

Becoming A Person Of Influence **Acts 28:1-10**

Introduction:

1. The apostle Paul was on his way to Rome to stand trial before Caesar. In chapter 27, we learned how Paul and over 200 other passengers encountered a terrible storm at sea. Although the ship was completely torn apart, all the people made it safely to land. 27:44
2. They ended up on the island of Melita (modern-day Malta). One of the northern inlets of the island is called St. Paul's Bay, because tradition says that this is where the shipwreck occurred. They remained there for three months. 28:1, 11
3. Although Paul had never met these people previously, in only three months Paul became quite an influence on these island people. This is clear from the text, but also history.
 - Supposedly Christianity abounded on this island for a number of centuries after Paul's visit.
4. There are people of influence in government, politics, business, sports, and entertainment. But a Christian should influence people towards Jesus Christ. Paul did so and so should we. This is God's plan. Wherever you are and in whatever you do.
 - We do influence people whether we realize it or not, but is it for Jesus?
5. Do we wield much influence with those around us for Jesus Christ? Was there a person who influenced you for Christ? You can do the same! How can you become a person of influence for Jesus Christ? Let's look into this text and learn from the apostle Paul.

First, by possessing a servant's heart – vs. 1-3

1. These island people were very kind and gracious to Paul and the others. vs. 2
2. In verse 3, we see Paul gathering a bundle of sticks for the fire.
 - Though Paul had become very prominent on the ship, he still was humble enough to do the lowly task of gathering sticks.
 - He didn't expect the people of Melita to do it, or some of the other prisoners from the ship. He possessed the heart of a servant.
3. This principle contradicts the thinking of many people. Some believe that you must flex your own muscles, toot your own horn, and build yourself up in the eyes of others if you are to possess great influence.
4. But this is not the way of Christ. Jesus Christ has exercised more influence over this earth than any other man who ever lived, yet notice the instruction He gives to His disciples in Matthew 20:26-28.

Second, by understanding that trials often increase our influence – vs. 3

1. While Paul is performing a good deed, a tragic incident occurs. A venomous snake, which must have been in his bundle of wood, attacks Paul and strikes him on the hand.
2. There is no record that Paul became distraught or distressed. He simply flings the beast into the fire. vs. 5
3. Paul was doing a good deed, yet he was attacked and bitten by a poisonous snake. Many Christians have a difficult time understanding why they encounter affliction while trying to do good. This is life. This is the earth we live on that is under the curse of sin.
4. But, as was the case here, trials (coupled with our godly response) often increase our influence for Jesus Christ.
 - When Paul didn't die from this deadly snake bite, the people realized there was something special about Paul. What an open door to influence these people for Jesus.
 - Paul went from being a prisoner (a nobody) to being the most notable man on the island **because** of this trial. He now had a platform to speak for Christ!
5. How often God can use our afflictions to enlarge our work for Him, to open up doors that otherwise would have remained closed, and to reach more people for Christ!

Third, by remaining the same, regardless of public opinion – vs. 4-6

1. In verse 4, the people of Melita curse Paul as a murderer. In verse 5, they change their minds and proclaim him to be a god. In a matter of minutes, he goes from being a murderer to a god.
2. Yet we see Paul unchanged through it all. He didn't become irate when they labeled him a murderer, and he didn't exploit the situation when they believed him to be a god.
3. Public opinion can be very fickle.
 - **Illustration:** Jesus Christ – One day they were chanting, "*Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel.*" Before the week was over, they were shouting, "*Crucify Him, crucify Him.*"
4. A wise Christian doesn't base his life and decisions on public opinion, but rather on God's Word. 2 Timothy 3:13-14, 4:2-5
5. As you live your life unto Christ, some people will admire you and attempt to exalt you too highly. Don't believe it!
6. There will be others who will judge and criticize you. Do not allow this to deter you. Just be consistent. While not everyone will love you, most people will respect you.
7. Christians who try to mold their lives to fit whatever crowd they're in will never become people of influence. People may **like** you, but deep down they won't **respect** you.

Fourth, by using their God-given gifts to touch the lives of others – vs. 7-10

1. Paul was invited to stay with Publius, the governor of the island. Instead of using these luxuries as a time to kick back and relax, Paul used them as an opportunity to serve the Lord. vs. 8-9
2. As an apostle in the Acts time period, Paul possessed the sign gift of healing. Rather than taking a three-month vacation on this island, Paul was ever-ready to use his God-given gifts to minister to others.
3. Every believer has been given spiritual gifts from the hand of God, and has a choice to make:
 - Bury the gifts by not using them.
 - Seek to bless others by using the gifts.
4. Paul exhorted Timothy to “*stir up*” his gifts and “*neglect not*” his gifts. 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 4:14
5. A person that will influence others for Christ does not allow God-given gifts to lie dormant, but uses those gifts to touch the lives of others. They don’t use their gifts to build themselves up, but to bless others.
 - What if Paul would have sat around and allowed these people to die one by one, knowing he could help them? You would say, “That’s terrible.” Yes, but what about you? What if you have the gift of teaching, or administration, or exhorting, etc., and don’t use it?
6. It is obvious that Paul’s influence was great. Notice the send-off these island people gave to Paul and his company. vs. 10

In Conclusion:

1. What about you today? How is your influence for Jesus Christ – at home, at work, on the ball team, etc.?
2. You can make a difference in other people’s lives, just like Paul did.