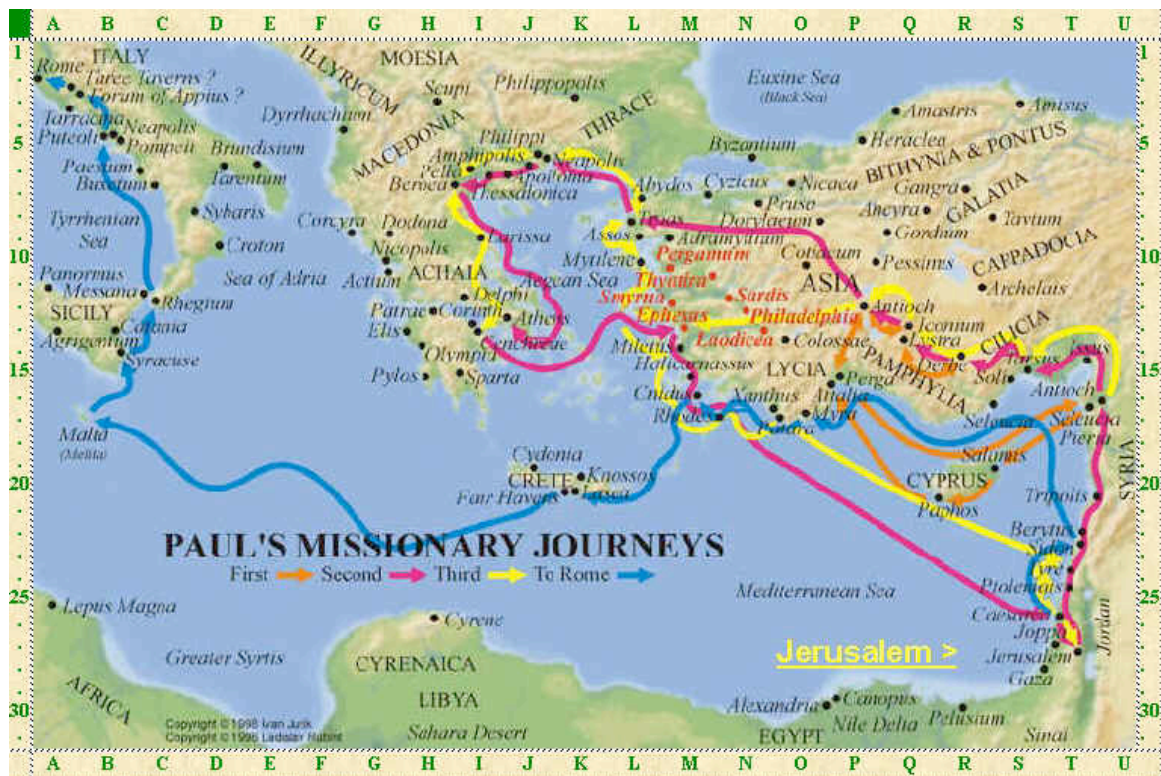
**1. They were thus miraculously on course to Italy**

But the most remarkable thing about this island is that it was Malta. Even the name itself is cool – it means place of refuge. But think of how

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<sup>4</sup> *Voyage*, p. 121

unlikely this is. At one point they were being driven by the winds into the Syrtis Sands, 375 miles southeast, and they did everything they could to steer away from there. When you read verses 20-27 it becomes clear that for fourteen days they didn't have the foggiest notion where they were, and they weren't just going in one direction. Verse 27 says, "**we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea.**" In the first century AD, the Adriatic Sea is not limited to where it presently is. It covered the whole Mediterranean Sea west of Crete and all the way to Malta. This means that they were all over the map on the Mediterranean Sea, not just the squiggly line shown on this map. So with being driven up and down and all over the place, it is astonishing that were basically on course to Italy. That's like a needle in a haystack in terms of probabilities, and yet even probabilities are overturned by the wonderful Providence of God.



