

PAUL'S TRIALS (3)

ACTS 27, 28



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Paul's Trials (3): Acts 27, 28
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Introduction to Acts 27, 28

Our study of the book of Acts and the ongoing work of Christ comes to an end, as Paul arrives in Rome, and sets up shop for the Gospel.

Sure, he's under house arrest, awaiting trial before the emperor, but he's not about to let that keep him from proclaiming Christ and His Kingdom as often as he can.

Paul was warmly received by the brethren in Rome, and here we see the power of the Spirit at work in the ongoing work of Christ, building His churches into one Body worldwide. Many important lessons are ahead for us in these two chapters, to embolden our witness and encourage our souls.

We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Setting Sail

Pray Psalm 12.6, 7.

The words of the LORD *are* pure words,
Like silver tried in a furnace of earth,
Purified seven times.
You shall keep them, O LORD,
You shall preserve them from this generation forever.

Sing Psalm 12.6, 7.

(Hamburg: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*)

Your words are pure and proven true, like silver seven times refined.
You will preserve Your Word ever new, and keep the heart to You inclined.

Read and mediate on Acts 27.1-12.

Preparation

1. How was Paul treated on this leg of his journey to Rome?
2. What advice did Paul give to the helmsman and the centurion?

Meditation

This passage is vintage Luke, chock full of historical and geographical details and hints of things to come. If we could hear background music for the outset of this voyage to Rome, it would be light and hopeful to begin with, as Paul and his companions are treated kindly and he is able to visit with some friends.

Everything is looking promising, except for an ominous note, set in a minor key with a kind of low rumbling, which begins to build. Luke notes that “the winds were contrary” as they set off (v. 4). Right. We haven’t seen anything yet. They “sailed slowly” “and arrived with difficulty” because the wind was “not permitting” them to make good headway (v. 7). Are we getting it? This is going to get worse before it gets better. The voyage was becoming “dangerous” (v. 9), and Paul decided to weigh in on the wisdom of continuing (v. 10).

Paul’s concern here is not for himself: He knows he’s going to get to Rome. He’s looking out for the whole “society” of people on this journey, seeking their *shalom* and safety (cf. Jer. 29.7). He doesn’t preach here or pound a pulpit. He simply injects his opinion and advice in a way others can understand and consider. This vessel had become Paul’s Personal Mission Field for the time, and he was determined to do his best to try and keep it within the bounds of God’s gracious provision and protection.

The centurion’s decision to press on is reasonable (v. 11), given that the helmsman and owner of the ship were confident they could make it to Crete, and thus complete an important leg of the journey. But what may be *reasonable* is not always *wise*.

We will see the apostle Paul play an important role in these final two chapters of Acts. He will provide us with an excellent example about rising above our trials and the role of faith and the believing community amid an age of *reasonable* but *unwise* people, who are destroying themselves because they refuse to heed the voice of the Lord. Lesson 1: Don’t be afraid to speak up on matters of importance, when the chosen course seems unwise and likely *not* to be for the benefit of the society.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“This vessel had become Paul’s Personal Mission field for the time, and he was determined to do his best to try and keep it within the bounds of God’s gracious provision and protection.”

Do we have that same belief about where we are at any given time? Do we see everywhere we are as our Personal Mission Field? At work, standing in line, waiting for whatever, at home, at church, at school, at the grocery store, at the doctor’s office, cooking, cleaning, cutting the grass, painting, writing, at the post office, at the hardware store, in our car, walking in the neighborhood, anywhere, and everywhere we are always in our Personal Mission Field. Working for the Kingdom and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. On duty at all times.

And those in our care need to be reminded to “Stay always within the boundaries where God’s love can reach and bless you.” “Wait patiently for the eternal life that our Lord Jesus Christ in His mercy is going to give you” (Jude 21 TLB).

And then we are to:

“Try to help those who argue against you.”

“Be merciful to those who doubt.”

“Save some by snatching them as from the very flames of hell itself.”

“And as for others, help them to find the Lord by being kind to them.”

“Be careful that you yourselves aren’t pulled along into their sins.”

“Hate every trace of their sin while being merciful to them as sinners.” (Jude 22, 23 TLB)

As Moses instructed the children of Israel to work the Personal Mission Field of their home, he also gives us insight into how we should conduct business in ours: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength...these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut. 6.5-9).

