SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Week of November 1, 2026 ***Acts 28:1-16***

28 After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. 2 The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. 3 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. 4 When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." 5 He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 6 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 come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god. 7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. 8 It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him. 9 And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. 10 They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed. 11 After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead. 12 Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. 13 And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. 14 There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome. 15 And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. 16 And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.

1. No matter who we are - new believer in Christ, or the Apostle Paul himself - we all need help and encouragement. When do you think you need the most encouragement? Under what circumstances? How has God encouraged you most in those times?
2. In our passage this week, God encourages Paul through unusual and *potent* kindness. Describe a time when someone was *unusually* kind to you. What do you think was at the core - the essence - of this *potent* kindness? Is this sort of kindness repeatable and if so, how can you bless others with it?
3. When Paul is bitten by the viper, the locals immediately attribute this to "karma" (or "bachi" in local terms). They assumed he was guilty of murder; for he survived the shipwreck only to be killed by a snake. What do you think is the underlying belief system behind such thinking? If a close friend or relative said something similar to you (i.e. "what goes around comes around") how could you use this as an opening to share the Gospel?
4. Based on the sermon, this snippet of the story, where Paul is collecting wood and is bitten by the snake, gives us a glimpse into Paul's deep humility and strong faith. Elaborate on this as best you can.
5. After two years of imprisonment and then nearly dying at sea, Paul miraculously heals Publius' father and then many others who had diseases. If you were Paul, describe how encouraging this would have been for you and explain why. Have you ever experienced this kind of encouragement?
6. Why is Christian fellowship necessary for the believer? Building strong Christian relationships can be hard. But it's harder to go through life without them. What makes building relationships difficult and what are some practical ways to develop them?
7. At the end of v.14, it says, "And so we came to Rome" Why is this short phrase so significant, especially in light of all that the apostle Paul endured to get there?