## 2. Unlike some islands that would have presented instant death, or slow starvation, this one presented friendliness and comfort.

Second, the fact that they landed on Malta instead of one of the other islands is a wonderful act of Providence. If they had landed on Linosa Island, or Comino Island, pirates would have likely overpowered them. Kythira Island had about this time been laid waste, and likely did not have a population. They would have probably starved to death on that island. There were a couple other islands that were unpopulated. At least one island had

no vegetation and would have meant starvation for sure. And on some of these islands, the cliffs would have made it impossible for anyone to get onto the island on large portions of the shoreline. Why this island? It's not an accident. It's God's providence, which (history tells us) led to the entire island's conversion. God had His elect on that Island, and His hand was directing this.

**3. Unlike many islands that provided no protection from winter storms, this one provided protection and harbors and a place for a later ship to take them on.**

Again, unlike many other islands, this one would have provided more protection from the wind. It had a perfect harbor from which a later ship would be able to pick them up, and then to take them on to Italy. None of this speaks of chance. It all speaks of the superintendence of a wise and loving God.

***H. Side note – notice how every detail of the prophecy was fulfilled.***

And of course, lest we think it *was* chance, Luke records a prophecy that Paul made in verses 21-26. Every detail of that prophecy was fulfilled. And just as a side note, I think this is a correction to the modern charismatic views on prophecy. Many people have tried to say that New Testament prophecy (unlike prophecy in the Old Testament) can have mistakes, and errors. I totally disagree.

There are two main reasons this viewpoint should be rejected. First, throughout the New Testament you find the words “prophecy” and “prophet” used interchangeably to describe *both* Old Testament prophets *and* New Testament prophets. And often that word describes both in the same paragraph and even the same sentence. The use of that language would be incredibly confusing if God intended to mean that New Testament prophets were totally different from Old Testament prophets. These writers obviously did not think so.

Secondly, we have seen throughout the book of Acts that New Testament prophets were treated as infallible. That is hinted at here too. Let's read verses 21-26 just to see a couple of hints of this infallibility.

**Acts 27:21 ¶ But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.**

**Acts 27:22 And now I urge you to take heart, for *there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.***

Notice he doesn't say, "I think," or "I feel," or "It appears to me." This is a certain statement – no one will lose his life, but the ship will be destroyed. Look at verses 23 and following.

**Acts 27:23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,**

**Acts 27:24 saying, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar;**

Notice that word "must." It is a divine imperative.

**and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'**

**Acts 27:25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.**

There's inerrancy – "just as it was told to me." When prophecy comes, we can bank on every word. Verse 26:

**Acts 27:26 However, we must run aground on a certain island."**

The running aground on Malta was not chance. It too was part of God's divine imperative, and Paul banked on it as certain. All of that speaks of Paul treating prophecy as inerrant.

And of course that is consistent with the rest of the New Testament. So God's Word is always backed up with His providence. This is true not only of foretelling the future (and providence fulfilling it), but of forthtelling how life is right now (and providence guaranteeing it). God's Word is always backed up by His providence. Let me just give you one example of how we can trust God's hand to be at work in our lives right now.

1Corinthians 10:13 says, "**No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, [notice these words here] *who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.***" He is guaranteeing that God will so control your circumstances that He will never put you into a situation that you cannot handle. He will never put you into a situation where there is not an escape from temptation. That speaks of a beautiful synchronization in each of our lives of the demands of God's moral laws and the provisions of God's providence. We can trust God's hand to be at work in providence always.

## **II. God's hand in common grace**

***A. Definition of common grace: "God's kindness and goodness at work in the lives of all men for the sake of His people and the advancement of God's kingdom. This involves restraining sin, giving abilities, bestowing good things, etc so that this world does***

***not totally fall apart. In the process the wicked are benefited even though it ultimately is for the sake of the kingdom.”<sup>5</sup>***

Let's look next at God's hand at work in common grace. Let me just read the definition that I have put in your outlines because it is different than the definition used by Van Til, or the CRC, which I definitely disagree with. It's led the PRC and some others to overreact and reject common grace altogether, but I don't think that you need to do so. There is a balanced middle position.

