

Rome at Last - Acts 28:1-16

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[0:00] Well, hey man, it's great to see all of you. I especially am so excited to be here this morning, to see all your faces, to come back from a really busy, full summer for me and for the youth and for a bunch of others.

I was just telling somebody today, I'm somebody that likes adventure, likes to be spontaneous and go and not be so dependent on a calendar and routine. I cannot be more excited for routine in the fall.

That's saying a lot for me. So I'm excited to be here. I'm excited to continue to worship together on Sundays and to be present here with all of you.

So with that, we're gonna turn to Acts 28 this morning, Acts 28. This is the final chapter of the book. That a long journey that we've weaved in and out of cities and sermons and interactions and gospel victories as we've gone through this book and now we come to the final chapter.

The end of the story of the book of Acts, but not the end of the story of the gospel. So Acts 28, I wanna give us some context from last week as we come in.

[1:18] This is what happened leading up to our passage. I'm just gonna read 27, chapter 27, verse 39.

Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders then hoisting the foresail to the wind.

They made for the beach. Striking a reef, they ran the vessel around. The bow stuck and remained immovable on the stern, was being broken up by the surf.

The soldier's plan was to kill the prisoners lest any should swim away and escape. But Centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. And he ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and to make for land and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship.

And so it was that all were brought safely to land. That's where we landed last week. And I want to remind us that for Paul, in his missionary journeys and in the book of Acts as we've followed him and his companions through their stories and their journeys, we've noted throughout this series that Paul has this deep laden desire to see and be in Rome.

[2:42] And Acts 19 says this, now after these events Paul resolved from the spirit of Pastor Macedonia and Ikea to go to Jerusalem. And he used to say what he said, after having been there, I must also see Rome.

He's excited to go to Rome. He wants to go to Rome. And we know this that while in Corinth in the third missionary journey, Paul penned the great majestic epistle of the Romans to the Romans. He wrote that about 57 AD. And he arrives finally at Rome in our passage today after years of longing, two to three years later in 60 AD.

Listen to Paul's heart in Romans 1.15. He writes to them, he has a longing and desire to see his brothers and sisters in Rome. He says, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. Why is Paul so excited to get there?

And why is it taken 28 chapters till he finally gets there? Rome was the hub of the known world and the place and the seat of power and influence in the world. Naturally it's the place where Paul wanted and needed to be.

[4:01] He knew that the church in Rome would be a major player and major pillar for the expansion of the gospel to the nations, which is why he writes 16 beautiful chapters highlighting the beauty of the gospel for all people to the city and to this church.

So today's passage covers Luke's final travel log and acts. It's the end of the journey in terms of travel to a destination. Paul's concluding missionary voyage is to Rome and we're gonna get there

today.

Now what I love about this story is that it's about the final leg of the journey. Our passage literally ends this morning with and they were in Rome and he was in house arrest at a house.

So chapter 27 recounts that as on their way the ship runs aground and the ship is destroyed by the surf of the wave and they end up swimming, jumping the boat, they decide not to kill the prisoners, praise God and they jumped the boat and they swim to the land.

Now I want to offer to you this is basically Gilligan's Island, except instead of seven castaways there are 276 castaways. It's a lot of people, it's a big boat.

[5 : 18] Instead of billionaires and movie stars there are soldiers, criminals and a hyped up super evangelist named Paul. These 276 people jump and swim.

And now we enter 28 verse one, follow with me. After we were brought safely through we then learned that the island was called Malta.

After a crazy series of events, ship running aground, anchors thrown off, ship being destroyed slowly. Should we kill the prisoners? No, Paul's here.

Let's just let them jump off and swim. After all of this they swim to land, they wash up, 267 people, 76 people wash up on a beach shore, hold, tired, where are we?

You can just put yourself in their shoes. They land on an island and here's what I love. Verse two, the native people showed us unusual kindness.

[6 : 29] For they kindled a fire and welcomed us all because it had begun to rain and it was cold.

Now I believe our narrative today asks one big question that we need to answer as we look through it and read.

And the big question for you and for I today is this, why should we value hospitality in the church?

That's the question I believe this text gives an answer for.

