

Acts 27

THE CURRENT MISSION

Reacting to Suffering Or Responding to the Savior?

Life Group Leaders should read through this material and choose a few questions to talk over in your group. Your group will not have time to cover all the material. The guide is for personal study and for choosing a few questions that you and your life group would like to discuss.

Read Aloud Acts 27:1-12

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own WORDS. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)

Acts 27:1

Paul is now transferred yet again in his prison journey. Paul has had favor as a prisoner, but he was still a prisoner nonetheless. We have to remember that Paul is not only in prison, but here he is with other prisoners.

Specifically, Paul was placed in the care of a special unit that was most likely a bodyguard or special force unit for the Roman army. This was no small operation!

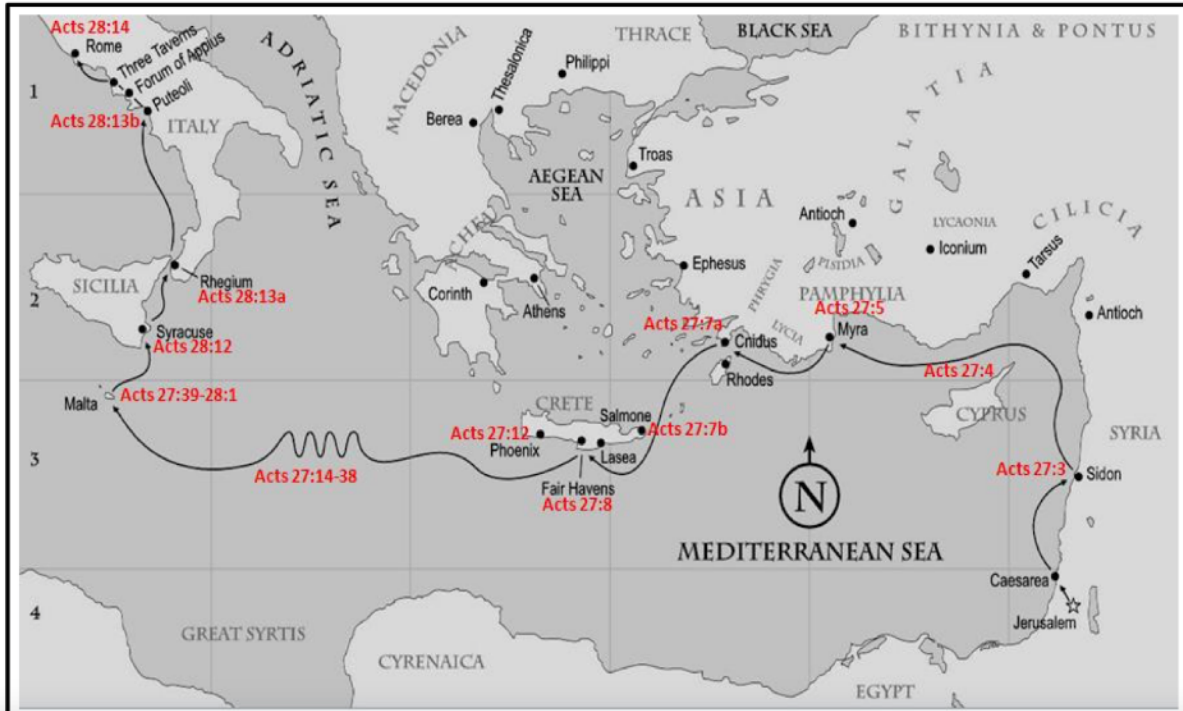


Question: Can you imagine being stripped from a community of believers and being placed in a new community of criminals? What do you think was able to keep Paul so level-headed and joyful during this time? It is easy to give the "church answer" of Jesus, but critically think of this challenge. On the practical level, what would you do in this circumstance?

Acts 27:2-8

In the midst of the difficulty, God supplied respite for Paul. It seems that God oftentimes gives us enough blessing to be encouraged, but enough hardship to be humbled. In the midst of prison, God provided favor for Paul to be comforted with the believers with him like the penman of Acts, Luke. Yet, we read in the passage that the journey was very difficult.

We often want or even expect trials to blow over quickly. We want to see God change our circumstances and to learn quick, easy lessons. Unfortunately for us that is not usually the case! Check out the map on the next page, and the journey that Paul endured during this time.