Common grace is “God's kindness and goodness at work in the lives of all men *for the sake of His people and the advancement of God's kingdom*. This involves restraining sin, giving abilities, bestowing good things, etc so that this world does not totally fall apart. In the process the wicked are benefited even though it ultimately is for the sake of the kingdom.”

I don't buy the idea of common grace that says that God's sunshine and rain on the pagans is an evidence of His love for them or of His favor towards them. Scripture indicates that the wrath of God abides on all of us when we were outside of Christ; there can be no favor (John 3:36). Yet it is just as clear that Christ's cross purchased things for the church and kingdom that hugely benefit nonbelievers. Ray Sutton and Gary North liken this common grace to the crumbs that fall from the table of the kingdom.<sup>6</sup> There is an overflow benefit from Christ's kingdom that benefits those who are outside of Christ. In fact, because of this restraining grace (which is another term for common grace that might be more accurate – because of this restraining grace), there are unbelievers who will receive much less judgment than they otherwise might have. What are common to all are the temporal benefits of grace, even though the focus of grace is always the elect. If you don't understand this debate, don't worry about it. I just want you to see that God can produce good things in the lives of even pagans, but

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<sup>5</sup> Note: we should not see this “common grace” as God's favor, love, or grace towards the unregenerate. On this definition there is no common grace. The wrath of God abides on the unregenerate. But what is common to all men are the crumbs that fall from the table of the kingdom, and God's patience with the unbelievers will benefit the kingdom just as the Israelites in the conquest inherited the labors of the wicked. God is at work in restraining sin, making people better than they otherwise would be, giving knowledge and wisdom to the unregenerate, all for the purpose of long-term benefit to the kingdom at large.

<sup>6</sup> For a helpful book that discusses this question, see Gary North, *Dominion & Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, TX: ICA, 1987).

He does so for the benefit of His kingdom. Grace always flows toward the elect, even though it benefits the unbeliever in the process.

***B. Evidence of common grace (v. 2)***

Look at verse 2: “**And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.**” These guys are depraved sinners, and yet they show the ability to perform remarkably wonderful things. It was an unusual kindness. I don’t know about you, but I know unbelievers who can be unusually nice to be around, or be unusually generous, helpful, loving to their children and to others. In fact the Greek word that is used here is *philanthropia*, a word that means “affectionate concern for and interest in humanity, (loving) kindness” (BDAG). *Phileo* is a friends love.

So there are two extremes that people have gone to when it comes to this subject of common grace. The first is to say that because the motive, goal, and standard must all be perfect for an action to be a good action, that nothing an unbeliever does has any good in it. It is true that the Scripture says that even the plowing of the wicked is sin, but this theory takes it one step further and denies that man can get worse, and denies that there can be any good thing that an unbeliever can do. They will quote Isaiah 64:6, which says,

“**But we are all like an unclean thing,  
And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags;  
We all fade as a leaf,  
And our iniquities, like the wind,  
Have taken us away.”**

But there are two things to notice about that verse. The first is that it doesn’t deny that pagans can do righteous things. In fact, it affirms the opposite. It says, “**all our righteousnesses** [so we do have righteousness] **are as filthy rags.**” In other words, the righteousness of pagans are good things (otherwise he wouldn’t call them righteousnesses), but they are so tainted by sin in motive, goal, and even standards that they are incapable of making these people acceptable to God. It’s like having some good eggs in with some rotten eggs in an omelet. The rotten eggs will make the good eggs smell bad and be unacceptable. That’s the way it is with our works. Apart from God’s forgiveness, cleansing, and the legal imputation of Christ’s righteousness, we are unacceptable to God.