Why should we value hospitality in the church? Read with me again, verse two. The native people showed us unusual kindness for they kindled the fire and welcomed us all because it had begun to rain and was cold.

They wash up on an island, this ragtag bunch of criminals, soldiers, evangelists, sailors and they run into a native people they did not know, they did not understand.

And these people show unusual kindness, meaning Luke, part of the journey, part of the team, he, his interpretation is this is not normal to wash up on an island with this many people and with soldiers who probably still have some element of soldier gear on and the native people to say, come on, let's go, you're cold and you're wet, we see that, let's make a giant bonfire.

[8 : 08] 276 people to be warmed by one fire, that is a massive fire. And I remember back when I played football, there was a certain team that would come to town every single year and they'd come to play us and we would always remember them because they were our rivals and after every single time we played them, we would take about 50 pallets collected from all over the city and we'd throw them on the field at the end of the game, this is back when our field was really, really well watered and they didn't care that we burned a giant bonfire on the field.

And we would torch this thing and I'm telling you it probably could have warmed 276 people, some of the biggest fires ever seen was that game we played Lost River. The people of Malta, don't just show kindness, they see, these are people who are tired, they're wet, they're cold, they have no energy, they're washed up on our island and we have a choice here.

And these pagan, godless people, very important and they decide to see them and express kindness and they gather wood, I'm sure, and heaps and bunches and they get a fire roasted, super, super cool.

Verse three, when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. Well the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to another, no doubt this man is a murderer, though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.

He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead, but when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune came to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

[9 : 58] This is a wild story. Shipwreck, washed ashore, tired, cold, natives, what are they going to do to us? Come on in, we'll make a fire, gather around, we'll be kind and love you with this way.

I'm sure everyone's like, this is crazy but cool. So then Paul goes and gathers sticks for the fire and he brings them back and lays them down and a viper comes out and bites his hand and I'm sure Paul is like, you've got to be kidding me.

This is a crazy story, but it's real, it's in the scriptures. And he pulls it out and does one of these moves. And I don't know about you, if you've ever been bitten by a snake, I've been bitten by a lot. My mother's here and she was very, very crazy and kind to allow me to have a gopher snake, a garter snake and a corn snake all growing up.

Two of them got out of the house, we never found them. My mom's awesome. But I remember one time the garter snake that I had was pregnant and we didn't know it, but every time you get, it would just bite you like crazy.

I'm like, what's with this thing? And finally it starts having babies and my mom said, Eric, let's let it go because it's wanting it out because she's trying to have her babies.

[11:10] But I remember that thing would bite me and I would have to pull its head and kind of do one of these because you can't just whip it off, it'll rip your skin, right? I love this. I love this picture because this is the picture of Paul.

This is what I have in my mind, I think Luke is trying to portray. He gets a bit and I'm sure in that moment Paul, a million miles a minute is thinking, that's a poisonous viper.

I just got bit by it. And because at this moment, I'm projecting this is what Paul's thinking, but Paul is probably doing this. I have traveled all across the world and I am miles away from Rome.

There's no possible way the Lord is going to end it here. I really believe that him flicking the snake like is his confidence, I'm gonna be fine.

God is going to take care of me, this is not gonna stop me. But what's really, really incredible is this. We see into the spiritual heart of the Maltese people.

[12:17] They've already shown kindness, which is incredible, but now we see their theology, their view of the divine. And I wanna offer to you today, every person in existence has a view of the divine, has a theology, whether they acknowledge it or not.

We all have a way of thinking about God and eternal things. And this passage speaks a great deal about hospitality and we're gonna get there, but it also talks about the nature of mankind and what we are created for, AKA, it highlights aspects of what it means to be made in God's image.

And there's three aspects of humanity that reveals God's image in us in this passage. And the first one we see right here is this, that the Imaggio dei or the image of God gives us this, that we possess an eternal, internal awareness of right and wrong.

We all possess an internal awareness of right and wrong, a conscience, if you will. Paul says in Romans one, there's every person has seen what it was made and they all are without excuse, but also in Romans three, all have turned aside to get it to become worthless.

No one does good, no, not even one. Romans 2.15, they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, talking about all people, not just believers.

