

# Acts 28

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please take out your copy of God's Word and turn to the book of Acts chapter 28. While you're getting there, let me just say a few unscripted things about music.

I appreciate Jordan kind of prompted this in my mind as he talked about how we don't come together to praise performance, but to praise the living God. Particularly if you're new to us, the way we do music on a Sunday morning may feel strange to you.

And I just want it not to. I think the way we do music on a Sunday morning, and this is not me saying that we're more right than anybody else, but I think it ought to feel familiar to Christian people.

When you go in amongst other Christian people to sing songs to God, I think it ought to feel more the same. And I don't mean lead from a guitar with a banjo and keys or any of that.

I'm not talking about style and preferences of style. I'm talking about content. So we have a criteria for the songs that we sing together on Sunday morning, and that is as follows.

[ 1 : 09 ] First, the songs are true. So we want songs to be lined up with the truth of Scripture. In your time singing with us, if the words are odd to you, if the strangeness of it rings out, you probably don't read your Bible enough.

Because the songs we sing are Scripture-saturated. There's so many direct Bible references in the songs that we sing together. So the songs need to be true.

The next criteria is that the songs need to be deep. Now, I'm okay with a good repetitious chorus. Please know that. There may be a really great time for that.

But we have a limited amount of time together. So how much depth of truth can we pack into our time? So most of the songs, not all, but most of the songs we sing together are wordy.

And they're wordy for that reason. We want you to know the truth so that you can be changed by the truth. Have it dwell deeply within you. I'm really horrible at remembering song lyrics.

[ 2 : 15 ] I hope you're not like me in that way. But I will get a tune stuck in my head on a Sunday morning, which will force me to go look up the lyrics so that I can sing it, not just hum the same thing over and over and over again in my head, which presses me to biblical truth.

And typically what I tend to do is go, oh, that's a reference. I know that's a reference. I've read it somewhere. And I begin to look up all the references that are found in this great hymn that gets stuck in my head. So songs should be true and they should be deep.

And then lastly, they should be singable, right? Which is just really practical. We want to be able to sing songs together. And so I appreciate, if you've been here with us for a while, you know Wes and Liz Shelnut led us for many years and they've just recently moved to Utah.

But the guys that have stepped in are doing the same thing. They're not trying to amaze us with their musical talent. And they have musical talent. But simply leading us to sing songs together. So true, deep, and singable. That's why we don't turn the music up too loud. There's a time and a place for a rock concert. I enjoy it as much as the next person. But you need to hear your neighbor.

[ 3 : 22 ] That's why we keep the lights on and we have windows. I didn't build the building, but we didn't cover them up. You'll note. We left them that we might sing and rejoice together and be God's people together, praising God in song.

So, brief and off script. I want to encourage you though to join us and to sing well with us. Our text for today is Acts chapter 28, verses 1 through 16.

We're getting very close to the end of our verse-by-verse exposition of the book of Acts. This will be my last sermon in Acts next week.

Clay is going to finish it up for us. And this morning, as I did the last little bit of note preparation, I took this stack of commentaries that's been living for the last... Anybody know off the top how long we've been in the book of Acts?

A year and a half? Does it seem about? Something like that? I took it and I put them all up on my shelf. There's this weird void on my desk right now that will soon get filled with other commentaries. [ 4 : 24 ] But I'm grieving it a little bit this morning to leave the book of Acts. So, let's wring it out together. Before we read the text, you need a sweeping summary to get us to where we are in Luke's second narrative.

So, beginning... We'll go back to chapter 21. We've observed Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, his various trials before various prominent men, his exercise of his Roman right to appeal to Caesar.

So, he makes this appeal to go to the highest court as a Roman citizen. They grant that to him. So, his departure from Caesarea for Rome via a ship.

And then we saw last week in chapter 27 this storm that leads to this shipwreck. On the island of Malta. So, our text today picks that story up as Paul and the other 275 souls that were on the ship are washed up on the beach.

Before we read, beloved, this is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and for our good. Which means we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

[ 5 : 35 ] Acts chapter 28, beginning in verse 1. 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. When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out and because of the heat and fastened on his hand.

When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live. He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. 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.

Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island named Publius, who received and entertained us hospitably for three days. It happened that the father of Publius lay sick for fever and dysentery.