But think of it this way: Would you rather have a pagan be a murderer or a philanthropist if he was your neighbor? Obviously, I would rather have



a philanthropist like these people, even though both are filthy in God's sight. Yet one is better than the other. The bible nowhere says that pagans are utterly unable to have any good deeds. God puts that goodness into their lives by restraining their sins. If God did not restrain sin, people would automatically plummet into every kind of iniquity. That's what Romans 1 means when it speaks of God giving men and women unto a depraved mind. It means He no longer restrains the sin and He allows their depraved mind to have full reign. So that is the first extreme – thinking that there can be no goodness in unbelievers, or that every unbeliever is as bad as he or she possibly could be. They can get worse, and they can have some degree of goodness. God's common grace ensures it.

But the second error is to use passages like this to teach the innate goodness of man. Liberals have taught that criminals become criminals because of a bad environment, not because of a bad heart. That's what motivated the Prohibition. They thought that if you got rid of alcohol (change the environment) you could do away with the problem of drunkenness. But that fails to deal with the heart. Liberals have often thought that primitive natives are not as corrupted by society. You've probably heard the expression, "the noble savage." That's the liberal idea that primitive tribes aren't corrupted by western evil and therefore are innately good. It made sense to some of these liberals in the 1700's until they began running across these noble savages who weren't too noble – who tortured people, treated women with indignity, and engaged in abominable practices, and superstitious, and were cannibals, etc. And yet liberals still think that man is basically good. You know why we have penitentiaries, don't you? The Quakers thought that if criminals could be put on time out, they would be able to meditate on the error of their ways and become penitent. It has never worked, and never will. They just get worse in the penitentiary. So those are the two extremes: 1) seeing no good in unbelievers, and 2) failing to see the corruption of depravity.

### ***C. Notice that these pagans demonstrate depravity and false religion***

#### **1. They assumed that suffering proves we are evil**

So the first thing that I want you to notice is that these pagans demonstrate depravity and false religion. And the first evidence of that is that they were legalists. They held to a view of salvation that Paul anathematized in Galatians. Paul says,

**Galatians 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.**

**Galatians 1:9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.**

These people would be under the curse. For example, in verses 3-4 they assume that if you are evil, bad things will happen to you. That's an assumption of legalists. **"But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, 'No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live.'"** On this theory, if you do bad things, bad things will always happen to you.

## **2. They assumed that good comes because we are good**

But their false theology has to come up with an explanation of his surviving – of a good thing happening to him. They don't assume that their theology is wrong. Rarely do people ditch their presuppositions *that* easily. In fact, they are so set in their false religious views that they would rather come to a ridiculous conclusion that Paul is a god (which is ridiculous indeed), than to abandon false presuppositions. Look at verses 5-6: **"But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god."**

So you can see that they had a works-righteousness approach to life, which is an abomination to God. They thought that bad things happen to bad people and good things happen to good people, and you have to earn your way to salvation. There is no way you can earn your salvation.

## **3. They were idolaters**

They were idolaters who were quite willing to worship and serve Paul, the creature rather than the Creator. So we can't take the idea that these are noble savages without sin. They had sinful hearts, and their hearts were idol factories.

## ***D. Yet despite their distance from God, they clearly do "civic good"***

### **1. Don't assume the worst of pagans (v. 2)**

Yet despite their distance from God, they clearly do what older writers spoke of as "civic good." In fact, some of what these guys do is so good, it puts a lot of Christians to shame. Verse 2 says, **"And the natives showed us**

**unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.”** In fact, in verse 7 we see a leading citizen who received them into his estate and entertained them for three days despite the fact that his father was extremely sick. Here is a guy who has every good reason to not extend hospitality, yet he does so.

