**Sermon Title: Shake it Off**

**Acts 28:1-10 (NIV)**

**Pastor Raphael Warnock**

**November 13, 2022**

**Scripture**

*Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta.****2****The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.****3****Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand.****4****When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, “This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live.”****5****But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects.****6****The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.*

**Sermon Summary**

The idea of keeping adversity and adversaries in their proper perspectives is central to understanding the text under consideration. Pastor Warnock translates the snakebite experiences of the Apostle Paul into a metaphor for us all to process our own adversities or “snakebite” experiences. Snakebites are like the oppositions we encounter in life as we attempt to accomplish our goals, realize our dreams, and manifest our destinies.

Some people face stagnation due to the fear of being bitten. They limit themselves by asking fearful questions such as: Why launch out? or why risk failure when the possibility of being bitten looms ahead? Others who have experienced the pains of being bitten convince themselves the risks of trying again outweighed the fruits of potential success. The pains we feel from these bites can be debilitating, discouraging, and sometimes devastating if we do not find the strength or proper perspective to shake it off.

While on the Island of Malta and enroute to Rome, the Apostle Paul was bitten by a Viper, but his destiny propelled him to shake off the snake, the venom and those who expected him die. He not only overcame the snake bite but also changed his adversaries’ perspectives about him. Paul experiences help us visualize how to overcome sudden and potentially fatal attacks and oppositions as we press-on in the service of God. He was neither a murderer that is, to be blamed for being bitten or a god that is to be worshipped for his victory. Like us, Paul was a person with a purpose that propelled him to Rome where his destiny was revealed.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Do you believe God uses adversities to propel us to our destinies? Why does it have to hurt?
2. What can you say about your personal destiny that helps you shake off snakebites (troubles, adversaries)?
3. How does Paul’s calm response to the viper bite prepare you for your next encounter with negative things, adversities, fear, etc.?
4. How does Paul’s response to the local onlookers speak to you? Do you handle people in a similar way?
5. Have previous bad experiences prevented you from pursuing your goals? How so? What are you going to do now?