

Acts # 98 “Paul’s Constant Example of *Give and Take*”

*Acts 28:1-31; Psalm 107:23-25;28-32;*

While it’s true that God will give us all a certain amount of materialistic things, perhaps a spouse, enough time to be successful or whatever we need, these all are based on our capacity to enjoy them.

True capacity for our physical and spiritual lives results when our heart, where we do our thinking, leads our soul and our emotions respond.

*Emotion has no biblical truth content or knowledge of its own; it depends on the knowledge of the heart.*

Our emotion adopts the character of whatever it responds to and if our emotion responds to biblical truth, it has great capacity for life and true happiness.

But if our emotion responds to our sin nature, it will produce miserable frustration, rebellion and ultimately, loss of all freedom and enjoyment in life.

Notice that God brought the storm and the calm that followed; one of the greatest frustrations people have is not fulfilling their aspirations and therefore having their dreams remain unfulfilled and that’s because they don’t understand God’s plan of give and take.

To any fair-minded human being, the situation was helpless and hopeless BUT GOD had said that although the ship would be lost, everyone on it would be saved and would end up on an island and just as God predicted, it came to pass.

*Can you imagine Paul’s new credibility after the Omnipotent God he proclaimed to these unwilling listeners came through?*

These natives displayed an amazingly gracious attitude as they did not take advantage of an easy prey situation from a battered crew and passengers in a shipwreck.

Obviously, God provided this opportunity as the beginning of Paul’s evangelistic ministry on Malta with a miracle to draw attention to his message; not to remove suffering, which was a secondary purpose. God used His prophecy given to Paul who shared it among the crew and passengers of the ship to evangelize them all and God is using Paul’s miraculous healing from a poisonous snakebite along with the healing of Publius’ Father and now many others to evangelize the natives of Malta.

*This is the last time we’ll see a divine healing via God’s human agent in the apostolic pre-canon era.*

Do you see how Luke related the ministry of Paul with our Lord’s ministry in that both are compassionate in healing the sick to gain their attention for the greater eternal spiritual healing of the soul and then both are ultimately rejected by their own in the end for the most part?

But these pagan people are doing great all in all; so we have a medical doctor and a spiritual doctor in tandem here as these sick people were treated and healed – Dr. Luke dispensed medicine and Dr. Paul dispensed information; the Gospel to the lost and then then biblical principles to the newly saved.

*Paul’s constant example of give and take means he’s forever giving thanks to God for His grace and he’s taking courage in his encounters with people and his circumstances no matter how bleak through his confidence in God!*

Paul took biblical truth and placed it before the Maltese people where they could see it; in other words, he communicated the Word of God in fresh New Testament form by explaining it clearly in a way that they could easily understand.

He presented the information without salesmanship or gimmicks so well that they were forced to make a decision; so in Joe Friday-like fashion, Paul simply presented the facts.

*Paul was the agent used by God in persuading these people to accept His Son, Jesus Christ; emphasizing as always, it's the message that counts, not the messenger.*

Effective witnessing relies on accuracy of content rather than persuasiveness of speech.

The age or dispensation has changed from the Age of Israel to the Church Age and the Jews are getting ready for their fifth cycle of divine discipline and God is now sending His message to Gentiles who'll be willing recipients and not only that, the Gentiles will now be the new communicators of His message simply because they're willing to hear it and share it.

Paul's lifestyle which is a constant example of 'give and take' began with him giving thanks from a grace-oriented grateful heart.

*True thanksgiving is expressing gratitude to God and there's no capacity for gratitude to God apart from His biblical truth in our souls.*

Thanksgiving is our recognition of the benefits that God provided for us in eternity past to be used by us both in time and eternity.

Learning, understanding, believing and applying biblical truth is our basis for true worship which is our basis for the expression of our genuine thanksgiving toward God.

*Thanksgiving is our appreciation for God's grace solutions to all our problems.*

And using God's grace solutions is not just recognizing them and saying 'Thank You, Lord'; The best way we can say thanks to our Lord is to use what He's provided to honor Him and that's applying His truth to our experience every day.

Thanksgiving is not some simply saying 'Thank You Lord for my children; my spouse; my home or job'; it's a lifestyle of appropriating everything He's given to us TO USE in our daily spiritual battles.

Courage comes from confidence in God through faith in His promises.

And faith is something everyone uses; it's the basis for all the knowledge we have because everything we've ever learned is based on a faith response to someone we heard or something we read and accepted as explained.

*All the believing in the world gains nothing from God but the tiniest bit of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, His precious Son, secures our eternal salvation from Him.*

The effectiveness of faith is found in the object of that faith, not in the amount of that faith; so it's the quality of the Object that has the merit, not the quantity of the faith.

Understanding and applying Paul's technique of 'give and take' Christianity enhances our experiential relationship with the integrity of God.

Giving God our thanksgiving and taking courage as a result of trusting Him is greater than any pressure or disaster in life that we could ever face.

*This is more important than anything in life, whether abject failure, great success, extreme pressure or excessive prosperity.*

Philippians 4:4-7 "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to

*all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*