[13:43] They show all of us that the work of the law is written on their hearts while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts, and the cues or even excuse them, meaning every person has an imprint, an innate understanding of right and wrong that God has placed.

And this is, Scott's gonna talk about this a little bit later today, a conscience. To me, the image of God means we all possess an internal awareness of right and wrong.

And the native people of Malta, they demonstrate this in multiple ways. First, they show unusual kindness.

Part of being made in the image of God means that all humans are able to do externally that which God would consider good.

It does not mean that every human is able to be status, to be good.

[15:06] There's no, none good, no, not one, none righteous. But because of that innate moral compass that God has given us, it is possible for nonbelievers to live pretty externally good lives.

And we need to be able to recognize the people of Malta demonstrate this. And I'm shocked at how many times in my life I look at nonbelievers that do not believe in Jesus, that are not saved by grace, that are not motivated by grace, that are not seeing Jesus, that don't live their lives with the perspective of Jesus on the cross.

For me, my Savior, my King, my God, and they live pretty upstanding lives. The reason why this is important is the goodness of the image of God in us, although deformed by the fall, can and does show up, even in the lives of unbelievers.

But it cannot save. My tennis instructor when I was growing up, his name is Frank. And Frank was such a kind man, he still is to this day.

He's very kind, he's very generous, he's very gentle with his words. He speaks with maturity, he speaks with wisdom, and he acts in such a way that all growing up, I saw my tennis instructor, Frank, as someone to be like.

[16:31] And to this day, there's many things about Frank that I said I want to be like Frank. And I remember my senior year, he would give all the senior students presents, and he gave me this cool Nike, he was sponsored by Nike, he's a big wig.

He had this cool Nike barber bag, all these pockets, and I remember he'd give it to me, my senior year, he said, here's a gift. Just a gift for you, I appreciate you, as a tennis player, I appreciate you as a person, thank you for being my student all these years, here's something I've given you. I remember taking this gift, just looking at it, being like, wow, this guy is so generous. And it empowered me towards the end of my senior year when I would believe for college and not be around Frank anymore.

It empowered me to ask him one of my lessons finally. Gained the courage to ask him, I said, Frank, you, you're a good guy, I like you, I see so many good things in you, you're so generous, you gave me that bag, I didn't have to do that, and I was just bragging on him, and I just said, Frank, what do you believe about God?

Because if it was up to me, I would see your out, your works, and I would say, this guy has to believe in God, right? And Frank responded in honesty, and he said, Eric, I don't believe in God.

[17:46] I do believe in spirits, and I believe in wellness, and I believe in peace, and I believe in those things, but I don't believe in God. Thanks for asking.

And to this day, when I think of him, I still pray for Frank, that God would grasp his heart, that he cannot be good before I good, truly good God.

Jesus says, why do you ask who I am good? There's only one who's good, well, he can never be good like God, but he is capable of demonstrating externally good deeds, and that's what the people of Malta show us.

We all possess an eternal awareness of right and wrong. Next, I want us to notice that Paul gathers a bundle of sticks. Now, if you're in here today and you say, I want to be a leader of some sort, I want to be a church leader, I want to be a pastor, I want to be an elder, I want to be a deacon, I want to be a missionary pilot, I want to be a CEO of a company, a president of a university, I want to be in leadership, or I want to be a leader in my home or my friend group.

If you want to be a leader of any kind, I want you to take a note here, because here's Paul, the great Paul, and great renown even among the Roman soldiers. And they gather around a fire, and they all start warming up, they're all cold and shivering.

[19:09] This picture in my mind, we went to a Mexico mission trip a long time ago, and Seth Farmer went and jumped in the ocean and came back and he was purple and shivering.

I've never seen him like that before. That's probably what it's like here, it's cold and rainy, they're all cold, they're warming up on the fire, and what does Paul do? Leader, pastor, visionary Paul, what does he do?

I'm gonna go gather sticks to warm the fire and keep it going for everyone else. He goes off and he got their sticks and he comes back. This is a really important lesson for leaders.

Your leadership via speaking, via example, all of it boils down into integrity, every part of who you are. And I look at Paul here and I say, wow, this is what Jesus would have done.