In other words, the Word of God should be in our hearts, and bubbling out of our hearts, always. Anywhere and everywhere. “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4.2).

Whatever vessel we happen to be in today.

For reflection

1. We frequently use the word “work” in reference to your Personal Mission Field. What do you understand by that?
2. What does it mean for you to seek the *shalom* of the people in your Personal Mission Field?
3. How does “the world” try to prevent or discourage you from taking seriously your calling to work your Personal Mission Field?

*Sailors must make the best of the wind: and so must we all in our passage over the ocean of this world. When the winds are contrary, yet we must be getting forward as well as we can. Many who are not driven backward by cross providences, do not get forward by favorable providences. And many real Christians complain as to the concerns of their souls, that they have much ado to keep their ground. Every fair haven is not a safe haven. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 27.1-11**

Pray Psalm 12.1-5.

Pray that God will protect you from the lies of the evil one, and that He will rise up and be present to keep

you through every temptation and trial, trusting and rejoicing in Him.

Sing Psalm 12.1-5.

(Hamburg: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross)

Help, Lord! The godly cease to be; they who believe in Christ are few.
Falsely the wicked confidently flatter, deceive, and mock Your truth.

Stop, Lord, the lips that utter lies, all those who speak with boasting tongue!
See how Your holy Word they despise, while their own praises they have sung.

Rise up, O Lord, and rescue all Your precious children sore distressed.
Save those who faithfully on You call; grant them deliv'rance, peace, and rest.

2 Told Ya So!

Pray Psalm 25.1-3.

To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
O my God, I trust in You;
Let me not be ashamed;
Let not my enemies triumph over me.
Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed;
Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause.

Sing Psalm 25.1-3.

(Festal Song: [Revive Thy Work, O Lord](#))

I lift my soul to You; O Lord, in You I trust.
Let me not come to shame, nor let my foes o'er me exult.

All they who wait on You shall never come to shame;
yet they to shame shall come who stand against Your holy Name.

Read Acts 27.1-26; meditate on verses 13-26.

Preparation

1. What happened to the ship, and how did the crew respond?
2. What was Paul's advice to them?

Meditation

Our background musical score again takes up a light and hopeful motif, as a gentle south wind encourages the helmsman and crew to begin their journey past Crete (v. 13). But even as they cleared the port, we can hear the rumbling, ominous, motif resuming and gathering strength. Suddenly a storm engulfed the ship, making it impossible to sail (vv. 14, 15). All they could do was let the storm drive them along as they strengthened the ship and made it as light as possible, so that it would ride the waves rather than be pounded by them (vv. 16-19).

Apparently, even Paul's companions were beginning to lose hope (v. 20). But Paul was not afraid. As he began to speak, there was no gloating or chiding in his voice (v. 21). A simple, "I told ya so!" was enough before he moved on to give them hope and advice.

Paul figured his little "society" was so desperate for encouragement and hope that he could speak freely about the things of the Lord and mention the visitation of an angel without fear of being scorned (vv. 22-25). He held out the promise of deliverance for all, though not without some significant loss and turmoil, the result of their unwise choice to sail in the wrong season (v. 26).

Just because people are stubborn and unwise doesn't mean we stop caring for them or seeking to do good works for them. Paul stood bold and confident on the deck, encouraging the fearful and counseling them according to the wisdom of God. We should respond like Paul when it comes to offering help in troubled times.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The angel of God said, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has

granted you all those who sail with you” (Acts 27.24).

Two things stand out in this word from the angel. First, he was affirming to Paul that he still needed to go to Rome, so he would survive this adventure. But second, and most astonishing, is that Paul must have been praying for the safety of his little “society”. His Personal Mission Field.

He wasn't so focused on the importance of his arrival in Rome that he failed to consider the importance of the people he was with at that moment. “God has granted you all those who sail with you.” Amidst all the turmoil of the exceedingly tempestuous headwind, Paul was praying not only for his own safety and that of his traveling companions, but for the ship's crew and the other prisoners. Who does that? Only those who are trusting fully in God and know where they are going.

We see Paul's trust in the care of God, Who had said to him, “you must also bear witness at Rome” (Acts 23.11). Paul knew Him Who commanded the wind and the sea, and Whom they obeyed: “...He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters would not transgress His command...” (Prov. 8.29) “Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know?” (Prov. 30.4) Paul knew God's name and His Son's name. Jesus!

“Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet; so He guides them to their desired haven” (Ps. 107.28-30).

Paul's trust in the Lord was contagious. His calm during this storm brought peace to his Personal Mission Field. And his care and concern for the other members of his little “society” brought safety and life to them as a gift from God.

Do we pray as diligently for those in the storm with us?

For reflection

1. What promises from the Lord do you cling to for your walk with and work for Him?
2. How does it encourage your work to know that God is completely sovereign over all things?
3. Whom will you encourage in the Lord today? Pray for these people right now.

Hope is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil. Let those who are in spiritual darkness hold fast by that, and think not of putting to sea again, but abide by Christ, and wait till the day break, and the shadows flee away.
Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 27.21-29*

Pray Psalm 25.11-22.

Confess and repent of any sins the Lord brings to mind. Seek His way for the day ahead, and ask Him to help you keep focused on Him throughout the day, whatever storms or trials may come your way.

Sing Psalm 25.11-22.

(Festal Song: [*Revive Thy Work, O Lord*](#))

For Your sake, Lord, forgive. All they who fear You, Lord,
shall know Your blessings day by day and follow in Your Word.

Your friends are they who fear and seek Your holy face;
Your covenant with them You share and save them by Your grace.

Be gracious, Lord, to me; my heart is weighed with woe.

My troubles and affliction see; let my transgressions go.

Consider all my foes, who hate me all the day;
and rescue my poor soul lest I should stumble in the way.

Preserve me in Your way, redeem Your people, Lord!
We wait for You and refuge seek in Your own faithful Word.

3 Struggling but Safe

Pray Psalm 149.1, 2.

Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,

And His praise in the assembly of saints.

Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

Sing Psalm 149.1, 2.

(Toulon: [*I Greet Thee Who My Sure Redeemer Art*](#))

Sing to the Lord a glorious song and new! Praise Him you people, to Whom praise is due!

Let us rejoice, let us be glad in Him Who has created us and cleansed our sin.

Read Acts 27.1-44; meditate on verses 27-44.

Preparation

1. What happened to the ship?

2. How did Paul help to keep everyone alive?

Meditation

The struggle to save the ship and themselves continued for fourteen days and nights. The sailors determined that their ship was being driven into shallow water, so they set out anchors at the stern in hope of keeping the ship from crashing onto rocks (vv. 27-29). They were not persuaded that was going to help, however, so they concocted a scheme to escape what they perceived would be certain destruction (v. 30). Paul saw through their ploy, however, and counseled the centurion to keep them on board and to cut away the ship's boat to avoid that temptation ever rising again (vv. 31, 32).

If they were going to run aground, Paul knew they'd need strength to get ashore. So he advised them to eat something before they threw the last of the provisions overboard (vv. 33-38). He prayed with thanksgiving in front of them all and led the way to a meal. His prayer and actions encouraged the others, and all benefited from the food.

Finally, the ship ran aground on rocks. The constant pounding of waves against the stern caused the ship to begin breaking up, so now it was push-come-to-shove (vv. 39-41). It's a good thing Paul and the centurion had come to respect one another. What the soldiers were planning – to kill all the prisoners – was standard operating procedure (v. 42). The centurion intervened however, contrary to accepted Roman military practice, to keep Paul alive (v. 43). Then the centurion took over and, with all the authority and threatening power he possessed, directed everyone to do what Paul had previously advised. Consequently, and against all odds, everyone landed safely on the beach (v. 44).

The story of this ship is a parable of our lives in many ways. Rejoice that, whatever our struggles, we are safe, and we will be safe when all is done.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable...” (Acts 27.41). Running aground is not a bad thing when we stick fast and remain immovable in the solid ground of the Lord.

“Hear my cry, O God;
Attend to my prayer.
From the end of the earth I will cry to You,
when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to
the rock that is higher than I.
For You have been a shelter for me,
a strong tower from the enemy” (Ps. 61.1-3).

“The story of this ship is a parable of our lives in many ways. Rejoice that, whatever our struggles, we are safe, and we will be safe when all is done.”