[ 6 : 46 ] And Paul visited him and prayed and putting his hands on him, healed him. 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. After three months, we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria with the twin gods as a figurehead.

Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. And from there, we made a circuit and arrived at Regium. And after one day, a south wind sprang up. And on the second day, we came to Pute...

Excuse me. I practiced this one. Puteoli. There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome.

And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and three taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.

[ 7 : 41 ] And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself with the soldier who guarded him. So for many chapters now, we've been waiting for this fulfilled promise that Jesus spoke to Paul and said, you will arrive at Rome.

You must speak the gospel in Rome. And so we see that promise fulfilled here. But before we get into any part of this text, which I find meaningful for us this morning, we must first address the incident with the snake and then the healings that are happening on the island as well.

We must ask about such implications of these kinds of events for our day. So what's the deal, right, with Paul gets bit by this venomous snake?

Interestingly, there are no venomous snakes on the island of Malta today, but that doesn't mean that there weren't in that day. The people there seem to be convinced that he's going to die as a result of this particular snake bite.

Nothing happens to him. He shakes it off into the fire. And then he goes and heals Publius' father. And the record is the rest of the people on the island who had diseases. So it would seem that at least for a period of time that the island of Malta was entirely disease-free.

[ 9 : 00 ] How does that apply to us today? Are there a whole spectrum of beliefs concerning the present nature of spiritual gifts?

Are the gifts of prophecy and healing and tongues still active today? And I'll tell you honestly, that's a question I thought that I was going to have to answer definitively as we preach through Acts. And if you've been with us, you'll know that I have not. So I'm going to get into it a little bit more this morning to clear the field for you. But to simplify the matter, let's just consider healing, right? Which is what we see happen in our text today. Just consider healing this morning. Now, in the spectrum of beliefs, there are two most commonly held beliefs with some variations of them in between.

They range from what are called continuationists. I think all of these gifts are still active today, right? Continuationists, the gifts have continued. To cessationists, which means they've ceased.

[ 10 : 02 ] Those gifts have ceased. So cessationists all the way to continuationists. And then just about every little variance you can think of in between someone has held at some point in history.

Cessationists will say that the gifts of prophecy and healing in tongues ceased when the apostolic age ceased. As they were used, those gifts were used to validate the message that the apostles taught.

You remember that the early church did not have the New Testament scriptures. They had the Old Testament. They had the text that attested to Christ's coming, right? But they did not have the New Testament that gave the full expression of his coming, told the story of his coming, and walked out for us the way we're meant to live in light of his coming.

And so the apostles, these gifts accompanied them. We know for sure they accompanied them to give affirmation to the words that they taught. But did they stop when the apostolic age ceased to exist?

Cessationists base their belief on a couple of texts. For me, the ones that are most convincing begin in 2 Corinthians 12.12. Well, Paul writes, The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

[ 11 : 22 ] So Paul is saying, Paul, as an apostle, is saying, The signs of an apostle, a true apostle, were performed amongst you.

Now, an apostle is someone who had walked with Jesus, had seen him after his resurrection, and were personally charged by Jesus to be an apostle.

So, not just anybody that lived around Jesus and saw him after his resurrection. There's others in the scripture who are called disciples. Acts chapter 1, we see a group of disciples gathered.

The apostles were a very specific group of men who met these criteria, walked with Jesus, seen him after his resurrection, and they were commissioned. Jesus said to them, You are an apostle.

So, these gifts accompany these men to give affirmation to them and to their teaching. We can also look at Hebrews chapter 2, verses 1 through 4.

[ 12 : 21 ] The writer of Hebrews says, Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, apostles, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

So, the writer of Hebrews says the same thing. This message of salvation declared first by Christ, attested to us by those who heard, he's referring specifically to the apostles there, God gave witness to their witness in accompanying it with signs.

Now, here's the challenge of cessationism. The Bible nowhere definitively says that the gift of healing or tongues or prophecy will cease.

This definitively suggests, but doesn't definitively say that anywhere. However, we do only ever observe the apostles' healing.

[ 13 : 39 ] Consider that in the book of Acts. We don't see a record as it concerns healing of anybody other than an apostle healing. And because of these things, right, the evidences of this, and because throughout church history, the largely held view of the church has been that of cessationism.

