Acts Chapter 28 Verses 1 – 2

* Malta was *(and truly still is)* a very **interesting** place! It’s an island situated roughly 50 miles south of Italy out in the middle of the Mediterranean sea. Because of its location, it’s a very convenient and strategic military outpost location and it’s been inhabited for thousands of years. Today it is the world’s **tenth smallest country** and yet the **fifth most densely-populated country!** It’s only about 122 square miles in size.
* Super interesting place. Today, it’s a place right out of an ancient movie set. The capital looks like time forgot it…huge columned-stoned structures and long winding white stone walls. Many movies are filmed here including part of Pirates of the Caribbean and a good portion of the movie Gladiator.
* They’re also known for their world famous food. Their most popular dish is ***rabbit.*** HA! Let me tell you, rabbits DO NOT want to go there on their *bunnymoon!* HA! Seriously though, don’t eat there if you get grossed out when you ***find a hare(hair) in your food!*** HA!! Ok, I’m finished…this place was and is certainly amazing and Paul ends up there, shipwrecked as it were…

Acts Chapter 28 Verse 3

* Ok, I love this verse! Why? Because there are **hundreds** of men on the shore from the ship and most of them were ***rugged sailors, young, strong***…and yet here’s Paul, water logged and a captive and yet he works, he serves them…I just *dig* that. These men that **hadn’t listened to him**, they were the **reason** he is shipwrecked and yet just as he always does, ***he’s seeking to warm others.*** Not, *“Somebody warm me!”* Although really…he had that right! He had *told them so* but that’s not his heart. His heart is to warm them. So much of who Paul is in the Lord is not in ***super DEEP spiritual vibrations!*** HA! So much of his powerful effectiveness in the Lord and strength of character is in the simplicity of being the one who serves others.
* Truly a servant’s heart is necessary to rightfully **understand** and teach the Word of God but it’s also necessary to live a life that points people to life…to Jesus. And look at what happens to him while he is serving!? He is injured. He’s hurt. It’s going to happen! In his attempt to bless others, **the serpent strikes.** Sometimes Satan sends a sizable storm to try and drown us but most of the time it’s the ***unexpected little attack of the viper that stings the most.***
* Watch as Paul gets down on himself, down on them, screams out to God, *“Why!”* and Tweets about his misfortune…

Acts Chapter 28 Verses 4 – 5

* A ***major injury*** just happened to Paul in the service of others…***a sting like never before***…but Paul doesn’t whip out his iPad and post about it…**he shakes it off!** I love that! Sometimes it takes an hour or a day but the those that are truly seeking to serve the Lord, those that have been indwelt by the very Spirit of Power, when we fall, we get back up, shake it off and get back to the work God has given us…quickly…keenly focused on making sure the sting doesn’t spread! He shook it off INTO THE FIRE. Not towards his shipmates or the natives…

Acts Chapter 28 Verse 6

* The opinion of man sways so quickly! Do you see that? From a demonizer to a god in one verse! Which is the **worse injury?** The viper or the harassment of man? Man, I wouldn’t say the viper! It is so hard to deal with and relate to and seek to commune with a person that one minute will think well of you and the next will turn on you! In the realm of man that is called emotional abuse! Being a product of it I will tell you now…I’d much rather have the snot beat out of me than deal with, *“You’re good and smart and amazing,*” one minute and then, *“You’re worthless and not worth my time,”* in the next!! ***In word or in deed…***
* Now, notice this…***it is times like this***…the serpent strikes of your life…that bring about the ***greatest opportunities to put the Gospel on display!*** Paul shook it off an there was no explicit harm, no harm observable by the onlookers*. He didn’t complain. He didn’t need counseling*, he just shook it off. He didn’t make a big deal about it. **And they were all watching!**
* They expected him to swell up and fall….notice, when he didn’t **it was then** that they changed their minds about him. Its then when they’re watching…when the snake bites and you shake it off...when they see how you navigate a problem, a trial, a bite of the viper with joy and strength. **Don’t forget this truth**…especially as you and I are gathered with family and friends that perhaps you’ve been praying for for years…***perhaps the only way they are going to perceive the reality of the Lord in you is when the viper strikes…***
* People will change their minds about the Lord often times when they see how you’ve been *hurt, wronged, problems, difficulties* and yet you’re able to seemingly shake it off. Why? **They’ve been bitten too**…yet **unable** to shake it off…they swelled up…they fell. I hate the sting of the little snakes…but I know Jesus…and I know a higher purpose and reason than my own convenience…
* One other thing here…God didn’t preserve Paul from the storm just to let him perish by the snake. Remember, recall, remind yourself of all that God has seen you though, brought your through…when you are facing the storm of the day wondering if God will do it again. God is for you! God is with you!! Without this ***storm***, there would be no what is coming up next…

