I. **INTRO:**

A. Rabbi Yoseph - B'rit Avraham Messianic Synagogue; *Meet @ Bundy Canyon School.*

B. The Queen Mary, that grand old ocean liner: 1st a wonderful **pleasure vessel**; then a **troop ship** carefully evading the German submarines; next a **museum piece**, docked in the Long Beach harbor, stripped of her vitals.

1. The **giant engine** has been removed, most of the **sailing equipment**. There she sits virtually **motionless**, tied tightly to a dock. **Shops** line the deck to sell souvenirs to the visitors. **Dining & lounge areas** provide rooms for meetings & conventions. **Actors** have been hired to act out the parts of officers w/British accents. But the one thing the Queen Mary can’t do now is to fulfill the reason for which she was built; **to sail the high sea!**
   a) Everything is the same, nothing is the same. The vessel had become a monument to past glory! {Pastor Lloyd Ogilvie; *Drumbeat of Love*}

2. Paul sure wasn’t viewing Rome as his retirement from ministry. He would never allow his engine to be stripped, & to be lashed to the dock of routine! Still plenty of spiritual **Holy Ghost wind** left in his **sails**.

C. Last week we were **run aground** & then **shipwrecked** w/Paul, during his “Ike” like storm in the Mediterranean Sea. The island, Malta.

1. **We join them this morning soaked, hungry, & shivering**, probably huddled together as they watch the churning sea slowly **dismantle** their ship.

2. However, everyone was safe. God had brought them ALL through the storm! **Still miles from Rome, God allows them 3 months of R&R, time to heal.**

II. **ISLAND OF REFUGE!**

A. **BITTEN BUT NOT FORSAKEN**! (1-6)

B. (1) Malta - small island 50m south of Sicily, which is just south of the **toe** of Italy’s boot.

1. You’ve heard of the small white dog breed, the Maltese. (from here)

2. Island is a rugged **mountainous** island, only 18 miles long & 8 miles wide.

3. In Paul’s day it was called **Melita** “refuge”!
   a) Verse 1 might imply “**we recognized that it was well named!**” (F.F.Bruce)
4. **It was going to be their island of refuge!** But it wouldn’t be overnight.  
   a) Even the father of medicine Hippocrates said, “Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.” Paul’s time would be **3 months!** (11)

5. But, Paul wasn’t sitting around sipping coconut juice under a palm. He used his healing time as an **opportunity** to experience God’s presence in new & refreshing ways. (Chuck Swindoll)

C. (2) **How warm that fire must have felt,** **emotionally** as well as **physically.**
   1. The Maltese healing process had begun!

D. (3) Paul, you just helped save 276 people from drowning, **what are you doing picking up sticks?** - What a servant!

E. (3) **A viper fastened on his hand** - **Come on God,** haven’t I suffered enough? (Traveling as a prisoner on a wheat ship; our ship floating for 2 weeks aimlessly in the pitch black Mediterranean; finally ate something after 14 days w/no food; just survived a terrible shipwreck; swam hard barely making it to shore; & now this snake stuck to my hand?)
   1. **Nope, that wasn’t Paul’s attitude.**
   2. Anything that bites you in life...**shake it into the fire!**

F. **What becomes important to them is why he was bitten!**
   1. **Was he a murderer who was being punished by the gods for his evil deeds?**
   2. **Fear** turns to **awe**...“Maybe he’s a god?”
   3. Maybe this is an example of what Jesus meant when he said, **“they will take up serpents...& it will by no means hurt them.”** Mark 16:15-18
   4. Yet in all this Paul doesn’t say a word. Just goes about resting & healing.

G. **What a strange but very popular** view many people hold, as to how they think God works - i.e. Paul’s snakebite = divine retribution.
   1. That’s exactly what Job’s counselors assumed. Job your problem could only be a result of unconfessed sin!
      a) **Remember when we had the former baseball pitcher(Padres) Dave Dravecky here?**
         1. **He got cancer in his pitching arm.** Had surgery, removing 1/2 his deltoid muscle. Made a comeback, then during a game his humerus snapped in the middle of a pitch.
         2. **Dave said,** “I was in Grand Rapids, Michigan, speaking at a chapel service when I was approached by a man in his twenties. He told me I **had cancer** because there was **sin in my life.** He told me that the Holy Spirit revealed to him that God had a special plan for me - to be a preacher - but 1st I had to get rid of the sin.” *(When You Can’t Come Back)*
b) What a terrible theology! - “Snakebites don’t prove wrong-doing, anymore than hard times always imply hidden sin.”

(1) Dave went on to say in his book, “The issue is not our character but the character of God! Is God the kind of God who gives people tumors when they sin? Does he dole out diseases when we fail him? Say, maybe, cataracts when we lust or hardening of the arteries when we hate.”

(2) This is Pharisee theology! When they came across a blind man they asked Jesus “who sinned this man or his parents?” Jesus said, neither, & then proceeded to heal the man. (Jn.9)

(3) Let’s hear from another David, Read Ps.103:10-14.

(a) Oh, what comfort that brings your soul!

(4) Quoting Dravecky one last time he said, “I didn’t get angry with the man. I felt sad that he was carrying around such a distorted picture of God. And I wondered how that picture would get him through life when one day he would have to walk through his own valley of suffering.”