In fact, continuationism has really been on the rise in the past hundred years, but prior to that, at least most Baptist confessions were cessationist. But because it doesn't definitively say that the gifts stop, this is where I'm at.

So, you ready? I'm priming you to know where I stand on the matter, at least for right now. I like to call myself a cautiously open cessationist. How about that?

It's kind of like saying I'm a cessationist. Sort of that way. Which means I hold the cessationist view generally, but I'm willing to be wrong, and I'm willing to be shown that I'm wrong.

But I'm going to do so with a great deal of skepticism and care in hearing about the telling of things that have happened, supposedly in the name of our Lord.

[15:00] Now, wherever you may be on the matter, possibly just confused, and there's a really brief presentation of those things, here's what I think becomes more important for us. Two things that I believe that we can know.

With a confidence, we can know. Number one, the apostles did not go about seeking to heal people. This wasn't the thrust of their ministry.

They seized opportunities when they were presented to them, but they didn't have, quote-unquote, healing ministries. They didn't hold, quote-unquote, healing services.

This was not the thrust of what they were doing. What was the thrust of what they were doing?

Preaching the good news of Jesus Christ, right? That's what they did, right? Their mission statement for their organization, I don't think would have even included healing.

They would have been all about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let me show you some places, just to Acts chapter 3, verses 1 through 8. This is the first healing that we see in the book of Acts.

[16:06] Now, Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer. Instead of going up to pray, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they had laid daily at the gate of the temple, that is called the beautiful gate, to ask alms of those entering the temple.

Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. So he just simply says, Can I have some money? And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, Look at us.

And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Rise up and walk.

So he seizes this opportunity, verse 7, and he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, and he stood and began to walk and entered the temple with him, walking and leaping and praising God.

And we'll talk about what happens next in just a moment. So again, seizes an opportunity, but doesn't go out seeking to do this activity. And then in our text today, Acts 28, verse 8, Luke says, It happened that the father, right?

[17:11] So they're invited to stay with this man named Publius, and his father is sick. And after he heals him, what happens? People keep showing up and want to be healed. And Paul obliges.

So, they didn't go about seeking it. Secondly, when someone was healed, the gospel was always preached. When someone was healed, the gospel was always preached.

Remember, healings were just meant to give credibility to the message that was being preached. And so you'll find today, if you want to fall into the black hole, people of YouTube, type in miracle healings, and start paying attention to what's happening, recorded, many, now I'm not, I haven't gotten too deep into that black hole, but many of those things are not accompanied by gospel proclamation at all.

Not at all. When someone was healed, the gospel was always preached. Now, Luke doesn't make record of that reality in this passage, which could trouble you.

But there's a really clear pattern of this throughout the book of Acts. And we've seen this pattern together. I've talked about it on multiple occasions. Let me give you a few examples in case you've forgotten that or you just haven't been with us for the entirety of our study.

[18:29] So, going on in Acts chapter 3, the story we just read about the lame beggar. Peter heals the lame beggar, and a crowd gathers, verses 11 through 26, and because of this, right, this man is leaping, everybody recognizes him, says he was laid daily at this gate called beautiful.

Everyone recognizes this man who was lame, who's now miraculously jumping around. And what does Peter do? He preaches the gospel. He gathers a crowd, and he preaches the gospel of Jesus

Christ.

Acts chapter 5, verses 12 through 14, Luke records this for us. Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles.

And they were all together in Solomon's portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And then verse 14 says, And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord multitudes of both men and women.

How were they added? By believing in the gospel preached. Right? They were believing the gospel that was being preached as they're also performing signs and miracles.

[ 19 : 37 ] Another example, Acts chapter 14, beginning in verse 8 and following. Now at Lystra, there was a man sitting who could not use his feet.

He was crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking. He's already preaching the gospel. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet.

And he sprang up and began walking. And when the crowd saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lithuanian, The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.

Barnabas they called Zeus and Paul Hermes because he was the chief speaker.

And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifices with the crowds. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, Men, why are you doing these things?

We also are men of like nature with you. And we bring you, what? Good news. The gospel. That you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

[ 20 : 48 ] So at Lystra, they healed a man and they preached the gospel. So we should not go about seeking to heal people, but we should go about preaching the good news of Jesus Christ.