Don't assume the worst of unbelievers. God is at work in their lives to benefit the kingdom. Don't be surprised when pagans want to hang around and want to bless you in some way, as they blessed Paul and the others in verse 10. If all things work together for our good and for God's glory, this means that even those headed toward hell are themselves part of God's good plan for you. We can expect God's hand to be working in their lives via common grace by 1) restraining the sinful expressions of their sinful hearts, 2) and by motivating them to do good things, 3) and by giving them financial abilities, mental abilities, art, architectural abilities, and so many things that will benefit the kingdom in hundreds of years to come.

I don't avoid computers simply because pagans have developed them. I thank God for His common grace and make good use of the computers for the kingdom. I don't avoid politics simply because most politicians are pagan and do wrong things. I praise God that God's Hand is involved in politics, and despite the fact that some politicians use politics against us, God by means of common grace can raise up other pagan politicians to counter the evil and to benefit Christians. God did that with Publius here, and He has done it countless times before. I don't avoid banks, the stock market, pagan groceries stores, K-Mart, Wal-Mart, or other stores simply because the owners might do some evil. I realize that the wealth of the wicked is laid up for the righteous (as Proverbs 13:22 affirms), and I am not going to be overly righteous by condemning everything that the ungodly do. If we do so, we will be condemning the very hand of God in their lives that was intended to benefit the kingdom. Value common grace by valuing the civic good that is in non-Christians.

## **2. But don't assume the innocence of “primitives.”**

On the other hand, we shouldn't go to the other extreme and assume the innocence of primitives. I would rather live in pagan technologically advanced America than in a pagan nation that is immersed in primitive religious worship. Nevertheless, Scripture teaches us to expect God's hand of common grace to be at work in both kinds of culture. And both kinds of

culture desperately need to hear that God offers salvation from hell to all who will put their trust in Jesus Christ.

### **III. God's hand in protective grace (vv. 3-6)**

Now, related to this is God's hand in protective grace. God not only protected them from a bad or a fearful reaction of the natives, but God also protected Paul from the poison in the viper, and from the dysentery when he went in to pray over the father of Publius. There have been numerous times when God has protected us from disaster. One time we were on the road with a tornado right by us. And even though we were parked, the wind was moving our van. A number of times God has spared us near collisions. How many times does God protect us from mildew, ants, mice, and other pests that are listed in Deuteronomy 28. Again, we need to have a confidence that God's control of every aspect of nature continues to work today.

My parents told me the story of a young female convert in Ethiopia who was walking home one day and slipped in the mud and cold rain, knocking her head on a stone, and going unconscious. When she woke up there was a leopard lying on top of her, keeping her body warm from the cold elements. Its face was right in her face, and its tail had already rubbed her leg raw with its twitching. But she prayed in simple faith to the God who controls all things, thanking God first that she was saved and would go instantly to heaven if she was eaten. Do you have that confidence? If you don't, talk to me. God shows you in the Bible how you can know for certain that when you die, you will go instantly to heaven.

So she thanked God for saving her. But she also asked God to spare her life so that she could share the Good News with her family and friends. Immediately the leopard got up and walked away a short distance, then looked back; walked on a bit further, and then looked back; and then finally walked off into the woods.

God's hand can still be seen in His protective grace, whether it is from a viper bite, or from malaria. Thank God my brother John has finally started to recover from his malaria and may even get out of ICU today. Though he had an amount of malaria in his body that should have killed him when he went into the hospital (8%), it was down last night to 1%, and he is on the road to recovery. So thank you for your prayers. But never doubt the power of God's hand in protective care.

Now I can't resist one side note. I am an animal lover who respects all of God's creation, even vipers, and ants, and mosquitoes. But some people take this to unwarranted extremes by saying that using DTD to rid Africa of

malaria is a non-Christian obliteration of an insect species and of the parasite that the mosquitoes spread. If you have a hard time killing a mouse that has been eating your pantry, or you have a hard time killing all the carpenter ants you get your hands on around the house, meditate on this passage. I want you to notice that Paul did not caress the viper and gently put it on the ground to live and slither off into the woods. Verse 5 says, **“But he shook off the creature into the fire...”** He let it die. It was a pest. Don’t feel guilty killing pests that are out to damage your produce, your health, or your life. Controlling pests is as much a part of dominion as controlling weeds and thorns is. We are not here to worship creation. Creation is here to serve us and to glorify God. And yes, we must be stewards of it, but I think there needs to be a balance that does not exist in the green movement.