Many years ago people in our church experienced a difficult situation with one of their children. This story from Paul served as a reminder of the way things work out with the Lord. Yes, the parents had told the child not to do something, just as Paul had told the centurion not to set sail. And yes, the parents reminded the child of their sin; but in the same loving way that Paul restored, rescued and led the sailors and prisoners into a new way of thinking about their struggles for survival.

God's guidance through our trials leads us to repentance and restoration. It is what His forgiveness is all about. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1.9). Ready to set sail once again with a new focus and a new boat. God's grace is amazing.

Stuck fast on the Rock, immovable in Him, we will survive the tempest-tossed seas of life and emerge safely from each shipwreck. Maybe a little bedraggled and damp, but ever striving forward into our Personal Mission Field, to love the Lord with all our heart and our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22.36-40).

We are all in the same boat, we daily go adrift;
We need the steady winds of God to blow us to His gift.
His gift of love and mercy, His gift of grace divine,
His gift of true forgiveness, His gifts are yours and mine.
So grab your oars, let's hoist the sail, we're in this boat together.
His love will never ever fail, even in stormy weather!

For reflection

1. What do we learn from Paul about how to deal with the “stormy weather” that comes into our lives from time to time?
2. Why is Jesus likened to a steadfast and immovable Rock? Why do we need to keep this in mind?
3. Why are we “safe” in the Lord no matter how great the trial we must face?

You can understand now that the truth of the word and promise of God is so great that no storm of the sea, no plotting of the wicked, no adverse misfortune is so powerful as to thwart it. Therefore, from the story of this shipwreck, let us strengthen our faith in the face of all opposing storms. Johannes Brenz (1499-1570), Homily 118 on Acts 27.19

Sing Psalm 149.3-9.

Life is a struggle, but thank the Lord we are safe in Jesus and He will bring us safely to our distant shore! Call on the Lord to use you today, according to His Word, to encourage and bear witness to those in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 149.3-9.

(Toulon: [*I Greet Thee Who My Sure Redeemer Art*](#))

Praise Him with dance, with tambourine and lyre! To be so praised is God's one great desire.
Lord, beautify Your holy ones with grace; show us the mercy of Your saving face.

Sing to the Lord, exult with great delight! Sing on your beds with joy to God by night!
Sing praise and take His Word into your hand; publish His grace and wrath in every land!

4 Always on Duty

Pray Psalm 143.1, 2.

Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me,
And in Your righteousness.
Do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
For in Your sight no one living is righteous.

Sing Psalm 143.1, 2.

(Divinum Mysterium: [*Of the Father's Love Begotten*](#))

Hear my earnest prayer, O Lord! Give ear to my pleas for grace!
In Your faithfulness and righteousness, look upon me with Your face!
Enter not to judgment with Your servant, Lord, with Your loving servant, Lord:
None can stand before Your Word.

Read and meditate on Acts 28.1-10.

Preparation

1. What did Paul do on the island?
2. How did the people of the island respond?

Meditation

Paul is the hero of this story. Everyone would have understood if he'd have let himself be tended to and cared for by others. But that's not how Paul worked his Personal Mission Field. Instead, Paul gathered sticks for the fire (vv. 1-3) – still on duty, trying to help where he could, no task too menial.

The incident with the serpent is a bit of comic relief (vv. 3-6). Paul had escaped assassination attempts (were those guys still fasting?), shipwreck, threat of execution, and more. No little snake – poisonous or not – was going to keep him from getting to Rome.

We note how the local people changed their view of Paul to make sense of the incident they observed (v. 6). Pagan religion – including secularism – is built on all kinds of shifting sand. Paul did not despise them for their fickleness or their folly. He just kept on being Paul and showed himself to be a servant to all, beginning with the father of their generous host (vv. 7-10). Always on duty, always ready to serve, Paul's example is an excellent one for us (cf. Titus 2.14; 3.1.8.14).

The storm was over, the wreck was in the past. No sense dwelling on these or being traumatized by them. We don't wallow in our problems, and we can't let setbacks and trials keep us from our Kingdom-and-glory calling in the Lord. Paul certainly didn't. He dragged himself up on that shore, and the first question on his mind was, "What can I do to help?" "Imitate me," Paul instructs us (1 Cor. 11.1).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Yes, "imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11.1).

