

WEEKLY REFLECTION

The finale of Acts ends in a whirlwind: after being caught in a storm, Paul and those with him are lost at sea and without food. (27:14-26) When they finally land, shipwrecked, on the island of Malta, Paul is then bitten by a viper as he helps to start a fire. (28:2-4) But because God's will is for Paul to reach Rome and to stand before Caesar, all those on the ship with Paul are alive and well (27:23-24). Though the native people of Malta were expecting Paul to swell up or to suddenly fall dead from the viper's bite, nothing happened. (28:4-6)

In fact, Paul's treatment as a prisoner in Rome isn't bad at all. Though he was perpetually chained to a soldier who guarded him, he was allowed to stay by himself with his own earnings. (28:16, 30) For two years Paul lived in Rome, welcoming all those who visited him and proclaiming the kingdom of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance. (v.31)

This is where the book of Acts ends—Luke doesn't say that Paul had the chance to meet Caesar, and it's likely he didn't meet his end here. Church tradition maintains that Paul visited Spain after Rome, which for him would have been the ends of the earth. Dogged, determined Paul had fought the good fight. In 2 Timothy, which is believed to be the final letter he ever wrote, Paul describes himself as having been "poured out as a drink offering", having finished the race and kept the faith. (2 Tim. 4:6-7) How many of us can say the same?

Though the ending to the book of Acts may seem abrupt, it tells us two things: firstly, that the protagonist of Acts was always God, not Paul or Peter, nor anyone else. Secondly, Acts 28 now points towards us and asks—will you go? Will you follow in Paul's footsteps, church? Will you obey and go?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

What is a movie, book, or TV show finale that was memorable for you? What did you enjoy about it? If it disappointed you instead, how do you wish it had ended?

QUESTION TWO:

In Acts 27-28, not only was Paul lost at sea without food, but he was also shipwrecked and bitten by a viper. When he finally reached Rome, he was chained to a soldier for constant supervision as a prisoner. And yet—this is the same person who was able to write in his letter to the church of Corinth, that “...this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison...” (2 Cor. 4:17)

Given all that he had faced, why or how do you think Paul was able to have this mindset? Is there anything you are facing that makes it difficult to have the same attitude Paul does? How might you shift your perspective as you consider Paul’s journey, not just in Acts 27-28 but throughout the entire book of Acts?

QUESTION THREE:

Acts 28 ends with Paul “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.” (v.31)

As we reflect on the ways we can reach others for Christ, what is a small, actionable step that you can commit to doing this week despite whatever you’re facing? For example, can you use the time you have between back-to-back meetings to pray for whoever you’re meeting with?