

the shipwreck

Acts 27:27-44



The amazing fact in this story is that they all survived. They survived the battering of the storm and the prisoners survived the threat of being killed by the Roman guards. As the angel spoke to Paul, “indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you” (v24). Paul driven by compassion and in the power of the Holy Spirit intercedes for the those on the ship. The Roman guards would have lost their lives in accordance with Roman law had the prisoners escaped, so this turn of events was significant! So, in Pauls likeness, moved with compassion we pray for our own potential shipwrecks. Praying that God will change the circumstances and bring mercy into our midst.

verse for the week

But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land.

Acts 27 verse 43

image for the week



prayer for the week

Father, there are tricky times we live in and seek to navigate through, but I know You are God.

When others fear their circumstances,

I will trust in the way of Jesus, because You said 'no weapon formed against me shall prosper.'

I stand on your promises, oh Father.

I believe that You are more than able to keep me safe during these times.

Help me I pray.

AMEN.

reflection for each day



day one

they took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep.

Have you taken time recently to pray for revelation about your circumstances? What does God say to you?



day two

Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.

Lord help us to be anchored in you and to pray earnestly for your light to illuminate our lives.



day three

Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.”

As with Paul Lord Jesus give us words of wisdom to help us day by day.



day four

For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.

Look out today for signs of God appearing in lives of those around us.



day five

So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away’.

Lord Jesus, help us to let go of all that might trap us and help us to hold onto that which brings life.



day six

‘Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.’

We need the bread of life in Jesus to survive and thrive. Reflect on how Jesus protects us through his provision day by day.



day seven

they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could.

Give thanks to God today for the shelters he has given in your life that have protected you from the storms.

for the group

as you gather...

- Discuss as a group what are the storms you have faced in life and how God may have brought you through them.
- In the group further reflect on how temptation to survive, “my way” has an influence on your survival strategies?
- Share some stories of how you have found the shelter from the storm? What forms have they taken?
- What difference do you think – feeding on the body (and blood) of Jesus makes in your life? (See John 6 :53-55).

prayer for the group

Lord God
we call on you our rock and salvation
to guide us through the rough seas of
life into your rest.
AMEN



continue the conversation

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Malta

Acts 28:1-15

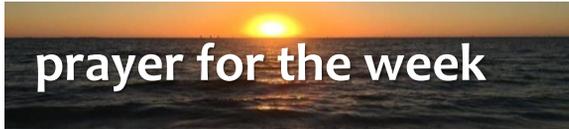


Throughout the ministry of Jesus and Paul, God seems to validate the word spoken with accompanying miracles and this tends to be recorded on the frontiers of the expansion of the message. As Jesus sends out the 12 and the 72 they are to look for those who welcome them and then heal the sick and manifest the Kingdom of God (*Luke 10.1-24*). This is precisely what happens here at the very edge of Paul's journey. There is a welcome given from the native population in Malta and Paul demonstrates the truth of the message entrusted to him with miraculous signs. Although these signs are very much part of the ongoing life of the Church they seem to have a special significance in the missionary work on the edge.


 verse for the week

When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.

Acts 28 verse 9


 prayer for the week

*Lord Jesus,
help us in our missionary work on the edge to have confidence in your grace and power to meet all of our needs.
Amen.*


 image for the week


reflection for each day



day one

The islanders showed us unusual kindness.

Remember to look out for the people of peace in your lives.



day two

But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects

Give thanks for the God who delivers us from evil.



day three

His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him

Be aware today for opportunities to pray with those who are ill.



day four

They honoured us in many ways; and... furnished us with the supplies we needed.

In the Kingdom of God it is normal to find mutual blessing. Be grateful and open to this and give thanks to God for this provision.



day five

After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island

Pray for direction today in terms of where God would have you focus your ministry in him. Is there a change afoot.



day six

The next day the south wind came up, and on the following day we reached Puteoli.

Look out for the winds of God's Spirit empowering and directing you.



day seven

At the sight of these people Paul thanked God and was encouraged.

Look for signs of encouragement today in the ministry God has given to you.

for the group

as you gather...

- Look at ways in which you as a group and individuals engage with the 'edge'.
- Share stories of God's provision miraculous or otherwise.
- Talk about ways in which you feel 'SENT', as Paul himself was sent out.
- Jesus called his disciples to 'go and make further disciples. How do you think as a group and individuals you are achieving that? Give examples to help this discussion along.

prayer for the group

*Help us Lord in every area of our lives to be
your sent ones.*

AMEN.



continue the conversation

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in Rome

Acts 28:16-22



Paul continues, in Rome, as in all his journeys to bring the message of Good News that God has opened the door to salvation both for the Jews and the Gentiles. The message that the blood of Jesus has brought forgiveness and reconciliation to both Jew and Gentile in a way that the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer simply could not match. His fellow Jews could not cope with this salvation of faith in Jesus being equally offered to both Jew and Gentile, but Paul persisted to the end, like Jesus, with the message he had been given.


 verse for the week

For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.