The story of the viper that should have killed, but didn't, is a true example of the potential for death that sin inflicts, and the saving grace of God that heals. The residents of Malta opined, "No doubt this man is a

murderer...and that justice [will] not allow him to live” (Acts 28.4). “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5.8, 9). Healed from the poison of sin and saved from His wrathful justice by Christ Jesus. Once yes, a murderer, but now justified.

“However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds...” (Acts 28.6). I wonder how many people were watching for us to swell up or suddenly fall down dead when we gave our lives to Jesus? Or, how many people are waiting for those tell-tale signs of death and sin to ravage us? Makes you wonder if there are people who would like that to happen to us anyway. Just waiting to see if our faith is sincere, and if our lives ultimately reflect what our mouths are saying.

But here is God’s answer to all of those wondering about us, when our faith is sincere: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8.1). Paul reminds us to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called” (Eph. 4.1).

Paul was bitten by a death-wielding viper, yet nothing happened to him because of God’s merciful kindness and protection. “You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot” (Ps. 91.13). And it played out just like that.

And the same holds true for us as we fight against our own brand of viper’s bites – our continued encounters with temptation and sin. We have yet to swell up and fall down dead because the merciful grace of God heals us and holds us up. “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation” (Ps. 91.14-16).

This amazing love spurs us on to welcome with love those with fevers and dysentery into our own Personal Mission Field. Working like Paul, gathering sticks, to bring others to the saving and healing knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For reflection

1. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to imitate Paul as he imitated Christ?
2. The daily work, the little things we say and do, are how we demonstrate the love of Christ for those around us? What little daily work is God calling you to do today?
3. What should we do when some “viper’s bite” of sin gets hold of us?

It was for Paul's sake that all this took place, so that the prisoners, as well as the soldiers and the centurion, should believe. For even if they were made of stone, from the counsel they heard him give, from the predictions they heard him make, from the miracles they saw him accomplish and from the nourishment they enjoyed because of him, they would have thought him great. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 54

Pray Psalm 143.7-12.

Pray that God will revive you and strengthen you by His Spirit so that you might be always ready for every good work. Pray that He will show you His will throughout the day, keep you safe from trial or trouble, and use you as His servant today.

Sing Psalm 143.7-12

(Divinum Mysterium: [*Of the Father's Love Begotten*](#))

Answer quickly, O my Lord! Do not hide from me Your face!

Paul's Trials (3): Acts 27, 28

For my spirit fails and I am like those who do not know Your grace.
In the morning let me hear Your steadfast love; Lord I trust You, show my way!
I lift up my soul and pray!

Rescue me from all my enemies! Lord, I refuge seek in You.
Let me know Your will, O Lord my God; make me know what I must do.
Let Your Spirit lead me on to level ground; save my life! Preserve my soul!
Rescue, Lord, and make me whole!

5 Rome at Last

Pray Psalm 48.1-3.

Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God,
In His holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation,
The joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion *on* the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.
God *is* in her palaces;
He is known as her refuge.

Sing Psalm 48.1-3.

(Cwm Rhonda: [*God of Grace and God of Glory*](#))

Great is God, now greatly praise Him in the city of the Lord.
Holy she, His lovely mountain, great and glorious by His Word!
God her King is great within her, He, her Stronghold ever sure!
He, her Stronghold ever sure!

Read Acts 28.1-16; meditate on verses 11-16.

Preparation

1. How many places does Luke mention in these verses?
2. What was Paul allowed to do in Rome?

Meditation

Luke's account of the final leg is as historical as the rest of his story – places, details about travel and wintering, weather, and how long it takes to get from here to there (vv. 11-13). The Kingdom of God unfolds in real history, and it turns real history rightside-up. Luke helps us to see this.

Paul must have been elated to find fellow believers in Puteoli (v. 14). Remember, “we” would have included Paul's Roman escort as well as his friends, companions, and other prisoners. The Christians showed hospitality without discrimination.

The brethren in Rome were so excited to hear about Paul's arrival that they went out to meet him and escorted him along the way – a kind of “triumphal procession” into the imperial capital (v. 15). Rome was known for such processions when a general returned leading captives and booty into Rome. Makes you wonder who's leading whom here, who are the captives and who the victor.