H. THE MALTESE HEALING PROCESS! (7-10)

I. Publius the governor of the island entertained them for 3 days.

1. Paul was able to heal his father from fever & dysentery as well as help many others on the island.
   a) Weird, should it have been Dr. Luke that did the healing? :-)

J. (8,9) 2 different words for healed in 8 & 9.

1. iaomi (ἰάομαι) - to heal.
2. Therapeuo (θεραπεύω) - to treat medically. [LKGNT; pg.343]
   a) This may infer Luke was involved in Paul’s healing ministry, perhaps by using natural means to cure the people & not only supernaturally.
   b) But what ever the subtleties, the Lord was using them to minister to the physical needs of the people, as a sign of His power & the truth of the gospel.

K. Somewhere in your life you need a Malta, an island of refuge.

1. What a blessing I was just able to enjoy a Malta this week. {saw Rabbi at Ontario airport} Mike & I in Belize with John & Lisa Gotz. Little Island called San Pedro.
2. We can’t always do a major Malta but how about grabbing a mini Malta this week. [A day off, a few hours, a Malta Meal?] :-)
   a) Sometimes what’s needed the most is just sleep & let the body rebuild itself.
b) “All the cells in your body, including your brain cells, make themselves new every 5 months.” (Skin cells new every month) {Dr. Amen; Making a Good Brain Great; pg.89}

L. **ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME!** (11-16)

M. (11) After 3 months the weather was favorable to be able to continue their journey.
   1. 3 months of healing for the lives of Paul & his shipmates, but also for the lives of the Maltese natives.

N. Twin brothers - On the front of the bow was Zeus’s mythical sons, Castor & Pollux.
   1. Supposed to be protectors of navigation & guardian of sailors.
   2. Said to have been taken up into the sky, so that 2 stars in the constellation Gemini (Twins) are called by their names.

O. (13,14) Puteoli - Land ho! We made it. The grueling sea adventure is over.
   1. Rome lays 120 miles north by land.
   2. Look at the spread of Christianity, a church here in Puteoli(14).

P. (15) Some believers traveled as much as 40 miles to greet & encourage their visitor… How far would you go to encourage a fellow believer? {sometimes we only need to go as far as our computer to email our persecuted brother Zhang Ronglinag?}

Q. (16) Now when we came to Rome...Finally!!!
   1. I think Paul shouted Rome at last, Rome at last, thank God Almighty it’s Rome at last!
      a) Hear Paul’s heart in Rom.1:8-11 (next page).
   2. Paul said, “I must see rome!”(19:21); in Rom.1:11 he told them “I long to see you”; Rom.15:24 he said, “I shall come to you”; Jesus told him, “you must also bear witness of Me at Rome”; & now so simply, when he came to Rome.

R. **LIMITATIONS INTO VICTORY!** (17-31)

S. Paul was a prisoner in Rome from 61-63 {During that time he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon} [“the prison epistles”]
   1. From 63-65, he was free to minister, & he wrote 1 Timothy & Titus.
   2. Imprisoned again in 66, wrote 2nd Tim. He was martyred in late 66 or early 67
   3. As Paul wrote in prison, so others devoted waiting time to profitable writing that has blessed many; e.g. John Bunyan imprisoned in Bedford jail, wrote a major portion of Pilgrim’s Progress; Martin Luther shut up in the Castle of Wartburg translated Bible into German.
4. James Stalker said of Paul, “On the few square feet of space allowed him he erected a fulcrum with which he moved the world, establishing w/in the walls of Nero’s capital a sovereignty more extensive than his own.” *(The Life of St. Paul)*

T. (20) I’m a prisoner in Rome because of the hope of Israel. For my devotion to the ancient dream of Israel, of a Messiah, & God’s intention of a universal brotherhood of believers...that’s what cost me my freedom!

1. Christianity wasn’t a competitor but a fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise “in you all the families(peoples/nations) of the earth shall be blessed”.

U. Paul’s chain? Whatever your limitation, like Paul it can become your platform for the gospel!

1. He couldn’t go to the people, but the people came to him.
2. He couldn’t unchain himself, but he could look across his cell & use the Rom Soldier as an object lesson like when he penned, put on the full armor of God
3. He couldn’t change what others say about him, he simply tells the truth.

V. (23) The Law & the Prophets - sensitivity to his Jewish audience.

W. THE END OF THE BEGINNING! (wrap up)

X. What an abrupt ending. But, its really not an ending. It’s written as though there was a sequel. There is...it’s your life! Your life is Acts 29!

1. In London 1942 Hitler’s Luftwaffe(*luft-vafe*) had invaded English skies, & all Britain was feeling the dread of his enlarging shadows. Air raid sirens, frayed nerves, bomb shelters, bombs come whistling, How long they thought? *Winston Churchill* wished he could answer that question. What could he say to steel the people’s melting courage. Then on Nov.10, he addressed a worried audience with these immortal words, “Now this is not the end. It is not the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning!”
a) Great description of the end of Acts! “the end of the beginning!”

Y. Sometimes there is victory, often there is defeat, but always there is hope - the hope to which we cling, for which we fight, & with which we will someday win. (Swindoll)

Z. Prayer: Let us press on & bear the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, unashamed, unafraid, & unhindered!