

“The Gospel for Barbarians”

Sermon Notes

- **Jesus commissions his church to take the gospel to the end of the earth, among all people...even barbarians**

**Paul's experience with the islanders of Malta confirms for us that he ministered among fellow men, and furthermore as men...*

1. Barbarians aren't only hostile but also hospitable (vv.1-2, 7)
2. Barbarians aren't only stable but also fickle (vv.3-6)
3. Barbarians aren't only strong but also weak (vv.8-9)
4. Barbarians aren't only ingrates but also appreciative (v.10)

**As barbarians are men, Paul's convictions remind us that...*

→ We are obligated (and ought to be eager) to bring them the gospel (Romans 1:14-15)

→ We must remember that they, too, can come to Christ (Colossians 3:11)

Next Week: Acts 28:11-28 - “Rome”

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of February 16th-22nd

Getting Started

1. Who is the most unlikely person you've ever heard of who came to saving faith in Jesus Christ? What made it so unthinkable? Share the story of what happened with the group.

Digging Deeper

2. One of the reasons that tends to contribute to the kind of thinking we exhibit above is that we are prone to leave the sovereignty of God in salvation out of the equation. How do texts such as the final sentence in Jonah 2:9 as well as Acts 13:48; John 6:37 and John 6:65 help us to regain a proper perspective as we consider the "likelihood" or the "unlikelihood" of any particular person coming to saving faith in Jesus?

Open Your Bible to Acts 28:1...

3. What sort of a reception did the 276 shipwrecked passengers experience on the island of Malta (vv.1-2)? Does this surprise you? Though the English Standard Version describes the islanders as “native people”, the footnote lets the reader know that the term that Luke originally used for them was “barbarians”. While we ought not to picture these folks as outright savages, it's true enough that they were an unrefined people - certainly not as cultured as the Greeks, Jews, and Romans from the ship. Compare this with the similar welcome that Luke, Paul, and those with them received at the home of Publius in 28:7. Does it seem that Luke is communicating something here that we ought to bear in mind as we consider our call to communicate the gospel among the more “unrefined” in our own culture? Explain.

4. Read the account in Acts 28:3-6. Now, compare and contrast it with the account of Paul in Lystra found in Acts 14:8-18. What similarities do you see? What differences do you notice? How are both of the islanders' hasty assessments of Paul in Acts 28:4 and 6 mistaken? We explored some modern-day applications of this sort of behavior about this time last year as we studied Acts 14:8-20. Two of the applications that day reminded us not to participate in the *veneration*¹ of faithful Christian leaders as well as the *cancellation* of faithful Christian leaders. Can you think of ways that we do both today? What are some best practices that might help us to steer clear of these opposite errors?

¹ Note that we're talking about veneration here, not admiration. Admiration, honor, esteem, respect (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)...those are all fitting responses to faithful Christian leaders. But veneration in the sense of adoration that borders on idolization is the problem in this case.

5. Luke's account of their three months on the island of Malta (28:11) among these unrefined pagans reminds us that even barbarians are weak and get ill. Read the portion of the story that takes place at the house of Publius (28:7-10). What details stand out to you? As we consider our 2030 Vision, we desire to become a compelling community that cares with the help of God's grace. That is, we want to increasingly be a church that ministers well to people in their time of need - with visible and tangible expressions of the gospel. While it's clear that a huge part of what made Paul so popular on the island of Malta was his miraculous gift of healing, it's also true that the gifts the God the Holy Spirit gives our church can serve to arrest the attention of our surrounding community as well. How have you seen our Wednesday evening meal become such a ministry in the Westonka area? What other ways might we use our spiritual gifts in order to serve our broader community in the name of Jesus?

6. Take a look at Romans 1:14-15. In these verses, Paul speaks of both his "obligation" to preach the gospel to barbarians (the more unrefined non-Jews / non-Greeks in his broader culture) and even his eagerness to do so. How about you? Do you sense your obligation along these lines? Would you say that you are eager to proclaim the gospel to such folks in our community? If not, why not?

7. One other remarkable place where the New Testament makes reference to "barbarians" is in Colossians 3:11 where he says that in the church there is "...not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, *barbarian*, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all." What does this imply about the eternal destiny of at least some (if not many) of the barbarians in Colossae? How does this encourage you in our mission to be and make disciples of Jesus as well as in our 2030 Vision to care with the help of God's grace and counsel with the hope of the gospel?