We note how the company of other believers encouraged Paul's soul, provoking him to give thanks (v. 15; cf. 2 Cor. 4.15). In Rome, Paul was placed under house arrest, with a good deal of freedom (v. 16). The oneness Paul felt with these brethren cheered and emboldened him.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Paul is now a man “of a certain age” who has just been through two years of house arrest in Caesarea. Then experienced hunger, cold, wet, sleeplessness, shipwreck, viper bite, exposed to fever and dysentery; and then enjoyed around two more weeks of the antithesis of pampered Viking Ocean Cruising. The man must have

been exhausted! And he also knew what was coming. Another house arrest. And yet another angry trial.

But just the sight of the Christian brethren in Rome renewed his spirit. "When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage" (Acts 28.15). These people, by their presence and encouragement spurred him on to be ready for the next steps in his life. They were Jesus to him: "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11.28-30). They were a sight for sore eyes.

And Jesus spoke to us in the Old Testament saying: "The LORD God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary" (Is. 50.4). And He did just that.

We are promised this same help from our own weariness: "But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Is. 40.31). Strength to reach out to those wearier than we.

Paul overcame his weariness through the power of the Holy Spirit and through the encouragement of Christian brethren.

Are there people in our Personal Mission Field who are weary from the storms in their lives?
Are there people who are experiencing trials of many kinds who need to see us coming to greet them?
Are there people who have just washed up onto shore from a shipwreck?
Or have been bitten by vipers? Or are sick with a fever or dysentery? People who are just worn out?

To greet, pray for, care for, and love these brothers and sisters in Christ are the good works that God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Eph. 2.10).

All we need to do is show up.

For reflection

1. What is encouragement? Why is it so important?
2. Whom will you encourage today? How will you do that?
3. What is the role of prayer in seeking the strength and encouragement of the Lord?

God, from heaven, mitigated the imprisonment of his servant, not only to lessen his troubles but also so that the faithful might have freer access to him. For he did not wish the treasure of his faith to be held confined within the walls of a prison but to be kept free and open, to enrich many on all sides. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Acts 28.16.26

Pray Psalm 48.9-14.

Thank God for His Church and for all the kindness He shows His people. Rejoice in His judgments and ask Him to lead you this day in working your Personal Mission Field and building His Church.

Sing Psalm 48.9-14.

(Cwm Rhonda: [*God of Grace and God of Glory*](#))

For Your grace and lovingkindness we proclaim Your matchless worth!
As Your Name is, great and boundless, let Your praise fill all the earth.
Let Your people sing rejoicing for the judgment of Your truth;
for the judgment of Your truth.

Walk about the blessed city, see her beauty, see her power.

Paul's Trials (3): Acts 27, 28

Count her ramparts, filled with glory, look on ev'ry mighty tower.
Tell her glory to the nations: God will guide her evermore;
God will guide her evermore!

6 End of the Beginning

Pray Psalm 57.1-3.

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!
For my soul trusts in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,
Until *these* calamities have passed by.
I will cry out to God Most High,
To God who performs *all things* for me.
He shall send from heaven and save me;
He reproaches the one who would swallow me up.
Selah
God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.

Sing Psalm 57.1-3.

(Fabien: *Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens Adore Him*)

Lord, be gracious, gracious to me, for my soul retreats in You.
In Your shadow keep me safely till the storms of life are through.
I will cry to You, the Most High; You do all things well for me.
You will save me when I thus cry, routing all who threaten me.

Read Acts 28.1-31; meditate on verses 17-31.

Preparation

1. How did the local religious leaders respond to Paul's testimony?
2. How did they respond to His teaching?

Meditation

Luke's story ends where it began – with Jesus and the Kingdom of God, and His faithful servants continuing the work He began to do. Paul called the Jewish leaders in Rome together because he wanted them to hear his case before he went before the emperor (vv. 17-22). They had no clue about him or the charges against him, but they had heard about the “sect” of the Christians, and that it is spoken against everywhere.

On an appointed day, Paul resumed his wonted tactic, reasoning from and expounding the Scriptures about Christ and His Kingdom (v. 23). The results were the same he encountered everywhere else, and his response was the same, too (vv. 24-29). He gave the Jews an opportunity to hear the Gospel. Now he would concentrate on the Gentiles.

