

Acts: Multiply (Acts 27-28)
For the week of August 7, 2016

Persevering in Trials

This passage has Paul traveling by ship to Rome where God had told him he would speak to Caesar. The journey is long and dangerous because of massive storms, causing them to wreck and layover in Malta for the winter. Paul is a prisoner, but well respected. He had impeccable character, boldly and wisely spoke truth and remained faithful to God. His and God's vision was for Paul to go to Rome to preach the gospel. Ironically, God's salvation was foreshadowed in Jewish Scriptures, fulfilled in the Jewish Messiah and first proclaimed by Jewish men like Paul who was ultimately rejected by the Jews and embraced by the Gentiles. As he traveled to new locations he spoke to Jews first. Some were receptive but the majority rejected the gospel. As the Jews rejected the Good News, Paul turned to preach to the Gentiles who wholeheartedly received Christ. We saw this pattern in Antioch, Corinth and Ephesus. Even though Paul had repeatedly experienced hardship and rejection for the gospel's sake, he never quit. He preached, loved, witnessed, warned, and kept doing what God called Him to do, even when the results were different than what he had hoped they would be. He remained faithful, praising God for the Gentiles being saved and puzzling over the Jews who rejected their Messiah.

Acts 27:1-28:10

Read Acts 27:1 – 28:10. As a group, rebuild the story.

Observation:

- a. How did Paul end up being a witness to those in charge of the ship?

- b. What was Paul's response to the storms and the decisions made by those in charge of the ship?

- c. Who made sure that Paul arrived in Rome to fulfill what God had told him?

Application: After reading Acts 27:1 – 28:10 look at Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 6:22, John 16:33 and James 1:25.

- d. What do these passages tell you about tribulation and the importance of persevering?

- e. How have you experienced tribulation for the gospel and the calling of God on your life?

Application: We live in scary, unsettling times. We may be tempted to deny the faith, to run when trials and persecution come, and to doubt God, His love, and His calling on our lives. It may be because we have misconceptions about the Christian life. We may equate obedience, being in God's will and blessing with earthly happiness and obvious success. Paul's life and journey is contrary to that opinion. As the hard times come we can remain faithful as Paul did by:

- 1. Trusting God and His Word over our circumstances and our perceptions.
- 2. Spending time in His Word so that we don't believe the lies of the enemy.
- 3. Choosing to obey even when it is hard.
- 4. Staying connected to believers whose hearts beat passionately for God.

Have you experienced any of these four points in your life? Discuss in your group.

Acts 28:10-31

- f. Read the story in Acts 28:10-31. As a group rebuild the story.

Observation: As we have seen before, Paul goes to the Jews first.

- g. What was their response to the gospel?

- h. What did he tell them in response to their rejection of the message?

- i. Paul was essentially in chains because of his desire to see the Jewish nation come to Christ. How do you think he felt when they rejected his message?

- j. What are some of the reasons they may have rejected Paul and his message? Could the fact that he was a prisoner accused of wrong and the desire for a life of ease played into their rejection?

- k. What do you think about his last statement to the Jews? Luke ends the story a bit abruptly, which could be his way of telling us that the story of the church continues to this day.

Application: We can learn how to relate to others from Paul. Here are some ways:

1. He initiated relationships and conversations with people so he could share the gospel.
2. He began his conversation with his personal story.
3. He gave the gospel.
4. He used the Scriptures, instead of emotion and threats, to convince them of the truth.
5. If the gospel was rejected, he didn't pout or become intimidated, he presented the Good News to others (the Gentiles).

How have you utilized any of these five examples in reaching out to nonbelievers? Discuss in your group.

Application: One of the things that stands out about the gospel is that God doesn't write anyone off. He saves killers, persecutors, liars, adulterers, prostitutes, thieves, stubborn and hot-headed people, both the educated and the uneducated, and those who denied and once rejected Him. He essentially saves people who don't look like saved people. Could we be missing out on opportunities to witness by our own fears and discomfort of being around those who don't look like believers but need Jesus the most? Discuss in your group how opportunities arise in your life to talk to people about Jesus.

Pray

- Pray for our country and its leaders
- Pray for our community
- Pray for our church and its families
- Pray for a heart that beats passionately for the lost