

The End of the Beginning

Acts 27-28

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It is through testing that our character is revealed. What do we yell when we are cut off on the highway? How do we talk about the boss who overlooks us for the promotion? What is our attitude toward others when we are sick, exhausted, and beaten down? God can and will use these and many other difficult situations to bring about His kingdom and our transformation. God had said of Paul, “he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” Our section today will reveal just how true this was. As Paul nears the end of his life and ministry, we see the impact that a transformed life can have in the worst of situations.

Set A Course For Rome! (27:1-12)

Paul’s transfer had been granted, and he, along with Luke and Aristarchus, and other prisoners, were packed onto a grain merchant’s ship headed for Rome. We read that they were under the authority of a centurion named Julius, and immediately we see that Julius seems to be a good man. (27:3) However, despite his kindness toward Paul, we also see that he wasn’t willing to take nautical advice from Paul. (27:10-11). It is important to note that Jewish people were not typically seafaring, but Paul was an exception. (See also 2 Cor 11:25-26) He had sailed all over these waters and knew that it was very likely that they would encounter some nasty weather since it was so late in the season. When they left Fair Havens, it was nearing mid-October, and was getting risky to sail. Paul’s warnings foreshadowed precisely what was about to occur. It was about 45 miles from Fair Haven to their desired destination of Phoenix, but by the time they ran aground, that 45 miles had turned into 400+!

A Messenger In The Mayhem (27:13-32)

Paul’s prediction came true in spades! These professional sailors did everything they could to keep the ship from sinking or being smashed. It was so bad and terrifying that the crew didn’t eat anything for two weeks! Amid this mayhem, Paul received a message from an Angel of God, assuring him that all who sailed with him would be saved. Paul’s unwavering faith in the promises of God, the God to whom he “belongs and worships,” allowed him to anchor the entire crew during that life-threatening time. We see how Julius no longer questioned Paul’s advice for the rest of their journey, even cutting away the escape boat against the crew’s wishes.

A Sacred Moment Before A Shipwreck (27:33-44)

In this section, Paul’s character and faithfulness to God shine through in vivid color. Luke recorded an incredibly sacred moment just before the ship crashed. Paul took some bread, thanked God, and began to eat. (Reminiscent of Jesus in Luke 22:19; 24:30) These pagan sailors and Roman soldiers were so moved by his confidence and counsel that they joined him in eating and were “encouraged.” Through Paul’s character and confidence in the promise and goodness of God, he was able to bring counsel and

encouragement to these exhausted men, helping to prepare them for the shipwreck ahead, and proving that his God, was the true and trustworthy God.

Unexpected Ministry On Malta (28:1-10)

Once they were safely ashore on Malta, it didn't take long to see God at work. He protected Paul from a viper bite, which opened up a time of powerful ministry for the three months they all were in Malta, which resulted in the people honoring Paul and his companions and providing for the final leg of their journey.

A Welcome Reception In Rome (28:11-31)

We know that Paul was eager to get to Rome and "be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Romans 1:12, written a couple of years before). But as he makes his way to this great city, we don't quite know what to expect regarding a reception, particularly among the Jewish leaders. Yet, as we read, we see that the Jewish leaders were curious and open rather than hostile and violent. They wanted to hear directly from Paul what he was teaching, and after hearing him, some were convinced, and some were not, but it would seem that the disagreement stayed mostly "amongst themselves."

Luke ends this incredible story with a wonderful and welcome description of how the Apostle Paul spent the next two years of ministry in Rome. The kingdom of God was spreading from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the very ends of the earth. God used His faithful servants to proclaim His kingdom and teach about His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was doing it back in 59AD, and He is doing it now in 2023AD.

GRACE NEWS AND NEEDS

- **"Lifemark" Movie Night: Sign Up On Patio**
Sunday, Jan 29th @ 3 pm, in the Modular. Hosted by Women's Clinic.
- **Men's Horseshoe Tournament & BBQ. Sign Up On Patio, \$10**
Feb 11th @ 12 pm, Wellfield Park (by adult softball fields).
- **Family Desert Trip. Mark Your Calendar**
Feb 24-26 @ Ocotillo Wells. Dinner will be provided Saturday night.
- **Spring Bible Studies & Home Groups are starting up!**
Groups and studies for everyone. Check the website for info. gccramona.com
- **Pick up your 2022 donation receipts on the patio.**
- **VOM Needs for January: Donations for tarps; Band-Aids.**