Acts 28 verse 20


 prayer for the week

*Lord Jesus,
through the power of your Spirit,
keep us faithful to the calling that
you have given to your disciples.
Lead us away from any temptation
to wander and deliver us into your
good will.*

Amen.


 image for the week


reflection for each day



day one

When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him

Paul was given some grace to live under house arrest. Give thanks to God for His grace given to you each day.



day two

Paul said to them: 'My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestor.'

Remember today and give thanks for your brothers and sisters in Christ.



day three

'I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans.'

Have you been 'handed over' by people who should have known better – pray for them today.



day four

'They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death'

Paul was found not guilty by the ruling authorities. Pray God will work through your local authority structures.



day five

'The Jews objected'

Sometimes we are let down by those who are supposed to be our brothers and sisters. Pray that in these situations you would maintain a compassionate and forgiving heart.



day six

'It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.'

Paul spoke to the Jews with words of hope. Today accept the challenge of speaking to all with words seasoned in hope.



day seven

'But we want to hear what your views are'

Paul enjoyed the prospect of an audience that wanted to listen. Today be aware that God may be working away in the hearts of people who you meet. Be ready to give a response of hope to any who are looking for it.

for the group

as you gather...

- Have you ever felt like a prisoner for the Lord i.e. certain options are just not available for you because of your commitment to Jesus? Go around the group and ask people to comment on the truth of this in their lives. Is it a difficult option or does it bring freedom?
- Paul was challenged by his brothers – the Jews. Share stories of where you have been challenged by fellow believers. How did it feel? Did good grow out of it or was it negative?
- The Roman authorities wanted to let Paul go but he was persecuted by those he once held strong allegiance to. Have you ever found that God seems to be working through people/areas that you were not expecting? Share examples of this around the group.
- Clearly the Jews had a problem with the door being opened to the Gentiles. Do you think that your local Church has similar issues with the your local ‘Gentiles’? Are there people who would have to jump through a few hoops simply to be accepted in your local Church?

prayer for the group

*May it be Your will,
O LORD our God,
to cause love, friendship ties,
peace, and friendship
to swell in our midst,*

Amen.



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The gospel proclaimed

Acts 28:23-31



The book of Acts works in a full circle – beginning and ending with the teaching of the Kingdom of God. In the first chapter Jesus gathers his disciples and speaks of the things of the Kingdom (before Paul has been even called!). Some thirty years later the Kingdom of God has spread to much of the Roman Empire through the likes of Peter, John, Stephen, Philip and countless others. This fulfilment of Jesus command to “*make disciples of all the nations*” had started with power and determination and continues to this day. Also to this day Acts is our training manual for this missionary endeavour.

verse for the week

Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it.

Acts 28 verse 28

prayer for the week

Lord Jesus
 help us to return to your mandate
 of making disciples
 as we seek day by day and week by
 week to live out the continuation of
 the acts of the Holy Spirit in the
 contexts we serve in.

Amen.

image for the week



reflection for each day



day one

and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying

The proclamation of the Kingdom is always marked by growth in the ministry and teaching of Jesus. Look for that growth in those you witness to.



day two

Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe.

Some will not believe our message of the Kingdom. Pray for those people today that the light will break the darkness.



day five

'I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles'

There are none who are outside of God's salvation – none at all. Affirm this truth to yourselves over this day.



day three

'Go to this people'

Today you go to a people that you work with, live with, have fun with. Remember today that you are called as a living witness to the power of resurrection. Pray that people will have eyes to this witness.



day six

'and they will listen'

People will listen. Pray for an expectation today that your witness and words will cut through the unbelief and bear fruit in the hearts of people you know.



day four

'and turn, and I would heal them'

Do you need to be healed in any part of your life. Turn to Jesus today and seek His wholeness.



day seven

'He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ- with all boldness and without hindrance!'

Let us follow Paul in these ways in our own situation.

for the group

as you gather...

- Who are the 'Gentiles' in your lives. Discuss what the equivalent of a Gentile is today.
- Reflect on the thread of the Kingdom of God that runs through the whole of Acts (and the Gospels too). What aspects of the Kingdom stand out and which are more difficult to see? Is that true in your context? Do some elements of the Kingdom stand out more than others.
- Paul continued to quote the Hebrew scriptures in all of his travelling even though the people who he met would not necessarily know Hebrew. What were (if any) the radical departures from his Hebrew roots in Paul's teaching of the ways of Jesus?
- Paul prophesied that "they will listen". Do you think that we need to make more room in our churches for prophecy? Discuss.

prayer for the group

Lord you have called us to proclaim the
Kingdom in words, deeds and power.
Help us, as a community,
do that both individually and corporately
as we seek to live in the power and
direction of your name.
Amen.



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