So then we see that the Maltese people, they express something about their belief of God. And this is the second part of the, what it means to be made in God's image.

[20:12] The first part we saw already is that we all possess an internal awareness of right and wrong. The second part of what it means to be the image of God, this is not a conclusive list, but just aspects in the passage is secondly, that we're all worshipers.

That God has created us in His image. We see the image of God, we see who He is and we have a need to worship.

Cause we are incomplete and we're not God. But we know of God. So we need to worship. And I would also argue not just that every person who's ever existed has a theology, has a view of God. Every person who's ever existed also has a need to worship and does worship something, everyone. And we see here in the passage that the Maltese people actually believe in an ancient form of karma.

AKA, they got off the boat, I'm summarizing here. They got off the boat in verse four. Somehow they made it to land. The gods were blessing them.

[21 : 12] Maybe they didn't deserve to die. And so the gods, whoever said, you get to go on the land cause you're all good people. But Paul got bit, uh-oh, he must be really bad.

Cause now karma's gonna bite him and kill him through a snake. Now we can be easy to dismiss this and just say, well, it's just karma. No, no, no, this is a view of theology and of the divinity that they understand innately, Romans one, but don't fully grasp.

They have an understanding of how the world works and how the powers of divinity operate in the world. And their view is this, that if you are a good person, the gods will make it easy for you and bless you.

If you're a bad person, you will get instant karma and you will be killed. Which means that in the Maltese understanding of God, anything good or bad, presumably, that happens would be immediately attributed to divine justice or mercy.

But here's what I love about what they illustrate. We're all worshipers, but that man is so fickle in our worship.

[22 : 21] Notice the Maltese people go from making judgments about Paul's guilt before the gods who are in power to worshipping him as a God.

Verse six, they were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when he had waited a long time and saw them as fortune came to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a God.

So their worship is gone from the divine powers that execute judgment in any instance. That's what we believe and we worship. To the very one that we thought was gonna die and deserved judgment is a God.

Let's worship him instead. This is the fickleness of mankind. And we share a common fickleness with outsiders, outsiders, insiders, unbelievers, believers.

We all are so prone to easily change our allegiance of our hearts to something other than the one true God. Outsiders change from God to God believing in whatever force they proceed to be giving the most meaning or comfort in their lives.

[23 : 25] This is a crew in Malta. This is true in Spokane. This is true everywhere in the world. The atheist is still a worshipper. Life's about reality, about facts.

For the atheist, science is the God they worship. The nihilist is still a worshipper. Life is meaningless, has no purpose. The God that the nihilist worships is a feeling of discontentment. That feeling of sadness, that's what I worship. The hedonist, life's about self-indulgence. They worship pleasure. Every viewpoint, every person, every single idea about what life is or what I'm gonna live it by is an act of worship.

This is where idolatry comes from. Worshiping the created, created things rather than the creator. But unfortunately, if we're honest, as believers, we too can so easily fall prey to changing our allegiance from the one true God to what he has created.

And in his divine grace in our lives, he touches us and brings us back and draws us back via repentance.

[24 : 36] But praise be to God that he remains faithful even when we are unfaithful and we idolize the very things that are meant to point us to God. Now, verse seven.

Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island named Publis who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.

It happened that the father of Publis lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed and putting his hands on him. He healed him. And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured.

They also honored us greatly. And when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed. This is incredible. People of Malta go from, here's a bonfire for you to warm you up and to love you and serve you in your affliction to the chief saying, come, reside with me in my probably

big house or big mansion being the ruler of the island designated by the Romans. Come and joy, I'll entertain you. I'll give you food, water, lodging for three days. This is amazing. I can guarantee you, everyone on that boat did not expect any of this hospitality, let alone all of it. [26 : 01] And in this, during these three days, residing in Publis's mansion house being entertained and shown hospitality, here's what Paul does.

He sees that his father is sick with fever and dysentery. There was a bacteria on Malta that was known to cause all sorts of gastrial problems.