Acts Chapter 28 Verses 7 – 15

* Syracuse is the ancient capital city of the island of Sicily and it was where the brilliant mathematician Archimedes lived. When the Romans conquered the island, a solider put a dagger to his throat as he worked on a math problem, drawing in the dirt. Archimedes said, *“Stop, you’re disturbing up my equation!”* and the solider killed him. *(I mention that only to entertain David and Matt Morgan)*
* We are told here that the brethren came out to greet Paul. Some to Appii and some as far as Three Inns. We’re talking roughly 30 miles and 40 miles south of Rome. ***Some traveled 30 miles to greet him and some 40…some didn’t travel at all.*** It’s interesting the lengths that some will go and some will not…
* Now look at this. It says here that Paul **took courage.** This word for courage in the Greek is **unique** right here to only this one statement in the entirety of the Word of God. It’s *tharsos* in the Greek and literally it means ***confidence, boldness, courage.*** Couple that with the word given before it and it means that **Paul caught boldness.** Caught courage. Caught confidence! Why? Because around the people of God **this goes around!**
* Ever call into work ***well!?*** *Yea, I’m definitely coming in today!! I caught a major COURAGE COLD!* HA! That’s literally how I feel on Thursday mornings! Monday through Wednesday typically kick my *hind quarters* but then Wednesday night worship, Bible study, fellowship…the next day, man **I’m calling in WELL!!** Are you catching confidence around the people of God? Growing more and more thankful? You can be…humble yourself…allow yourself to be led by the Spirit of God…and then the people of God in your life become like this…you take courage…**you catch it**…it’s going around…

Acts Chapter 28 Verse 16

* And so Paul finally makes it to Rome. And when he gets there, Julius somehow makes it so, ***sets him up***, so that he doesn’t enter into the regular jail but is set apart on his own with the soldier who guarded him. ***What a stroke of luck for that soldier, eh?*** All of the criminals getting off of that ship and he is assigned to the one who will share with him eternal life. Set him free from hopelessness. Encourage him and build him up. Educate him about the God that because of sin, because of this fallen world, he is out of touch with…why? Because Paul was so great? **Not at all**, I want you to see this…it was because Jesus is so great! It was because God is ***perfectly faithful!***
* Paul, being stoned and left for dead in Ephesus…but the Lord said to him…promised..., *“You’re going to make it to Rome.”* Paul, the leading Jews plotting and pledging to murder him…attacking him with violence and urgency in the temple, Paul being filled with terror…but the Lord said to him…promised…, *“You’re going to make it to Rome.”* Paul, in front of Felix, Festus, Agrippa…all with the power of death with just a word over him…none of them receiving his testimony…Paul so very discouraged as he pleaded with Agrippa specifically…, *“He’s going to kill me…,”* But Jesus had promised him, *“You’re going to make it to Rome.”*
* The storm beat on the ship so harshly and for so long that the ***remembrance of normality*** and the ***recollection of safety*** was ripped from the heart of the sailors…Paul aboard that doomed ship…, but the Lord had promised, *“Paul, you’re going to make it…”* And now this soldier…receives Paul, lights off, spirit no chance until this chance meeting…**and now he knows of Jesus.** He understands in words and concepts what he knew to be true before but couldn’t articulate in his heart of hearts…that he has sinned and is somehow not worthy and lacking…***but Jesus has removed his sin and he is now free to go.*** Free to go right up to the Father of lights, the Almighty and meet Him for the first time…free to eternal life. ***Why? Not because of Paul, but because of the Lord…***
* You have been given sure and strong promises too…and God will see you through. Psalm 121. Trust in the Lord. All of the greatness that may and can happen to you…behind it all, **He is there.** Simply loving you. He’s always been there. He’s always been for you. He’s always known you. His desire is for you. I am so thankful that one day 13 years ago, I was this soldier…and met a Paul.
* No one is completely for me in my life. No one. No one was ever completely for me when I was a child…and I grew up with a broken heart…and really today, even revealed to me this week, ***in ways it remains broken***…but in His hands, I find something not found on this earth…**Someone completely for me.** Someone who loves me perfectly. Someone whose promises to me, to the people I love, to this world…will never be broken. ***Why, because God is entirely faithful.***