And I'm really comfortable with that, whether cessationism or continuationism or something in between and it's the proper view. Whether I've got it right or not, I'm really comfortable seeing clearly that what we ought to be focusing our attention on is going about preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We ought to seek to see the most miraculous of things that has ever happened. Dead people, brought to life, cold hearts, warmed to God through His preached word.

Don't neglect that. When somebody places believing faith in Jesus Christ, it is more miraculous than a lame man from birth being able to walk because God has changed their heart.

It's an incredible thing that people gather to hear God's word preached. All of you, little miracles this morning, here, using your Sunday morning for this rather than something else.

[ 21 : 54 ] So, these are the things that we can know about this type of stuff happening. Someday, maybe one of you will prove me wrong and I'll be glad to hear your story.

Now, Luke has been so careful to record gospel proclamation as the point of healing. Why doesn't he do so in today's text? It bothered me a little bit.

Why did he not do it in today's text? Now, I contend that the gospel did get proclaimed, that it did, in fact, happen, not only because we've seen it patterned, but church tradition also holds that a church began on Malta while Paul and his companions were there.

Traditions say that a church began when he was there and the wonderful fruit of the gospel being preached is that churches begin. So, why does Luke not make that the big deal?

That's what he does all throughout the book of Acts, right? He's all about telling us the story, right? The second account of his, of the risen Christ working by the power of his spirit in the lives of the apostles, primarily Peter at the beginning, now Paul is the main character, right?

[ 23 : 04 ] Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, people coming to faith, churches beginning. Why does he not make that the big deal of this three months spent on Malta?

Believing that Luke wrote this account under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we must believe that there is something else that our attention is meant to be drawn to. And I believe, at least today, at least in part, it's meant to be drawn to two things from this text.

Number one, hospitality, and number two, justice. Number one, hospitality, number two, justice.

So let's take a brief look at these two things this morning. First, hospitality. Note the hospitality of unbelievers. Verse two, the native people showed us unusual kindness for they kindled the fire and

welcomed us all because it began to rain and was cold.

And then verse seven, now in the neighborhood of that place, the general area of that place where lands belong to the chief man of the island named Publius who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.

[ 24 : 23 ] And then verse 10, so notice the theme working through Luke's narrative. Verse 10, they also honored us greatly and when we were about to sail, this is three months later, they put on board whatever we needed for that journey.

So the 276 castaways were shown unusual kindness as they were cared for immediately with a fire. Think about the time that they're traveling in.

It's past the fast. We saw that last week. This is going to be late September. It's starting to get cold. It's starting to get windy. They've just been in the ocean. They're all sputtering up onto the beach and the native people, the people of the area, build a fire for them.

And then they were hosted for three days, hospitably, Luke says, so probably very generously, by Publius, who was the Roman governor of Malta.

And let us not miss that they wintered on the island. So we see that they were there for three months, so they must have been hosted further. And so they stay at Publius' house for three days.

[ 25 : 30 ] He hosts 276 people. I imagine at some point he said, okay, that's a lot of people to be at my house. But then they had to go somewhere for the following three months, right?

They're wintering there. It's getting very cold and very harsh. And so people of the island must have put them up for that time. Now, I believe that many of the people of Malta were saved in this time, right?

Because church history holds a church was started there. Healing was happening. Paul must have been preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. So the line between unbelieving hospitality and believing hospitality may be a bit blurry, right?

Maybe a mixture of the two. But all the same, the people of Malta just may put you and I to shame in keeping the command to hospitality.

Here's a few of those commands. We're to show hospitality to one another. Romans chapter 12, verse 13. Paul says, contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

[ 26 : 36 ] Peter writes in 1 Peter 4, 9, show hospitality to one another without grumbling. So what is hospitality? What are we talking about when we say that?

It's the making someone feel welcome. So we could do that on a Sunday morning here in our gathering together for people to feel welcome. We have a hospitality team which predominantly makes coffee.

But I feel very welcome when there's coffee ready to go for me when I meet with someone. They're the crew that scrambles and tries to help you with seats. Everyone in the back.

Somebody, I hope, helped you with seats this morning. We can show hospitality to our neighbors, right? Inviting them over for dinner. Somebody knocks on your door unexpectedly.

You don't slam the door back in their face and go clean the house up real quick. You invite them in and you make them feel welcome. Sam and I are always very tempted to clean up our tiny house before somebody steps inside.