And Paul says this visited him and prayed and putting his hands on him, he healed him. And what's so amazing about this is he doesn't just visit this man, this father of the one that's shown hospitality. He says he prays before he puts hands on him and heals him. And the reason why I believe Paul prays before the healing is because he knows who has the power to heal. It's not Paul. Who is the one who has the power to heal?

It's God. So I'm gonna put my hands on you. I'm gonna show everyone in this room. I'm gonna display the power of God through this healing. Lord, heal this man.

[27 : 08] It's God. And he heals. And what happens is incredible. All the people, they brought all who had diseases and they came and they were cured and the language here suggests that it's a line, a tribe of people, massive tribe and line of people that line up and Paul heals with the power of God on this island.

This is incredible passage. Fire to warm you up, hospitality. We don't know you, but come join us. Let me heal while I'm here. It's incredible. Everything that's happening so far is just wild.

And then it says this at the end. They also honored us greatly. And when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed. Now Malta was not known for its wealth.

Wasn't known for its prestige in the empire. But as they're getting ready to leave, they found another boat. It says this, they put on board whatever we needed.

And this implies, honored us greatly, implies a reckless abandon to meet the needs and then some. Reckless abandon.

[28 : 22] The picture is quite literally, let me run to my house and get all my stuff that I think I love, but you might need on your journey. Let me get that for you. Take this, please, just take it. Well, I'm sure at some point they turn people away.

We can't take anymore. Our ship is too bogged down. It's heavy. This is incredible. This is a crazy picture. Through all that's happened, all that God has done, He's shown Himself through hospitality, both from the unbelievers and through Paul and His healing.

There's this incredible response to love them as they go. And here's what I wanna say. Hospitality is very, very important because a truly hospitable experience where you were treated with kindness and someone sacrificed and loved you eagerly with absolute reckless abandon, those experiences stick with you.

I remember one time me and my wife were driving down to Medford, it's about a 10-hour drive.

Early when we were married. And I remember the day before I called my uncle Kurt, who lives in Central Oregon, I said, hey, it's a long drive.

We haven't seen you guys. Oh, my wife doesn't really know you that well. I love you guys and we'd love to stay with you just for a night, if that'd be possible. Do you think that'd be possible? And I recognize none of you know my uncle Kurt.

[29 : 38] Maybe you do. Kurt and his wife, Dinah, are probably some of those hospitable people I've ever met. And he goes, yes, yeah, we'd love to have you. Yeah, we're gonna have the room ready for you.

And he said, what do you need? You need anything? Like, we won't be there tomorrow. I don't know, we'll text you around. Like, okay, we're gonna be ready for you. We're so excited to see you. All right, bye. So we show up, no joke.

We show up and Kurt has everything laid out in our room. And then he tells me as Pauline says, okay, our bed is really nice. We have a very nice padded gel wall. It's a really nice bed.

And I got a great pillow. You guys, you want to take our bed? You can have it. We'll change the sheets out. You can stay in our bed and we'll stay. I want you to do that. And I'm like, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Kurt, we can do your guest room, that's fine.

Are you sure? My bed is really nice. And you're gonna love it. You're gonna great night's sleep. Are you sure? This is how Kurt works. Now we're fine, all right, all right. So here's your towels, all your

stuff. You got less or anything you need.

[30 : 35] In the middle of the night, you can knock on our door. We'll be ready. Okay, got it. Thank you, Kurt. This is incredible. My wife is just like, this guy is awesome. I know. So we go to bed, we wake up the next morning.

We're in no rush. I am not exaggerating. I come into the kitchen with my wife. There's four of us. Kurt, Dinah, me and my wife. He has at least 20 pieces of bacon already cooked.

About two dozen eggs, batched up. Cheese, salt, pepper, about six or seven pieces of toast ready to rock. He's got coffee brewing.

He's making like really nice espresso in his machine. I don't even know how he does it. There's fruit cut up. They woke up early to do all of this and probably took hour or two hours to get this all ready. And I'm just like, Kurt, we are not gonna eat 20 pieces of bacon. Oh, I know, I just encased though. I never know. I wanna make sure you're full.

[31 : 31] So we eat our meal and we get ready to leave. We're so overwhelmed. He gets a bag together of waters and sodas and trail mix. Our journey's three hours away.

