

Acts 28:1-10 [73]-PAUL in MALTA

PRELIMS. Paul has been shipwrecked on the way to Rome to be tried on false charges. All the prisoners have had the leave the boat and either swim or ‘float’ on pieces of wood!! The people of Malta were far from Paul and Luke’s mind, but God obviously wished them to hear the gospel and see it ‘at work’!

HUMAN NATURE

Having scrambled ashore, they were greeted by the local people with “unusual kindness”[2]. Complete strangers! Suspicious! Yet kindness - not too common! We should not be surprised.

We are made in the image of God and it is therefore not surprising that **kindness** should be at the centre of our being – because kindness and love is the heart of God. There is in our nature something which **wants** to **respond** to human **needs**! Unlike the **animal** world, where an injured animal is seen as ‘**easy prey**’ and falls victim of its own kind, the ‘God’ element in humanity reveals itself. Here in this chapter we have a perfect example of the plight of man drawing out the original kindness God put in the human heart.

Before the **Fall** Adam\Eve were lovely- in **every** respect! They were kind! But the Fall **changed** their **nature** and **disposition**! They became **self-centred**! **Greedy. Jealous. Hatred.** And yet, they still retained in general, the image of God and they, of course, could be **restored** – not just to their original state but a **better** state in which they could never be lost again!

Initially it was **not** something **within** man that ruined him! God made man **upright** and **holy**. It was something **outside** of man that ruined him. It was an **idea**, an idea/suggestion/proposal from Satan - that God was not telling the truth about eating from the Tree! It was an idea that ruined the human race! Of course the idea was evil and was **sourced** in hatred (Satan’s)! ‘**Ideas** have **consequences**’! Very serious consequences!

We saw that at the meeting on Wed, the video re Darwinism! Darwin did **not** write ‘The Origin of **Life**’ but the ‘Origin of **Species**’ (variety of life). Darwin, Dawkins, or no one can account for the origin of life! They all admitted they did **not know** how life began!! Wed DVD showed how evolution **influenced Hitler** and his **attitude to humans** who could not do so well as others – just **get rid of them**. Thus **holocaust!**

Darwinism is also the root behind **ethanasia**. Natural selection was an idea which percolated in the mind of Darwin, so after experiments it ‘grew’ and developed. It gets rid of the weak and the less useful and the unwanted amongst us so we will have a wonderful society! Lets have a **perfect** society even if it **costs** the lives of **innocents!** Ideas have consequences! It even leads to a **Peter Tobin** (how many did he murder?), and **Karen Matthews** who ‘saw’ children only as an opportunity to get ‘money’, found guilty last week of horrendous crimes against people! **Using people** for their own ends!

That is the **exact opposite** of how God sees people. God’s heart goes out in love to them. God’s idea when He saw the weak, the vulnerable the poor is to **help** and **save** them! And it **won’t** cost **them** anything! It will cost Me, My Son – but I am willing – and wonder of wonders, the Son is willing also! What **kindness!** *“I looked, but there was **no one to help**; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so **My Own arm** brought Me **salvation**”* [Isa 63:5] Look at **God in ‘the flesh’** *“When He saw the crowds, He had **compassion** for them, **because** they were harassed and **helpless**”* [Mat 9:36]!

Well, believe it or not, but at the root of our nature there still is this element of kindness. True, it has been **overtaken** by the corrupt nature and ideas of the evil one, but it is still there! Even sorrow for a missed train! **Sympathy** is a **gift** from **God**, not from the evil one! He does not know anything of sympathy! God is the **inventor** of **love/kindness/sympathy** – and **help!**

That sympathy is clearly seen in the “*unusual kindness*” of the Maltese people who “*welcomed us all*”[2]. Sometimes the people of the world are an **example** to Xns in kindness, as here!

MAN by NATURE is RELIGIOUS

Atheists **define** religion by saying that their ‘belief system’ does not believe in the **supernatural** whereas all religion do believe in the supernatural. But belief in the supernatural is **not** the **defining** point of religion. Atheism like all religions believe in what is said to be **unverifiable**! Something that cannot be proved beyond any doubt. Eg, evolution! It **requires faith** that the missing links are there! Religion has faith – thus atheists too have faith as they **cannot prove** evolution, or whatever!

Religion also includes **worship**! Atheists will say, but we don’t worship God or anything! Wrong. Worship means **devoting time, resources, confidence, hope** in whatever we are **trusting** in! Everyone has a hope – even if it is in ‘nothing’! So there is no such thing as true atheism because all men everywhere believe in what they **cannot prove** and **trust** in that belief!

So then, we see here, what we know about humanity everywhere, all people have **faith in something**, fate, or God or “*justice*”[4]! Deep in the heart of all humans is this sense of ‘Justice’, or God or some ‘Power’ over us to whom, from time to time, we **have** to make an **appeal**, in the hope that things **will** turn out better in the future! When the viper fastened on to Paul’s hand they cried out “*No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, ‘Justice’ has not allowed him to live*”[4]! The Maltese people reveal **where** their faith is!

Man believes in **ultimate** justice! Justice ‘in the end’! Solomon “*Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. But it will not be well with the wicked...because he does not fear before God*”[Ecc 8:12,13]

The POWER of EXPERIENCE

One ‘**real life experience**’ can change everything! “*However... they were **waiting** for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead...they **changed their minds** and said that he was a **god**”! [5,6] How **fickle** humans are! At **Lystra** they said Paul was a **god**, but changed their minds and **stoned** them![14:11-19] Now the **reverse** happens - he is a **murderer** then make him a **god**!*

APP This is why it is so important that Xns have a godly life. A godly life, **more than anything**, is the means God uses to **convince** people of the **reality** of saving faith! Look at how Paul, no doubt tired/weary, **helps** with the making of a fire [3]

But more – as **soon** as Paul **learns** about the father of the “*chief man of the island*” lay “*sick*”, he immediately goes to **help**! “*Paul visited him and **prayed** and putting his hands on him **healed** him*”[8]! Oh that we today had that power! All we can do is pray and ask God to do the healing according to His will! It is **not** a matter of **our** faith, but of the Sovereign God’s will!

The power of experience! Look at what happens next! When the island learn of how Paul **helped** Publius’ father, “*the **rest** of the people on the island who had diseases **also came** and were **cured**”*[9]! When people **witness for themselves**, the goodness of God, they are impressed and want to come and receive the blessings that are available! When we cannot perform miracles, be sure, yes **be sure**, you **help** them in whatever way we can!

Missionaries are wonderful. They heal and cure people through **medicines** (maybe some through miracles – fine – but don’t say healed when not healed). That, it seems to me, is the **main way** that **God**, yes **God** heals now! It is **God’s power** in **medicine** that heals and relieves pain! Some Xns maintain there ought not to be missionaries **unless** there are **also** doctors/hospitals to join the preachers to bring **physical** healing to the locals! **APP** Who are **you** trusting to **save** you? What **experience** have **you** had?