

And So It Begins

Acts 28.1-10

"All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before."
C.S. Lewis, The Last Battle

Acts 28 is not a conclusion. It's a continuation. It is the passing on of the mantle of the mission of God to the church. It is a powerful propulsion outward towards our neighbors and the nations with the hope and power of the gospel.

The mission of the church is a discovery that God has already gone before us making a way.

1. Unusual Kindness. Acts 28.1-2

"After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. 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." Acts 28:1-2

Some of the "shipwrecks" in our lives land us in places where some very sweet new encounters take place for the kingdom of God.

"the native people showed us unusual kindness..." Acts 28:2

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13:1-2

It is worth considering that one of the ways that we may begin to share the hope that we have in Jesus Christ is by our humble willingness to be helped by others in our time of need.

"Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or staff, for the laborer deserves his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it..." Matthew 10:9-13

We can show that we don't get the gospel ministry right when we think that we must share the gospel from a position of strength and competence rather than from a position of need and weakness.

"What I thought was the ruin of my life—a broken neck—was the beginning of God's greatest use of my life." Joni Eareckson Tada

"But we had this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsake; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies." 2 Corinthians 4:7-10

"The leaders God chooses are more broken than strong, more damaged than whole, more troubled than secure. The most effective leaders do not rise to power in spite of their weakness, they lead with power because of their weakness." Dan Allendar

2. Unusual Affirmation. Acts 28.3-6

"When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, 'No doubt this man is a murderer. ... 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.'" Acts 28:4-6

"The trial by nature continues. The snake signifies a turf war between Satan and God over this island. The larger narrative structure should be viewed here. First, Paul is saved through the water, and then is bitten by a snake. Both are resurrection-type stories." Patrick Schreiner

"Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many of the people died. And the people came to Moses, and said, 'We have sinned for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord that he take away the serpents from us.' So Moses prayed for the people." Numbers 21:6-7

"And the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it shall live.' So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live." Numbers 21:8-9

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." John 3:14-15

God is vindicating both his messenger and his mission by delivering Paul from the serpent in order to call all peoples to hear and to heed his message of salvation.

Justice has been satisfied in Christ and Paul and all who serve Christ have been delivered from the serpent's grip.

“ For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:11-12

“And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.”
Martin Luther

“Though Satan is not dead... yet Christ has so far broken his head that he has missed his mark altogether. He intended to make the human race the captives of his power, but they are redeemed from his iron yoke. God has delivered many of them, and the day shall come when he will cleanse the whole earth from the serpent's slimy trail, so that the entire world shall be full of the praises of God.”

Charles Spurgeon

3. Unusual Mercy. Acts 28.7-10

"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. It happened that Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hand on him, healed him." Acts 28:7-8

"And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed." Acts 28:9-10

The healing of Publius' father-in-law announces that a new day has dawned. With the entrance of the kingdom of God into Malta, this is an announcement that a new day has dawned. The curse is being reversed.

Where has God placed you providentially that you didn't expect to be? Could it be that God intends to both show mercy to you and to show mercy to others? Could it be in a place where you don't feel strong but weak?

Are you willing to follow Christ into unexpected situations and let him minister to you there so that He might minister through you there?

Questions:

1. The sermon opens with the idea that Acts 28 is not an ending but a beginning. How does that perspective change the way you think about your own life and calling as a follower of Christ?
2. In Acts 28:1–2, the people of Malta show “unusual kindness.” Can you share a time when a difficult or “shipwreck” moment in your life led to an unexpected blessing or relationship?
3. The outline suggests that one way we share the gospel is by being willing to receive help. Why do you think it's often hard to let others help us? What might that reveal about our view of strength and weakness?
4. How does the idea of “jars of clay” from 2 Corinthians 4:7–10 challenge the way we think about effectiveness in ministry or witnessing?
5. The quote from Joni Eareckson Tada reframes suffering as a beginning rather than an end. How have you seen God use weakness or hardship for good in your life or in others?
6. In Acts 28:3–6, the people quickly shift from condemning Paul to worshiping him. What does this say about how unstable human approval can be? How should that shape where we find our identity?
7. The sermon connects Paul's snakebite to the larger biblical story of the serpent and Christ's victory. How does knowing that Christ has ultimately defeated evil affect the way you face fear, spiritual opposition, or uncertainty?
8. Ephesians 6 reminds us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood. How might this truth change the way you respond to conflict, criticism, or difficult people in your life?
9. In Acts 28:7–10, Paul receives hospitality and then extends mercy through healing. Where might God be calling you not only to receive grace but to actively give it to others right now?
10. The sermon ends by asking whether we are willing to follow Christ into unexpected places. What is one situation in your life right now that feels unplanned or uncomfortable, and how might God want to work in you and through you there?