We're ready. We are ready to travel to the East Coast. You take this and then I'm not joking. Eric, it's kind of cold outside. Do you have a jacket? I'm like, no, I didn't bring one. We're in a car. There's a heater, right?

Here, take this jacket. To this day, I still have this jacket in my closet. My wife's been begging me to get rid of it. But I can't. It's a marker of hospitality. Take my jacket and I'm like, okay, how am I gonna get back to you? Keep it. This is Kurt.

But we get in the car and we're driving and I'm like, they're amazing. But here's what I love about it. True hospitality, true warmth, kindness, to go above and beyond, to do anything and everything to bless someone else.

It sticks with the person. I will never forget that experience. I'm sure my wife won't either. It's what I love about hospitality. It sticks with the person.

[32 : 34] Something about kindness, sacrificial love and kindness sticks with us. And I can only imagine that for both the Maltese people, the hospitality and kindness that Paul showed them, and for Paul and all the people on this ship, the hospitality they showed them, it sticks with them.

Verse 11, after three months, we set sail on a ship that had wintered in the island, the ship of Alexandria with the twin gods as a figurehead. Putting it at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days and from there we made a circuit and arrived at Regium.

And after one day, a south wind spring up and on the second day we came to Putioli. There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days.

Not only do the Maltese people have a theology and view of the divine, but who else does? The Romans. Did you see? On the head of the ship, twin gods as the figurehead.

Caster and Pollux were the gods. You can see them tonight in the night sky. Two stars thought to be gods that bless voyage on the head of a Roman ship.

[33 : 53] We all are worshipers. And now with me in verse 14, and so we came to Rome.

Finally, Paul has made it to the Roman province. The years of journey have brought him this gleeful destination, the very same destination that would eventually perpetrate his death.

And he's excited. Verse 15, the brothers were there and they heard us and they came as far from the form of Apius and three taverns to meet us and on seeing them, Paul vanked God and took courage.

And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself with a soldier who guarded him. Notice there's more hospitality to be had. It says the form of Apius and the three taverns, two outskirt Roman towns that nobody knew about or really cared about.

But what does it say? As they're traveling across the land, now they're off a ship, they're traveling into the heart of Rome, Christians from the two towns, two areas, form of Apius and three taverns, which are not the same, they're different.

[34 : 58] Christians from both these places converge and meet Paul on the road as he's going to Rome. Why? Because these believers were entouched deeply by Paul's Roman epistle.

Have you been touched by Paul's Roman epistle? Have you read the book to the Romans and thought, my God is incredible? For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for there's the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.

And in 623, the wait is to sin his death, but the gift of God is eternal life and Christ Jesus our Lord. Maybe one of those verses, somebody's hanging on to that saying, it's incredible, I've got to thank this man for writing this, that I would be saved.

His believers are touched by Paul, they hear of his coming and they go to meet him and encourage him as brothers and sisters. Here's what I love, what does it say? It says that Paul on seeing them thanked God and took courage.

We are called to encourage and to show hospitality. The last part of the image of God here is that we are all made for community.

[36 : 24] Every player in this story experiences some sort of community and fellowship. This is one of the few passages in all of Acts in which everyone gets along great regardless of their background.

The pagan Maltese barbarians on the island get along great with the Roman soldiers, get along great with the Christian evangelists. They all are getting together and they're all getting along and they're all experiencing this sort of weird, multifaceted community between people with different worldviews and it doesn't make sense, but it's incredible.

This passage brings this all together and it shows us that we're all made for community. The Maltese believers or the Maltese unbelievers, the Roman soldiers, the sailors at sea and Paul and his companions all experience something cool.

Community. And furthermore, the church fellowships you saw in Putioli and Appius and three taverns, Christians welcome Paul, receive him. They walk all day to meet him on the road.

There's hospitality here and it demonstrates our built in need for community, especially Christian community. Community. So we asked a question at the beginning of this.

[37 : 37] Why should we value hospitality in the church? Now, hospitality, biblically, the term is philo-xenia. Philo-xenia, which means love towards strangers.