[ 27 : 37 ] Showing hospitality means giving of ourselves to make others feel like they are important. That they belong in the place that we are. And we're commanded to it.

Not only are we to show hospitality to one another, those inside the church, but we're to show hospitality to others. Those outside. Hebrews 13.2. The writer of Hebrews says, Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Which is such a great word that I feel like doesn't belong in my Bible, but it's there all the same.

They have entertained angels unaware. So do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.

But we are not always to be hospitable. Did you know that? We are not to show hospitality to those who claim to be Christians, but do not teach what is orthodox or practice righteousness.

How about that? John writes in 2 John verse 10 and 11. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, the gospel of Jesus Christ, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting.

[ 28 : 47 ] For whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5.11, But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler, not even to eat

with such a one.

And what Paul is saying is if somebody professes to know Jesus Christ and then their life lives in direct opposition to that, don't greet them as a brother. Don't show them the hospitality that you would show to those who are inside the faith.

So we're to show hospitality. And we see that expressed even by unbelievers, which should be an astounding thing to us, the way they're greeted on the shore of that island.

Second, note the hospitality of believers. And in this case, we can say definitely believers. We know that these people are believers. Verse 14 in Pudioli.

I got it right the first time that time. we found brothers and were invited to stay with him for seven days. And so we came to Rome. So Paul and his companions, we have to assume the Roman centurion Julius, who's been accompanying Paul all along, upon arriving on the Italian shore, drop in for a seven-day stay upon being invited to stay for such a time.

[ 30 : 22 ] And likely for such a time because they needed to gain strength for their further journeying on to Rome. So we have this gracious extension of the brothers. And then verse 15.

And the brothers there, the brothers in Rome, when they heard about us, came as far as the forum of Appius and three taverns to meet us.

On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. The forum of Appius was a marketplace. It's sometimes called the Market of Appius and it was 43 miles south of Rome.

So these believers heard that this Paul, he had written his letter to the Romans already, had sent that on ahead of himself. But the believer Paul, the apostle Paul, was coming to Rome and they traveled 43 miles by foot or by some kind of equestrian means to go and to meet him.

And the three taverns was a location just 10 miles closer. So it's 33 miles south of Rome. Perhaps these brothers heard the news later or they just got a later start.

[ 31 : 29 ] They had to wait for somebody else to show up and meet them in the parking lot before they could take off. Right? What a picture of Christian love this is. Roman brothers hearing that Paul was arriving, extend this great hand of hospitality in accompanying him which we see made Paul thankful and encouraged him.

The end of verse 15 Luke records, On seeing them, Paul thanked God. What did he thank God for? For the brothers. For the hospitality of the brothers. That they came to meet him and accompany him to Rome.

Don't forget what Paul was headed to Rome for. He was to stand trial before Caesar. That's what he was headed to Rome to do. And he's greeted by a band of his family that escorts him back in to Rome.

So he thanks God and he takes courage. He took courage. He was encouraged by their hospitality. Hospitality has distinguished the Christian community throughout the ages.

New Testament scholar Abraham J. Moherbe points out that among early Christians hospitality was not merely a practical consideration. It wasn't just about providing for need. But it was a theological one.

[ 32 : 45 ] He wrote this. The Christian practice of hospitality was not viewed simply as a means of overcoming practical problems. Theological statements by different authors in the New Testament show that it was frequently viewed as the concrete expression of Christian love.

So if we love one another, we'll be hospitable toward one another. Beloved, let hospitality distinguish Christ Family Church to Lonega.

Be hospitable when we gather on Sundays, but not only on Sundays. Open up your homes, feed people meals. College students, you can pull this off too. Mac and cheese and hot dogs, get it done.

Seek out ways to show people concretely that you love them. may we not be outclassed by the unbelievers of Malta. So we see hospitality in the first part of chapter 28.

We also see some expression of justice. Secondly, justice. Verse 4 says, When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, No doubt this man is a murderer.

[ 33 : 59 ] Though he was escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live. Now the assumption of the Maltons was that Paul had done something to deserve the bite of the snake.

It is unclear if Luke means to tell us that the Maltons had a God named Justice. The ESV capitalizes the word for that very purpose. Or merely that they had a concept of justice.

