

For Sunday March 29, 2020 Devotion

KNOW HIM

There are some things we know. Beautiful passage of scripture - Romans 8:28-39: in particular verse 28:

*"²⁸ And **we know** that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."*

There's depth behind these verses – Paul knew he would land in Rome and he had quite a battle landing there. You can see that in the last two chapters of the book of Acts. How we view things makes a difference. In the last chapter of Genesis: within the last words spoken by Joseph:

"¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them."

Two times he says 'Don't be afraid' - There is forgiveness there (Genesis 45:1-8) and purpose revealed. How precious it is to know; to really know. You can enjoy mental assent but when mind and heart agree, there's concord – a powerful thing. There's a depth behind Romans chapter 8; the last verses in Romans 7; Paul is sharing the battlefield in his mind and he consolidates – he makes the distinction between what it is to being driven by his negative emotions or natural senses and what is being led by the Spirit. He taught the same thing to the Corinthian church – the critical need to take thoughts captive – consolidating the need to have our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, the anointed One. Our Young Adults are currently studying a great series 'Battlefield of the Mind'. Paul could communicate the chapters Romans 7 & 8 because he'd been there.

It's good to understand that Paul's conversion was matched by his confession. Paul's past was like rubbish to him compared to knowing Christ. You'll see through the letters he wrote to us that he had consolidated so many truths: to forget what lies behind and press on – take hold of what God has for us now and into the future; that he was a new creation – had right standing with God; he knew he was saved by grace, through faith; he understood faith – he understood in life we need to fight the good fight of faith. Galatians 2:20. This knowledge helped him – in Acts we see how he applied it.

Acts 27: Right from verse 1 there's a confidence. By this time Paul knew his purpose – he's a seasoned sailor – shipwrecked three times. 44 verses are dedicated to this particular account: v21-26:

*"²¹ After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. ²² But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. ²³ Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me ²⁴ and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. **You must stand trial before Caesar**; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' ²⁵ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. ²⁶ Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island."*

Paul knew he would get to Rome because told him 'you must stand' - If this ship broke up and all was lost, Paul would still go to Rome because God had said. (A precious Scripture in 2nd Timothy 3:16 – God breathed). We see in verse 44 – **everyone reached land safely**.

If you'll take some time to read through the two chapters later, you'll see some beautiful things in there. During the challenge Paul had opportunity to witness to the Imperial Guard; His own faith was refined; See

the purpose in the calling, the cast of his call – he was about to be thrust into the heart of Rome – the centre point of the world at that time; on the way he lands on ‘some island’ – a little place called Malta – insignificant to the world at that time, but is now an independent sovereign nation. This little place just south of Italy, is 122 square miles – the size of some horse paddocks – with 450,000 people on it - one of the most densely populated nations on the earth. It was bombed 3,000 times and some 230 ships were sank from that place. The whole island was given the St George cross. The Church is still alive there and well to this day.

Acts 27:44 – 28:10 ⁴⁴ *The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely. Chapter 28:1* *Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. ² The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. ³ Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. ⁴ When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, “This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live.” ⁵ But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. ⁶ The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. ⁷ There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. ⁸ His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. ⁹ When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. ¹⁰ They honoured us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.*

One version uses the word ‘barbarians’ - showed kindness – unusual. Paul had landed; he served, he gathered kindling – there’s a viper hanging off his hand – flick it off (voices, muttering, opinions). Paul knew he was called to Rome – no physical challenge stopped him preaching the gospel: to the Captain, the Imperial Guard, the sailors and the islanders, the barbarians. Paul was a new man; he was vaccinated against fear; he was vaccinated against venom. Paul’s faith mixed with love extinguished fear and took the sting of death from any fiery dart.

What do we come to grips with? We are called, there is purpose in life and there’s a good fight to fight; one of faith.

May we encourage you to:

- Know Christ, and to know He is in you
- Know that you are a new creature, empowered to answer the call and fulfil His purposes for you
- Know and understand that opposition must come (Luke 17:1)
- Know that **in all things, God works for the good - He works for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.**

He is a great God. His love never fails. He loves you; He always has, and He has done everything He can to bring you to Himself. If you would like to know more, please email pa@suncitycc.org.au