#### **IV. God’s hand in divine contacts (v. 7)**

Point IV – We can also see God’s hand in divine contacts established on this island. The history of Malta tells us that this is the first nation to be converted to Christianity. And no doubt, this convert Publius had a great deal to do with that. Verse 7 says, **“In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days.”** God can give our church the divine contacts that we need to make a difference in our culture. He can introduce Biblical Blueprints to just the right contacts. In fact, He has already been doing so. God has introduced me to a fantastic leader for our translation team. And God’s hand is at work in each of your own lives in bringing you into contact with divinely ordained people whom you can minister to, or who may minister to you. It’s just another way you can trust God to be at work in your life.

And sometimes the divine contacts don’t look particularly like divine contacts at the time. But as I did my personal time line of all the people, events, and ideas that have influenced me from the time of my birth through my forties, I realized that every person God brought into my life had a role in shaping me or moving me closer to what God intended me to become. Even the evil ones made me more aware of what I wanted to be – different from them. So don’t think of these divine contacts as only the extraordinary men and women of life. Try to see God’s hand at work through every individual in this church, and every individual at your work, and through all of your neighbors. Be alert to what God is doing, and you will find great joy in yet another evidence of God’s kind hand at work in your life.

## V. God's hand in healing (vv. 8-9)

In verses 8-9 we see God's hand at work in healing. **"And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed."** God continues to be at work through both supernatural healing as well as the ordinary kind of healing that we saw in the hospital in Minneapolis yesterday. Yesterday was the turning point. Waiting so long before going to the hospital could have easily meant that my brother John would die, yet God moved them to go to the Emergency Room. If they had waited one more day he may have been dead now. Even in the hospital, despite the best of care, John could have died. Medicine by itself guarantees nothing. We must be prayerful every time we take an aspirin or put on a Band Aid. We must learn to see God's hand in all healing. But certainly we should continue to pray to God for miraculous healing, whether it is healing from poison (such as happened with the viper bite) or healing from dysentery (such as happened with the father of Publius). The Bible doesn't say that such signs *only* followed the apostles. Mark 16 says, **"And these signs will follow *those who believe*: in My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents and if they drink anything deadly it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."** Though prophecy and apostleship are clearly stated to have ceased or to have been closed up, I see no reason to believe that miracles or healing is a thing of the past. When James commands the church to call for the elders when they are sick as well as to pray for one another, he is assuming that our God's hand is still at work in healing. Do *you* personally see God's hand at work there?

## VI. God's hand in abundant provision for what was lost (v. 10)

The last verse shows that God's invisible hand was also at work in financially and tangibly providing for all that had been lost on the ship. It says, **"They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary."**

When you are a steward of all that you have, there may be times when God will ask for those things back. That's His right as the Master. But when you have Job's stewardship attitude that says, **"The Lord gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"** (Job 1:21),

more often than not, God will entrust you with even more than you lost, just as he did with Job. God delights to do that. I'm looking for the Lord to do that with lost members, finances, lost health, etc. You can trust God on even the ordinary, tangible things such as money, food, gas, electricity, medicine, etc. His hand is everywhere. Amen? Let's trust Him.

## **VII. God's hand in special grace (implied – see Maltese history of this being one of the first “nations” to embrace Christianity)**

There is one last provision that is only implied here, so I won't take much time on this. But if you study the history of the island of Malta, you will find that this island as a whole embraced Christianity as a result of this shipwreck. In fact, the history of Malta shows that the leaders of this island opened the way for at least one neighboring island to hear the Gospel through the mouth of Paul as well.

