

SERMON: THANKSGIVING ON DEATH ROW PAUL'S CHALLENGE TO EVERYONE

ACTS 28:15

(15) And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and the three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

Introduction

This verse taken in isolation may not imply much. However, viewed in the full context of what has happened to Apostle Paul and what is about to happen to him, it speaks volumes. Paul is on death row. He has been sentenced to death for preaching the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It was a long grueling ordeal that carried him from the circuitous court systems of the Jews and the Romans. He stood before the courts of Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and finally Nero. As a Roman citizen, he exercised his right to appeal his verdict to the Roman emperor, who was Nero at that time. This meant he had to travel to Rome under armed guards. This hazardous sea voyage lasted from August to March. There were many stops along the way. Some were intentional; one was caused by a storm which caused a shipwreck. On this stop he was bitten by a poisonous viper, but God sustained him.

Against all odds—a harrowing voyage, lost at sea, shipwreck, and a snake bite—Paul arrived on land near Rome. He landed at the port of Puteoli. At this point, he was still on the outskirts of Rome, but now it was simply a five-or six-day 130 mile trip up the Appian Way, the main thoroughfare to Rome.

Word spread quickly that Paul was on the mainland. Perhaps someone from the church at Puteoli made a quick, impromptu trip to Rome to inform their fellow Christians there that Paul was nearby. The Christians in Rome had never met Paul personally. They had only read his letter, which would become one of the most, if not the most, doctrinal epistles of the New Testament. They were excited about the thought of seeing him in person. They eagerly sent a delegation to greet and to support him.

On the Appian Way, forty-three miles south of Rome, lay a rest place known as Appii Forum, or “marketplace of Appius.” It was there that this group of Christians from Rome intercepted the apostle. As this group traveled another ten miles or so toward Rome, they encountered at the way station, known as “Three Taverns,” a second group of Christians, who had also come to greet the apostle. These two groups treated Paul like a king or like a modern-day rock star.

Paul was overtaken by these two welcoming committees. He was dumbfounded in a good way. His heart overflowed with joy and he was encouraged. Paul

immediately thanked God for those individuals who had made these long journeys on foot to greet him. He did not take it lightly.

Apostle Paul was a constant optimist. Even on death row, he could still count his many blessings and offer thanks unto God. He lived what he preached. He admonished others to give thanks in every situation and this situation proves that he not only “talked the talk” but he also “walked the walk.”

Paul challenges us to give thanks every day, but especially during this season. No matter what the situation, we should count our blessings and give thanks to God for His grace and His mercy.

Exposition

We Should Thank God For.....

- 1. The Essential Things Of Life.**
- 2. The Everyday Things Of Life.**
- 3. The Exceptional Things Of Life.**
- 4. The Excruciating Things Of Life.**
- 5. The Extravagant Things Of Life.**
- 6. The Evaded Things Of Life.**
- 7. The Eternal Things Of Life.**

Closing Thoughts

If Paul could be thankful on death row, how much more thankful should we be?

God’s unconditional love for us should be reciprocated with our unceasing praise and worship of him. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord! Praise we the Lord!

Related Scripture

1st Thessalonians 5:18

End Note

Tavern does not have the same connotation in English as it did in Latin. *Taberni* were probably a group of inns where travelers could rest, eat, and spend the night.

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