But either way, they understood vengeance and believed that Paul, having escaped from a shipwreck, was still being pursued unto death by fate or by a God or whatever.

Why is this noteworthy? It is worth our attention because it is an example of the law of God being written on men's hearts. The native people of Malta, which, by the way, only means that they didn't speak Greek or Latin, not necessarily that they were uncivilized.

You don't need to see on Malta people in grass skirts. It was being ruled by Publius, right, who was a Roman governor. It just simply means they didn't speak Greek or Latin.

[ 35 : 12 ] But these people had an idea of right and wrong. They had no doubt that Paul was a murderer. Throughout history, morality has taken very similar shape, hasn't it?

Why? Because God's law is on men's hearts. In Romans chapter 2, beginning in verse 14 and following, Paul writes, for when Gentiles who do not have the law by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law.

So track what he's saying there, right? Gentiles, those who are outside of Israel, who weren't given the law, still do things that are consistent with the law, right?

Still live morally to some degree, right? Still obey. So here we see the native people of Malta seeing that murder is wrong. They know this to be true.

Verse 15 says, they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

[ 36 : 31 ] Now, if you're a student, you may have taken or will take a class that will suggest to you that morality is subjective and will cite some obscure example of a civilization deep in a jungle that does not find anything wrong with, say, murder.

Have any of you been in that class already? Two of you. All right. Maybe that's good that you're avoiding such classes. It will likely happen to you at some point, some small, obscure example of a little tribe that doesn't find anything wrong with murder.

Be really careful when those things are presented to you when people want to say that morality is entirely subjective. Their evidence for such claims is extremely weak.

The interviewing process for these people is almost nil. In most cases, they don't even speak their languages. They make assumptions that they think murder is right. And it's at very best anecdotal.

So you've got one small group of people. Show me a nation state that has taken morality and made it an entirely subjective thing.

[ 37 : 48 ] Could be the U.S. soon. We're kind of heading in that direction, aren't we? But deep down, people know. People know what is right. They know what is wrong.

Paul tells us and in our text we see that people without the law still by nature do what the law requires. And therefore, having kept the law imperfectly, even with the law written on our hearts, we don't keep it perfectly, their condemnation is just.

God will dole out justice and He will be right in doing so. Paul wrote this. If you back up into Romans 1, verse 18 and following, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

So the wrath of God will be delivered to unrighteous men. Those who aren't found perfect, the wrath of God is due them.

It's a weighty thing. Verse 19, For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made.

[ 39 : 16 ] So they are without excuse. The native people of Malta, God's word on their heart, they had evidences in the creation that a God exists who gave them such instruction and so they were without excuse.

The native people of Malta needed the gospel of Jesus Christ. They needed to believe in Jesus Christ and to be clothed in His righteousness, to be found perfect in Christ because without Jesus' righteousness, they would one day stand before the God of justice and receive their due punishment.

God, but praise God that by faith in Christ, they, I believe, they, I hope many of them, and you and I can stand before God and be seen as keepers of the law because Jesus kept the law for us.

Praise God that by faith in Christ, they and you and I can stand before God having our sins cleansed from us because Jesus bore God's wrath on our behalf.

And now, as followers of Jesus Christ, we boldly proclaim the good news of His saving faith. This is what it means to believe in Jesus, to believe in His person, that He is in fact the Son of God, God Himself, incarnate, sent to earth, and that He did this work on our behalf.

[ 40 : 43 ] He lived a perfect life, fulfilling righteousness, that He might give that to us, and He died a sinner's death, taking our punishment in His flesh. This is what it means to believe in Jesus.

Place your faith in that. Recognize your sinfulness, your just condemnation. God will bring justice, and He will bring it to those who haven't placed faith in Jesus Christ by pouring His wrath out on them.

He will bring it to those who have believed in Jesus Christ because He poured His wrath out on Christ. Christ. We escape His wrath because Jesus suffered in our place. Beloved, this is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and your soul is in a desperate state.

If you couldn't stand before God now, clothed in Christ's righteousness, there's nothing we can do to earn our way to heaven. How will you be justified before God?

You stand before Him, what will be your answer? The only answer that will be sufficient is I am clothed in Christ. I have placed my faith in His person and in His work.

[ 41 : 51 ] So for those of us who are in Jesus, we need to join with Paul, Romans 1 16, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

Let's pray together.