Now throughout the New Testament, Christians are called to show hospitality to non-believers, Christian leaders, elders, deacons are called to be hospitable and we're called to show hospitality to one another.

But the principle of philo-xenia is love towards the other. Someone who is different, outsiders. And the principle of that applies in the church because it's the same term, he says show hospitality to one another.

In other words, I believe a way to translate that is show a love towards those in the church who still may be somewhat different than you. And your differences in the way you see things, love.

But specifically love towards strangers. Philo is the word for love and philo is the word for love. And philo is the word for love. Philo is the word for love and xenia.

[38 : 49] You guys know the xenophobic, right? Xenia is stranger or the other. So why should we value hospitality in the church? What does this passage have to do with that?

Hospitality, love towards strangers is the common language of kindness that everyone understands. That's why we should care about it.

It is a natural means to the work of the gospel to be hospitable. Hospitality builds bridges toward gospel conversations.

To show love toward a stranger is to build a bridge that says walk over, I will love you, I'll care for you, I will make you 20 pieces of bacon.

I'll give you the coat from my closet. I'll let you sleep in my bed so that as you walk across, I can love you in this way. And maybe we can have a relationship that leads to talking about Jesus.

[39 : 55] Why should we value hospitality in the church? Everyone understands the language of hospitality. No one doesn't like hospitality. It builds bridges toward gospel conversations. We've seen in the text how there's three aspects of God's image that are latent here.

We all possess an internal awareness of right and wrong. We all are worshipers, we're all made for community. Here's the great thing. Hospitality brings all of these aspects together. We speak to the image of God residing in all peoples when we demonstrate sacrificial hospitality.

You can speak to the person who has an awareness of right and wrong. Frank in my situation, I can speak to him by being hospitable. I can speak to the fact that we're all worshipers by being hospitable and showing God to somebody.

We can speak to the fact that we're all made for community by providing others into community. And earthly hospitality, that which we're called to share and experience in the church and

demonstrate to one another love, kindness, but also to the world.

Love, kindness is reflective of God's hospitality. Earthly hospitality is only as good as God's hospitality. It's reflective of God's hospitality.

[41 : 09] What do I mean by that? God's hospitality is the gospel. Here's what it means that God is the ultimate hospitable presence in the world.

It's this biblical hospitality. If it's love of strangers, then the greatest form of hospitality is the message of the gospel because why?

You and I. We're strangers to God. We're far off. Made in His image, yes, but that image was deformed.

And as strangers, as wanderers, as foreigners in a world and in a land and an experience that was not meant to be, God sees you, He sees me.

He says, I want to know them. I want to know you. Here's my son. I'm gonna demonstrate a love toward you, stranger. It's practical, it's observable, it's real, and that's what Jesus says.

[42 : 17] That's what the cross says. And although Luke never records Paul preaching the gospel in this passage, did you notice that? Missed all the healings, all the opportunities, all of the incredible build relationships, bridges built with the Maltese people, even with the Romans, missed all of that.

Luke never says he preached Christ. And we have to wrestle with that and we can ask questions, but here's what I want to say. Although Paul's never recorded preaching the gospel, we know without a shadow of a doubt that gospel bridges were built for him and others to have when some conversations.

You're telling me the Maltese chief and the people wouldn't listen to him at all when he talks about Jesus after all they had experienced and their loved ones getting healed. Did you notice Paul's healings lead to the good of the natives, the good of the Roman soldiers, because the natives then give supplies to the Romans and send them well.

Hospitality is good for all people and it increases the probability of a gospel conversation, which is why we do it. All of the hospitality shown by all of the different individuals in this passage point us to this, that as we love the stranger, love the other in the world and in the church even, as we do this together, we're building bridges to talk about Jesus.

Four areas that I want us to focus on when it comes to hospitality. I want to focus on the fact that four areas that I want us to focus on when it comes to hospitality. And maybe some of these you guys, you're really good at.

[43 : 57] You say this and you're like, Lord, by your grace and power, I've done that. Maybe there's one of these that you want to work on. There's a lot that I want to work on. First is your home.

Hosting meals, hosting gatherings, inviting people into community, inviting a co-worker, inviting somebody you know at your gym or your club that doesn't know Christ, you want to get to know them so you offer a non-threatening environment of food.