Our final lesson from Paul and the entire book of Acts: What Jesus began to do, Jesus continues to do, and Jesus will finish. The ongoing work of Christ goes on. Scandals and plots can't stop it. Persecution fuels it. Storms and shipwrecks are just open doors of opportunity. Foes may decry and deny the Good News, but the world is full of people who are looking for the hope that is in Jesus. Are we looking for them? Are you?

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

All those who share the love of Jesus Christ continue to reach out to God's original children of Israel. And that is as it should be. They are, after all, the “apple of His eye” (Zech. 2.8).

Paul gave himself three whole days to recover from all his travels and travails and then he contacted the

leaders of the Jewish community in Rome. He wanted to tell them first-hand why he was there and give them the Good News about Jesus. He also wanted to give them a heads-up about why he would be facing a trial. As he said, "For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28.20). Jesus Christ is the "hope of Israel." He is the only hope for salvation for all of humankind.

Paul then took an extra amount of time to talk with them at his own lodging. He "explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets...and some were persuaded...and some disbelieved" (Acts 28.23, 24). Paul practiced what he preached. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Phil. 2.3).

He showed them great respect and deference by talking with them first. But then he angered them with the truth about themselves: "the hearts of this people have grown dull" (Acts 28.27; Is. 6.10). He then dutifully informed them that "the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (Acts 28.28)

We see Paul following the letter of the Law and the spirit of the Law. But in doing so, he was never afraid to speak the truth of what he saw and of what he knew. We can learn much from his example. He was merely doing what Jesus had taught His own disciples to do: "And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" (Matt. 10.14, 15).

Paul kept going. We need to keep going.

Paul kept sharing the Gospel. We need to keep sharing the Gospel.

Paul wasn't afraid to speak the truth in love. Neither should we be.

Paul never hesitated to shake the dust off and move on. Why do we find this so difficult?

Could it be that we are so trained in tolerance that we have lost the power of discernment?

And the courage and permission to move on? Time is short. The fields are ready for the harvest (Matt. 9.37, 38).

God will lead us, in the same way that He led Paul, to have wisdom about who, what, where, when, and how to work our Personal Mission Field for His honor and glory.

Let's continue to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Cor. 11.1).

For reflection

1. What are the most important lessons for us from Paul's many trials?
2. What is your place in the ongoing work of Jesus Christ?
3. How would you describe the role of Scripture in Paul's life and ministry? What should it be in ours?

Paul persuaded the Jews concerning Jesus. Some were wrought upon by the word, and others hardened; some received the light, and others shut their eyes against it. And the same has always been the effect of the gospel. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 28.23-31

Pray Psalm 57.4-11.

Pray that God will be glorified and exalted by His people today. Ask Him to lift your soul and embolden you for today's work in your Personal Mission Field. Commit yourself steadfastly to serve Him and give Him praise and thanks throughout the day.

Sing Psalm 57.4-11.

(Fabien: Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens Adore Him)

Send Your truth and lovingkindness; raging lions seek my soul.
Threats and sland'rous words without rest they against me fiercely roll.
Be exalted o'er the heavens, let Your glory fill the earth!
To Your Name all praise be given, let all men proclaim Your worth!

Nets and pits they set before me; overwhelmed, my soul bows down.
Let them all in their own works be thrown and scattered on the ground.
Let my heart no more be shaken, I will sing Your praises, Lord!
Harp and glory, now awaken to extol God's faithful Word!

Praise and thanks among the nations I will sing with all my might!
For Your truth and love are stationed far above the highest height!
Be exalted o'er the heavens, let Your glory fill the earth!
To Your Name all praise be given, let all men proclaim Your worth.

7 A Line of Continuity

Pray Psalm 22.23.

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
and fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

Sing Psalm 22.23.

(Darwall: [Rejoice, the Lord is King](#))

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

Pray Psalm 22.24-28.

Pray that the ongoing work of Christ will continue to the ends of the earth. Ask God to use you to bring His Kingdom to earth as it is in heaven. Rejoice in King Jesus and His rule over all the earth!

Read and meditate on Acts 1.1-3 and 28.30, 31.

Preparation

1. What is the common focus of these two passages?
2. What did Paul preach and teach?

Meditation

The book of Acts began where the gospels left off, with Jesus adding to, clarifying, and enlarging His teaching on the Kingdom of God. This is the message He brought to earth (Matt. 4.17), as is clear in so many of His parables and other teachings. The book of Acts ends right where it began, with Paul – and by implication, the other apostles – preaching the Kingdom and teaching all things that pertain to Jesus.