And I would encourage you to always be on the look out for opportunities to share the Gospel with others. Always carry tracts with you, ready to hand out. One of our goals for this next year is to help our congregation to be more deliberate about tract distribution. Another goal is to teach everyone a very short presentation of the Gospel that you can even draw out on a napkin in a coffee shop. If you begin to see God's hand in everything, you will begin to see God's hand making opportunities to witness as well. May this coming year give you a renewed sense of joy and confidence as you begin to see God's hand in your life. Amen.

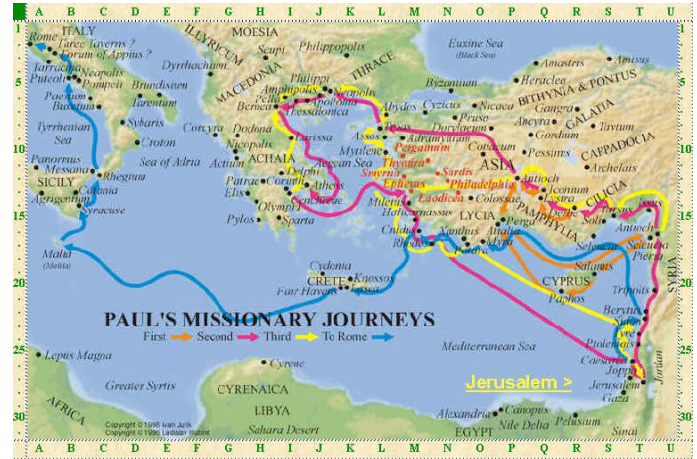
# God's Hand

## Acts 27:44-28:10

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-9-2010

### Introduction

- I. God's hand in Providence (27:42-28:1)
  - A. A commander likes Paul
  - B. All the swimmers make it to shore
  - C. There is a floatation device for each one who can't swim
  - D. They all got to shore, just as God said they would.
  - E. They lost the ship
  - F. They had run aground on an island
  - G. The island was Malta
    1. They were thus miraculously on course to Italy
    2. Unlike some islands that would have presented instant death, or slow starvation, this one presented friendliness and comfort.
    3. Unlike many islands that provided no protection from winter storms, this one provided protection and harbors and a place for a later ship to take them on.
  - H. Sidenote – notice how every detail of the prophecy was fulfilled.
- II. God's hand in common grace
  - A. Definition of common grace: "God's kindness and goodness at work in the lives of all men for the sake of His people and the advancement of God's kingdom. This involves restraining sin, giving abilities, bestowing good things, etc so that this world does not totally fall apart. In the process the wicked are benefited even though it ultimately is for the sake of the kingdom."\*
  - B. Evidence of common grace (v. 2)
  - C. Notice that these pagans demonstrate depravity and false religion
    1. They assumed that suffering proves we are evil
    2. They assumed that good comes because we are good
    3. They were idolaters
  - D. Yet despite their distance from God, they clearly do "civic good"
    1. Don't assume the worst of pagans (v. 2)
    2. But don't assume the innocence of "primitives."
- III. God's hand in protective grace (vv. 3-6)
- IV. God's hand in divine contacts (v. 7)
- V. God's hand in healing (vv. 8-9)
- VI. God's hand in abundant provision for what was lost (v. 10)
- VII. God's hand in special grace (implied – see Maltese history of this being one of the first "nations" to embrace Christianity)



\*Note: we should not see this "common grace" as God's favor, love, or grace towards the unregenerate. On this definition there is no common grace. The wrath of God abides on the unregenerate (John 3:36). But what is common to all men are the crumbs that fall from the table of the kingdom, and God's patience with the unbelievers will benefit the kingdom just as the Israelites in the conquest inherited the labors of the wicked. God is at work in restraining sin, making people better than they otherwise would be, giving knowledge and wisdom to the unregenerate, all for the purpose of long-term benefit to the kingdom at large.