Everyone likes food, maybe fire, weird, but specific application. Come sit in our backyard, let's enjoy some food, conversation around a fire.

Using your home as a sanctuary of peace and grace to your neighbors. Me and Brooke have made it a goal to get to know our neighbors better. Got a lot of transient people, people selling, buying, and we didn't even know who lives next to them or it's been so crazy.

We want to make it a goal that everybody would know. The Morse House is a place I can find peace. Second is your calendar. In what ways does your calendar show your value of doing life with believers?

Being hospitable to believers, but also, in what ways does your calendar reveal your value of rubbing shoulders with non-believers? Me, my wife and Scott just came back from the church planning assessment conference and there's a lot there.

[45 : 20] But the big, massive takeaway that I personally took was that I do not rub shoulders enough with non-believers. I don't know that I would call myself hospitable, loving of strangers.

I need to grow in this. I look at my calendar, where are they? Where's the lost? Midweek ministries, where are we pouring into the church?

Where are we investing in the people of God? Third is your paycheck. Your paycheck is something that you can use and render to God's service.

Providing a meal for others. We're gonna make a meal, it's gonna be great, like curtain diner, we're gonna go all out, we're gonna do this that people will remember the hospitality, the experience that our house, that draws them into relationship and a gospel bridge to Christ.

Buying or creating gifts, my wife is incredible at this. Brooke is the greatest gift kid I've ever met. She crafts gifts, she thinks of gifts, I'm like, how did you think of that? And she makes it, she sends it off with no applause.

[46 : 25] No one knows, except for the person that received it and their incredible gifts. It's a hospitable deed she's doing. Generosity to meet others' needs. Fourth, your resume.

What specific talents do you have? Look at your resume and say, I could use that to be hospitable to somebody who needs a service or an act or an piece of advice or just a friend.

How has your work experience has allowed you to speak in and invite others into hospitable situations and environments where you can serve them and love them, your education.

And then lastly, your church. Spiritual gifts. Although hospitality is not listed as a spiritual gift, the virtues needed to do hospitality are there.

As a church, serving, generosity, helping, mercy, and others all contribute to gospel, beacon of light, hospitality to the world.

[47 : 24] It's fourth memorial place where a love of strangers is clearly seen. Do we see the other as made in the image of God?

Because if we do, when the other comes in, we will resist judgment. We will see the image of God in that person is broken on the outside as they may look or even on the inside.

And we will say, God made this person, loves them deeply and has created them with a desire for community and worship. I want to invite them.

I wanna do something with them. I wanna do life with this. I wanna get to know them so that a bridge can be built where Jesus can be known. Tonight, we have, this afternoon, we have a church barbecue.

And I'm grateful for Melissa and all those that serve to serve us with hospitality, to do this very thing in the body of Christ, but also I pray that as we bring people into this community that we're inviting and we're welcoming others in, the outsiders, we're loving them by bringing them in, they can come to something like a church barbecue and stand in line and talk to you or I or us and be encouraged and strengthened to know more and to want to hear about Jesus from us.

[48 : 48] That's what it means to be a hospitable church. So church, finally, because of Christ, we are known. But we were once not known. Ask God for a heart that desires to show love to strangers as a means to expressing the great identity changing heart transforming light of the gospel.

Let's pray. Jesus, we thank you that even in the world of unbelievers, Lord, you still show your grace and your goodness, the receive from the malteased people that goodness is there.

Not in nature, not in status, but they are able to express hospitality. And God, I pray that as Paul expresses hospitality, as the believers that meet and greet Paul and the other companions he's traveling with us, they meet them with hospitality, that we would see the thread of hospitality and love toward the other in this passage.

And namely, most of all, we'd see it in your son. Lord, I thank you that Jesus perfectly and expertly models what it means to love the other.

To spend time getting to know, blessing, loving, honoring those who are far from you. Thank you that your son did this, not just in his life with his words and his deeds, but he also did this on the cross by inviting us, those who were outside who were not known, inviting us to be known.

[50 : 24] I pray that we would exemplify this. In our lives and as a church, and you may pray, amen.