

“Island of Refuge!”

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!
 - a) 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!**