

WHAT TO DO WHEN DEALT A BAD HAND

Act 28:3 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

Act 28:8 And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.

Paul was on a ship headed towards Rome when a great storm arose. In the midst of the storm an angel of the Lord appeared to Paul and told him what would happen to the ship and the crew. [Acts 27:21-26] The ship would be lost but the crew would be spared. The angel said they would be cast upon a certain island. That is as far as the revelation went. There was no mention of what would happen upon the island. Things happened just as the angel said it would. The ship was broken up because of the storm but the crew escaped to the island called Malta. When they got to the beach they were wet and it was cold and raining. To combat the elements the men built a fire. As Paul was laying a bunch of wood he had collected upon the fire, a venomous viper came out of the wood and latched himself to Paul's hand. The snake was pumping venom into Paul's hand! Paul quickly shook the snake into the fire. The natives sat and watched him closely. They thought that he must be a murderer or wicked person and that fate had not let him escape alive. After awhile when Paul did not fall down or swell up, they changed their mind and thought he was a god. Word got around about Paul and the ruler of the island, Publius, invited him to his house. Once Paul was in the house it was told him that the ruler's father laid at the point of death. Paul prayed and laid his hands upon him and healed him. Then all those who were sick in the island came and were healed when Paul laid his hands upon them. The island poured much honor and gifts upon Paul and the men and sent them on their way safely.

There are several things I want to you to see about this event. The angel had told Paul about being delivered from the storm but no mention was given about the snake that awaited him. The angel mentioned the island but nothing about what would happen on the island. God will sometimes reveal things about our future and what will happen, but

many times He does not. It is a total surprise. When that viper bit him, I am sure he was alarmed at first, but I believe he quickly thought back to the storm and how the angel promised he would be spared and be placed on this island. God did not do that for him to die of a snake bite! He also remembered the words of our Lord that believers would take up serpents and not be hurt. Paul placed his trust in God and the snake bite became harmless. In our lives the serpent will sometimes bite us on the hand. If you are truly serving Christ and performing His will, the serpent will come and bite your hand. He wants you to stop what you are doing! He wants to pump the venom of disappointment, bitterness, unbelief, shame, and unforgiveness into your system and shut you down. If you will trust God and shake off that snake, His bite will be harmless. Not only will the bite not be harmful to you, God will use it to bless you and others. When the devil starts messin' God starts blessin' -if you trust Him! Because of the viper incident word got around about Paul and because of the bite. Paul got to meet the ruler of the island and God got to reveal Himself through healing Publius's father. All the other sick were healed as well and most importantly they all received the gospel of Jesus Christ! Through the two puncture wounds on Paul's hand, God had the opportunity to be glorified and the kingdom built. **Paul took his hand that had the viper wound on it and placed it on the sick and the power of God flowed!** God wants to do the same with you my friend! Has the serpent bit your hand? He wants to take that serpent-bit hand and flow through it for His glory! Has the serpent bit you with sickness? God wants to be glorified by healing you! Has the serpent bit you by a lay-off? God wants to turn it around as an opportunity to reposition you for promotion and blessing! Whenever the serpent strikes, God wants to use that as a unique opportunity to reveal Himself and display His power and at the same time bless you in a way that could have not happened otherwise. Paul probably would have never met the ruler unless the viper had bit his hand. My friend, with every rose there is a thorn that comes with it. But the opposite is true! With every thorn, there is a rose ready to bud! Every time the enemy bites your hand, God is ready to use it to bless you if you handle it right. What you do when you are dealt a bad hand determines the outcome of that situation. If you will shake off the serpent and refuse his venom of bitterness, disappointment, unforgiveness, unbelief, and shame and trust in the promises of God then He will be magnified through your hand!

Col 4:18 This salutation by my own hand--Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

The ship Paul was on was headed to Rome when the storm cast them on the island of Malta. When they left Malta they went on to Rome. There Paul was placed into prison. Prison back then was different than today! Back in those days you were placed in prison and you wore chains on your hands in prison. Satan now had chains put on the hand he tried to stop with a snake bite! He once again thought he had stopped Paul's service to God! This was far from the truth! Paul continued in faith. He told the Philippians that he was convinced that God was turning this prison situation around for the furtherance of the gospel! **[Phil. 1:12]** He was right. Paul signed the prison letter of Colossians with his own hand and then said remember his chains. The hand that had been snake bit and now had a chain on it was used by God to write Holy Scripture that has blessed untold multitudes of Christians through the centuries! My friend, there is nothing the enemy has done to you that is stronger than God's ability to turn it to bless you, promote you, and use to build His kingdom! We can't stop the enemy from biting our hand, but we are in control of what we do when it happens. What are you going to do when you are dealt a bad hand?