

Sailing with Paul

1. The message today was titled "Sailing with Paul." Another title might have been "Sailing with Jesus." We are all sailing through this life, and most of us will experience storms.
 - a. Have you ever been on a big, ocean-going ship? If so, what was that experience like?
 - b. Have you ever been in a violent storm like a tornado or hurricane?
 - c. Would you like to combine those two experiences—being in a violent storm while at sea?
2. In many ways this was an "ill-advised" trip; the journey started out great, but the good weather didn't last. The "Euroclydon" (also known as a "nor'easter") was a violent storm that blew in from Europe.
 - a. What does verse 20 say about their hopes?
 - b. What was Paul's response to this (v. 21-26)?
3. Can you imagine going without food for fourteen days? Can you imagine being on a small ship in the middle of a violent tempest for over fourteen days?
 - a. What encouragement did Paul offer in verse 34?
 - b. What did he demonstrate in verse 35?
 - c. How did the sailors and crew respond in verse 36?
 - d. Do you consistently demonstrate faith in Christ during trials?
 - e. What message is conveyed when Christians demonstrate faith in Christ during trials?
4. Christians can become discouraged when they encounter trials; however, it is during these times that God often provides His "tender mercies," those special blessings, to encourage the hearts of His people. In addition, trials often help God's people become more alert to what He is doing in their lives.
 - a. God providentially arranged for two of Paul's missionary companions to accompany him on his journey to Rome. How else did God provide for Paul during this time (v. 1-3; Col. 4:14)?
 - b. Now think of a trial that you have experienced (health, financial, work-related, etc.). How did God assure you of His love and care during this time?
5. When some Christians encounter trials or adversity, they almost automatically think that their troubles are a result of some past sin or failure. If this happens, the individual often experiences unnecessary guilt.
 - a. Give five Biblical reasons why God's people experience adversity in their lives. John 16:33 Galatians 6:7, 8 Ephesians 6:11, 12 Hebrews 12:5-10 1 Peter 4:12, 13
 - b. How can a believer tell if the trouble he is experiencing is the result of some sin he needs to repent of, an individual trial of faith which he needs to endure joyfully, or just the everyday consequences of living in a fallen world? Psalm 139:23 Galatians 6:1 John 8:32
6. The sailors planned to escape the impending shipwreck by getting into the ship's boat (a dingy) and pretending to lay out anchors from the ship's bow (v. 30). When Paul warned the soldiers that their plan would end in death, they thwarted the sailor's plan and cut the dingy loose. Paul's faith in God had spread, the Centurion who did not listen to him at first now entrusted his very life to Paul's council.
 - a. How did God demonstrate His faithfulness during the shipwreck (v. 39-44)?
 - b. How does God demonstrate His faithfulness during the trials in your life?

Read: Acts 28

Monday

v. 1-6 — Shipwrecked on the island of Malta, Luke says the natives showed them “unusual kindness.” The following passage is also “unusual.” What did the natives of Malta think about Paul when the snake bit him? Has anyone ever accused you of sin because of your circumstances? Job’s “friends” come to mind: Job had not sinned but God had allowed those hard circumstances into his life. Job’s response was, “Though He slay me yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). Does God ever allow hard circumstances into the lives of His children as a result of their sin (Hebrews 12:5-7)?

Tuesday

v. 7-10 — Publius, the chief official of the island, provided food and lodging for the victims of the shipwreck (v. 7). God used Paul to heal Publius’ father from recurring fever and dysentery (v. 8) and others with various diseases (v. 9). What do you think Paul meant by “they also honored us in many ways”? Paul and his group ministered to the physical and spiritual needs of those on the island and in return they ministered to him by providing food, clothing and anything else they needed. Think about some ways you might be able to “honor” a missionary this year.

Wednesday

v. 11-16 — Three months later at the beginning of the next shipping season, Paul and the others boarded a ship from Alexandria, North Africa that had been moored at Malta over the winter (v. 11). After a brief stay at Syracuse and Puteoli, they finally arrived at Rome (v. 12-14). When Paul, Luke and Aristarchus arrived in Rome, brethren from the Appii Forum (forty-three miles away) and Three Inns (thirty-three miles away) encouraged Paul by their visit (v. 15). What happened to Paul’s fellow prisoners? Why do you think Paul received different treatment (v. 16)?

Thursday

v. 17-22 — How long was Paul in Rome before he got into gospel ministry (v. 17)? What reason for his imprisonment did Paul give the Jews (v. 20)? How did they respond to his testimony (v. 22)? What had they heard about Christianity? Notice that even though the Jews had heard negative reports about “this sect” and the person they were talking to was a prisoner, they still wanted to hear what Paul had to say. Remember that if you are a willing servant, God will give you opportunities to share the gospel even in the most unlikely of situations.

Friday

v. 23-27 — As was his custom from the beginning, Paul would reason with the local Jews from the Scriptures. The text says he did this “from morning till evening.” Why do you think the Jews came to listen to Paul? Do you think they were genuinely interested in his message? Do you think they were genuinely seeking revelation from God? Do you think they were more interested because of the controversy surrounding Paul? People today are no different, we can only thank God that He gives us opportunity to share His glorious Gospel and then leave the fruit up to Him (v. 24).

Saturday

v. 28-31 — Paul’s long journey began in Jerusalem and it was fraught with peril. Paul had an extended stay in prison, he was shipwrecked and he was bitten by a poisonous viper. Paul’s life was filled with hard circumstances, yet he was in the center of God’s will. God had worked it out for Paul to preach the gospel in most of the known world, and ultimately in Rome. While in Rome Paul was allowed to live in his own rented house for two full years. He did not have complete freedom, but he was still able to do effective gospel ministry. Verse 31 also says that no one forbade Paul to teach the things of Jesus Christ. Sometimes it is hard to understand what God is up to when life is difficult, but like Paul we have to trust in our faithful God. Take time today to reflect on this as well as the other awesome truths that God has taught you through our study of the book of Acts.