Acts 27:9-12

The "Fast" refers to the day of atonement. This statement is showing that the journey had passed "good travel" season and was entering winter. Since this time had passed, the question arose, "Would it be best to winter and travel in better conditions?"

Paul, either through the Spirit or just practical wisdom, warned of the perils to come. As we read through Acts 27, we will see that he is right. However, Paul's advice was not heard, and the company continued into what would be perilous times.



Question: Paul was able to remain positive and on mission despite his good advice being ignored. How do you handle being rejected or your advice not being heeded?

Read Aloud Acts 27:13-44

Describe what is happening in your own words.

Acts 27:13-20

Despite the best efforts of experienced sailors, they were unable to defeat the storm they found themselves in. Finally, as their own skills had failed, they needed to lift up the anchor and became at the mercy of the storm. The peril continued to the point of having to throw the cargo overboard, as the ship was most likely taking in water. Finally, the disaster of perpetual overcast and darkness set in. Without sight of the stars, it would have been nearly impossible to have a sense of navigation for the sailors.



Question: Human efforts had failed, and the situation looked completely hopeless. What are some temptations or lies you tend to believe when circumstances move beyond human aid?



Acts 27:21-26

Despite being rejected earlier, Paul was able to provide leadership to this group of dying individuals. Paul started as a captive and ends up being the captain of the ship during their darkest hour.

Paul uses the trial as an opportunity to press into Christ and preach the Gospel. God gives Paul hope through a promise that their lives would be spared. He also gives direction on what they must do.

- A *"The God whom I belong and whom I worship."* Paul makes it clear on why he has hope, and who it is that has given him direction. Paul makes a point to clarify that he belongs to God; this is a personal and intimate claim. This is much different from the relationship that many pagans had with their gods of idolatry. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- B Paul also clarifies who he worships. This is a statement of allegiance. In addition, Paul provides a great example of what worship is. Worship is offering our bodies as a living sacrifice, despite circumstance and despite suffering. Romans 12:1-2
- C *"Exactly as I have been told"* - Paul did not take this revelation as a suggestion, but he boasts confidently that it will be exactly as God told him. We can have 100% confidence that God will do exactly what He has promised in His Word. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

Yet it is worth noting that Paul concludes this statement with a BUT. There was a promise from God that REQUIRED steps of obedience.



Question: Do you cling to the promises of God in their entirety? Or do you tend to cling to the more "believable promises?" True faith is seen when what we are expecting could never be accomplished by human means (Hebrews 11:1-6).

Acts 27:27-44

Throughout this sequence we can see three main themes of how Paul navigated this trial.

1

Obedience - Paul was obedient to what God had told him. Not only this, but he was bold in requiring obedience of those who were with him. He gave them directions that the ship would be lost, they could not save it. He gave them directions on not escaping the ship, and he gave them directions on when to eat so that they would have strength for the mission.

The grace of God was fueling the mission through the faith and obedience of Paul and those on board.

2

Hope - Despite continuous peril, Paul remained hopeful. Where did he draw his hope? Through the promises of God. Paul's hope was contagious. Through his faith and confidence, the rest of the crew was strengthened and filled with hope.

Despair and complaining is contagious, but so is faith and hope.

3

Protection - Finally, despite leading the crew to an escape, Paul's life was in danger. God not only spared the crew's life, but he provided practical means for the protection of Paul's life.

Although we are promised a life of suffering, we also know that our suffering is always under the authority and protection of God's love and sovereignty. We can trust that all things happen for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)



Question: Following Christ is difficult, and we must count the cost. As you navigate trials, what elements of the above list can be difficult for you? Do you find yourself not wanting to move forward in obedience? Becoming overwhelmed in discouragement? Or lacking faith in God's sovereign protection and that He is at work in your suffering?

Weekly Challenge

Seeing God at work in the life and ministry of Paul is very encouraging. Yet in our own lives we do not get to see the end result by reading a chapter, but rather it is seen over weeks, months, and years of our lives. When we go through trying times many of us have a “default behavior” that it is easy to turn to. This may be a behavior of control, hiding, frustration, despair, feeling paralyzed, or anxious. This week take some time to evaluate what your natural reaction to suffering is. Is this reaction godly? Most likely the answer is no. Our flesh naturally turns to sin rather than faith. Take some time to evaluate and either journal or share with a friend on ways that you can move towards Biblical obedience in the midst of suffering.

Memory Verse

Acts 27:25 ESV

“So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.”