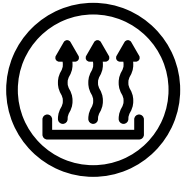




ACTS: THE STORY CONTINUES



WARM-UP

Have you ever been caught in a terrible storm? What happened?

Pray for your time together as a group.

ACTS 27:19-26 (NIV)

19 On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

21 After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. 22 But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. 23 Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me 24 and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' 25 So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. 26 Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island."



Why do you think Luke includes the detail that they "gave up all hope of being saved"? How does that set the stage for Paul's message?



Why do you think God allows the ship to be destroyed while saving all the lives?

JONAH 1:1-12 (NIV)

1 The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”

3 But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.

4 Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. 5 All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. 6 The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.”

7 Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”

9 He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

10 This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)

11 The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?”

12 “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”



Compare and contrast Acts 27:19-26 with the Jonah passage. What stands out to you?



In both situations, God wanted Jonah and Paul to be in the storm. What was God’s ultimate purpose for them? What does this say about the “storms” we go through in our own life?

Paul’s hardships don’t stop there...

ACTS 28:1-10 (NIV)

1 Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. 2 The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. 3 Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. 4 When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live." 5 But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. 6 The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

7 There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. 8 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. 9 When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. 10 They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.



How do we see God's sovereignty in these verses?



Compare this Acts 28:3-5 with Genesis 3:15. What does the comparison show us?

ACTS 28:24-31 (NIV)

24 Some (Jews) were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. 25 They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

26 “Go to this people and say,
“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”

27 For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.’

28 “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” [29]

30 For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. 31 He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!



How does this passage serve as a fitting conclusion for this book?



What is one thing that God has taught you through our study of Acts? What does it look like for you to continue living out this truth?

DISCUSSION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



- Have you gone through a “storm” in your life, where it was difficult to see God’s hand in it?
- How can we encourage each other to change our perspective in the midst of any storms or roadblocks we may currently be going through?