A strong cord of continuity runs through the book of Acts and into the epistles and the book of Revelation. It is the Kingdom of God, which believers are called to pray for (Matt. 6.10) and seek as the defining priority of their lives (Matt. 6.33), and to which we have been called by the Lord (1 Thess. 2.12).

Jesus secured the Kingdom by fulfilling all righteousness, bearing the wrath of God for our sins, and rising and ascending to His throne with the Father. There, He received the Kingdom, and gave it to His saints, beginning at the first Christian Pentecost (Acts 2; cf. Dan. 7.13, 14, 18). The reality and transforming power of the Kingdom are embodied in the Spirit of God, Who empowers us for our calling (Acts 1.8).

When Paul instructed us to imitate him as he imitated Jesus (1 Cor. 11.1), he was saying, in effect, make the Kingdom of God – righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18) – your focus and your goal in everything you do. This is what Jesus began to do in the gospels and what He continued doing in Acts, the rest of the New Testament, and beyond.

The ongoing work of Christ is to seek and advance the Kingdom of God. If we are not seeking the Kingdom, we are not in the trajectory Jesus and the apostles set for us. What Jesus began to do and what Paul and the others continued doing is what we must be doing as well.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The line of continuity which began with the creation of Adam and Eve and the mandate given to them to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1.1-31); then to the earthly appearance of Jesus Christ (Jn. 1.1-4) and His work of redemption (Jn. 3.16) and His work of doing and teaching the Kingdom of God (Acts 1.1-3); to His commandment to His disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples...” (Matt.28.19), with His instructions to wait for the filling of the Holy Spirit because “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me...” (Acts 1.8); through the Holy Spirit-infused work of the early church (Acts 1-28); then finally to us.

But that is not the end of the story. That is merely the beginning. Because with God and His work, and His expectations for us, and His compassions toward us that never fail, “they are new every morning” (Lam. 3.22) we have the impetus to do the works that have been “prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2.10). |

The work goes on. Daily. Internally and externally. Always growing. Always working. Onward and upward in the work of the righteousness, peace, and joy of the Kingdom of God on earth; and then finally to the righteousness, peace, and joy of the Kingdom of God in heaven. (Rom. 14.17) It is a win-win situation.

Paul's words are just the words of encouragement we need to continue busily in our Personal Mission Field until the day we are called to glory: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2.15).

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11.1).

This is God's Plan, there is no other.

The Good News of the Kingdom prospers and grows through us.

This is the line of continuity.

“This is the way, walk in it” (Is. 30.21)

For reflection

1. How would you explain the ongoing work of Christ to a new believer?
2. How would you explain the role of Personal Mission Field in continuing the ongoing work of Christ?
3. Whom will you encourage today in the ongoing work of Christ?

Let us seek to live more and more in the love of the Savior; to labor to glorify Him by every action of our lives; and we shall assuredly, by his strength, be among the number of those who now overcome our enemies; and by his free grace and mercy, be hereafter among the blessed company who shall sit with Him upon his throne, even as He also has overcome, and is sitting on his Father's throne, at God's right hand for evermore. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 28.23-31

Sing Psalm 22.24-28.

(Darwall: [*Rejoice, the Lord is King*](#))

For He has not despised the anguish of our King,
nor from Him hid His eyes, Who knew such suffering.
Let praise arise from all who love and serve the Ruler of the skies!

Then all the poor shall eat and praise with us the Lord.
Forever we His praise repeat and trust His Word.
Praise God above, all you who keep His vows and who His mercies love!

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord;

Paul's Trials (3): Acts 27, 28

all those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.
The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

Paul's Trials (3): Acts 27, 28

For reflection or discussion

1. What do we mean by “the ongoing work of Christ”? Which part of that work is His? Which is ours?
2. Why is it important that Christians be ready to help and try to be an influence for good? How can we do this?
3. Why is the oneness of Christ’s Body so important? Why is it so hard to maintain (Eph. 4.3)? What can we do to realize more of this oneness?
4. How has our study of Acts helped you in working your own Personal Mission Field?
5. What’s the most important insight or lesson you’ve learned from Acts 27 and 28?

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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