

Acts 28:1-16

THE CURRENT MISSION

Walking by Discernment – Strengthened by Fellowship

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 28:1-10

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 28:1-2

As God would have it, the island the crew landed on is called Malta, which means refuge. God provided a refuge in the storm for Paul and those who had trusted Him in obedience.

After falling exhausted on the shore, God provided even more blessing by providing hospitality. It would have been common for a native people to take advantage of shipwreck victims, but in this case the grace of God led them to do otherwise.

Question: The crew had been fighting God's will on this trip. They finally came to a place of obedience, and God began to provide a breakthrough. However, they were still shipwrecked, and they were still taken in by strangers. Do you feel like your expectations of how God will provide and protect you are reasonable? Or better yet, Biblical? These gracious acts of God could have been seen as further calamity, or they could have been seen as gifts.

Acts 28:3-6

1 Just when it seemed that things were going well, Paul suffered a tragedy. He was struck by a venomous snake. By the native people's reaction, we can see that the natural cause of a bite like this was either severe illness or death.

Paul did not seem moved by this incident, but continued on by shaking the viper into the fire. We see a pattern of faith in Paul's ministry. Even in life or death situations, Paul knew that God had his days numbered. God was going to protect him until his mission was completed. We can see the difference in Paul's perspective in:

- A** Acts 20:22-24: Paul knows that suffering awaits, but also knows that his mission is not yet finished.
- B** 2 Timothy 4:6-8: Paul knew that his mission was coming to an end and was trusting God in the face of his martyrdom.

2 Paul was not shaken by circumstance, nor did he discern God's favor by good or trying events. However, the natives did. This is a great example of the difference between how a disciple views trials and how a non-believer views trials.

A Paul, as seen above, trusted God and His work regardless of what it looked like.

B The natives discerned the world around them through what many people may call "karma." Good things happen to good people, and bad things are a sign of sin or evil within a person. When Paul was bitten, they concluded that he must have been a murderer. When Paul survived, their minds were changed to thinking that he was a god!

This is a sign of maturity. As we mature in Christ, we are able to discern God's will not by emotions or events but rather by the Spirit of God and Truth. (Ephesians 4:11-16, Hebrews 5:11-6:3)

? **Question: Do you find yourself discerning the favor of God based upon how your life goes? Or do you discern whether God is pleased with another person based upon how their life is going? Although we know this is not necessarily true, try to make an honest assessment of yourself and if you can fall into this trap.**

Acts 28:7-10

What looked like a terrible event opened the door for God to move in power through Paul. Due to Paul's miraculous healing, he was asked to pray over the chief of the people, and eventually over many of the sick native people.

God was allowing suffering and momentary crisis for a much greater purpose. Sometimes God's purpose is seen in a short period of time like Acts 28. Other times it is not seen for years, or even until we reach eternity. Regardless, we can trust the promise of Romans 8:28.

Read Aloud Acts 28:11-16

Describe what is happening in your own words.

Acts 28:11-15

After many hardships, the Lord began to provide some relief. In both Puteoli and Rome, God led the crew to "brothers," or in other words "fellow disciples." One of God's greatest ways of encouraging us is not in great physical blessing but often through the encouragement of the saints.

- 2 Corinthians 7:6
- 2 Timothy 1:16
- Philippians 2:19-24
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11

? **Question: It is easy to view fellowship or the church as something that is "normal" or simply something that we are entitled to. In reality, this is a great blessing! Do you view fellowship as foundational in your life and walk with Christ?**

Acts 28:16

God further blessed Paul by giving him privacy in his imprisonment. This most likely was in Paul's own rented quarters. God did not release Paul, but He was with Paul in the midst of his imprisonment and suffering.

Paul could have easily complained that God had not brought freedom. Instead, Paul remained thankful for how God provided for him in the midst of adversity. This type of attitude allows us to learn from suffering and ultimately use our own suffering to experience God and eventually witness to others. 2 Corinthians 1:3-11



Question: How do you view suffering? What sticks out to you about 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 and the example of Paul?

Weekly Challenge

Take some time this week to evaluate areas in your life that have been difficult. How has God provided in the suffering? What are your biggest needs and heartaches? As you have these thoughts, write them down. Then spend some time in both petitioning God (asking) and thanking God for the ways that He has been faithful. Finish this time with a few songs of worship that you sing aloud.

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."

