

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"GOD'S GRACE IN THE STORMS WE FACE"

Big Idea: Because of God's grace, we can have courage and be encouragers in the midst of any storm.

For individual study or discussion

One of the affirmations of faith frequently used in our church is the answer to the first question in the Heidelberg Catechism. The answer proclaims the one sure and certain comfort that we have all throughout life and when we face death.

What is your only comfort in life and in death? That I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven: in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

There are times in most lives, however, when these words, however stirring and beautiful, may seem or feel unbelievable. The storms of life can overpower us. C. S. Lewis made this honest observation in his book on grief: "Sometimes, Lord, one is tempted to say that if you wanted us to behave like the lilies of the field, you might have given us an organization more like theirs." We may know that we should trust in the Lord, but we may still struggle to do so. How might this story in the book of Acts teach us more about how to face hardship?

- 1) In what ways does Paul resemble his Savior in this passage?
 - A best-selling novel, first published in 1896 and entitled *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?*, encouraged many believers to make decisions by asking themselves the question in the title. "WWJD" is now a slogan printed on t-shirts and wristbands. Is this the way in which Paul figured out what to do?
 - ◇ What should primarily determine the way we think and act?
 - ◇ What can be problematic about asking the WWJD question?
 - What in this passage reveals that Paul is still human and not receiving moment-by-moment communication from God?
- 2) Take some time to read Romans 1:11-17 and Romans 15:14-33, two passages in which Paul expresses his longing to visit the Roman Christians.
 - What motivated Paul? Consider not just his primary motivation but his secondary motivations as well.
 - What made Paul "willing and ready" to live for Christ?
- 3) Paul offered God-given wisdom to encourage those enduring the raging storm with him. Here are other words of encouragement from God's Word—see Ps. 37:23-24, John 16:33, 2 Cor. 4:16-18, and Phil. 1:6.

DATE: February 28, 2021

SPEAKER: Joe/Frank

SERIES: Acts

PASSAGE: Acts 27:1-26

Family Dinner Table

As we've studied many of the stories about Paul in Acts, we have talked about God's providence: "His completely holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing every creature and every action." (This is the definition from *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, a book of questions and answers that summarize the core doctrines—the core beliefs—of the Christian faith.)

When Paul was sailing to Rome, he faced difficulty after difficulty, but he was not suffering because he had done something wrong. Nor had he made poor decisions that ended up having terrible consequences. He was actually doing everything God had told him to do.

So how do we figure out when hard times are part of God's design for our lives, and when they might be a result of wrong choices we've made or God's way of encouraging us to go in a different direction? Do you know the story of Jonah? What was Jonah doing when the boat he was in got caught in the storm?

How might knowing about both these stories—Paul's and Jonah's—help you know what to do and what to think when you face difficult circumstances?

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Bridges Community Church in Alhambra

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