

Don't Give Up - Press On!

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[0:00] If you would take your Bibles, please, and go to the book of Acts. Acts chapter 28. Oh, we're getting close.

Acts chapter 28. If you're visiting with us, you can pull out that black Bible in the chair in front of you. And go towards the back, find page 117. 117, Acts 28. We'll do the first 16 verses this morning. And I think if you notice there in your bulletin, as you're turning to Acts chapter 28, next week I'm just going to do a message specifically for the Lord's Supper.

We're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper together. So Hebrews, I think it's Hebrews chapter 4 is in there. 14 through 16 should be in your bulletins. That's what I'm going to be preaching on. We're going to focus on that so we can focus our hearts on the Lord's Supper. I told you I'd be doing that here and there. We'll finish up Acts on Mother's Day, May 8th. And then I'm going to do a message called Acts 29.

[1:10] Where do we go from here? We'll do that May 15th. So, the saga, the story continues on.

Acts chapter 29. So we will look at that in a few weeks. Today we're in Matthew. Today we're in Acts chapter 28. I'll read the first 16 verses. Then we'll do our study.

And when they had been brought safely through, then we found out that the island was called Malta. And the natives showed us extraordinary kindness.

For because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled the fire and received us all. But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand.

And when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, Undoubtedly, this man is a murderer. And though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.

[2:09] However, he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm. But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

Verse 7. Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days.

And it came about that the father of Publius was lying in bed, afflicted with fever and dysentery. And Paul went in to see him. And after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. And after this had happened, and the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured.

And they also honored us with many marks of respect. And when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all we needed. Verse 11. And at the end of three months, we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, which had the twin brothers for its figurehead. And after we put in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. And from there, we sailed around and arrived at Razium. And a day later, a south wind sprang up. And on the second day, we came to Puteoli.

[3:21] There we found some brethren and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And thus, we came to Rome. And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the market of Apius and three taverns to meet us.

And when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself with the soldier who was guarding him. NPR had a news story this past week.

It was titled, Faithful Mattress Will Squeal on a Cheating Partner. A new mattress on sale in Spain will alert you if your partner is being unfaithful.

You will learn of the cheating on a mobile app. The Smartwrist, Mattress, Smartwrist, that's where they go, is equipped with a lover detection system.

In a video, the company making this mattress says, quote, if your partner isn't faithful, at least your mattress is. Really? That's sad.

[4:39] You have to rely on your mattress instead of a person? What does our world come to? Is it that hard to find a faithful spouse?

What about faithful Christians? Is it hard to find faithful Christians? Nominalism is the in thing.

I'm a Christian, but I keep it to myself. Don't tell another person that they're wrong. Don't tell another person that their beliefs are wrong and Christianity is right.

Oh, don't say that. Because you're a bigot if you say that. That's hate speech. And it's easy to keep your Christianity to yourself.

But is that biblical? We've noticed over the past two, three, four, five, six weeks even, the model Christian that we see in Paul.

[5:49] I mean, we see this man who's just as faithful. A model for us. Exemplary character. And we see it here once again.

As we come to this part in Acts, as we're coming to the close of the book of Acts, Acts, what is it about? Just do it. Be who you are. Christian, let God use you to fulfill His mission.

And here we come to this passage, 28, 1 through 16. You be faithful, He'll be sovereign. You be faithful, He'll be sovereign.

You read this part of Acts, and it seems uneventful. And in certain ways it is. More or less. 276 guys, prisoners, whatever, and with the soldiers, landing on Malta, this whole ordeal with the snake. Paul heals. Possibly the gospel's proclaimed. They set sail for Rome. They get connected with other Christians. They arrive in Rome. We see this whole thing happening.

[7:03] Paul was on trial. He appears to Caesar. He goes before Agrippa. They sent him. He gets shipwrecked. They end up at Malta. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

True historical events that really happen. What can we take away from it? Well, we can take away this. Paul was a great example of a faithful servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ, who trusted and thanked God, who gave grace, and proclaimed the gospel, proclaimed the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, as individual, Jesus followers, and as a corporate body, we are encouraged to imitate Paul's example, to be faithful servants, who trust God's sovereign will and thank Him, who give grace to others, and take the opportunities given to us to proclaim Christ.

In other words, to put it in a short phrase for you, you be faithful, God will be sovereign. You just be the faithful servant, and God will take care of the rest.

You're easier said than done. I know. But don't look to me as an example. Look to Paul as an example.

[8:31] Be encouraged. Do what God wants you to do, and He'll take care of the rest. Let's be encouraged. Be a people of grace.

Because we're so awed of God's graces. God has been so gracious to you. Aren't you just enthralled, and enamored, and amazed that God has been so gracious to you? He owes you nothing, and He gave you everything.

And the Lord Jesus Christ, be so enamored with God's grace, and let's be a people of grace. And you know what? God's going to fulfill His word. Let this passage be an exhortation to you as a Jesus follower.

And not just for you individually, but us as a church, as a corporate body. We as members of Cottonwood Bible Church, we're known as people. We're just faithful servants. Like we read from Luke this morning, chapter 17.

Jesus is talking to His disciples. You just say, we're just slaves. We're just doing what we're commanded to do. Stay faithful.

[9:42] In a time where you're being squeezed, be faithful. In a time where it ain't cool to be a Christian, be faithful.

In a time where you're going to be called a bigot, be faithful. Or a homophobe. Be faithful. In a time where people will mock you, and they will want nothing to do with you, just because you say, I'm a follower of Jesus.

You haven't even said anything to them. And they just, blow you off. Stay faithful. Don't look to me as an example. Let's look to Paul.

Here's four marks. Four marks of a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Four of them. A faithful, there's more. Okay, there's more.

These aren't the only four, but here's four that we see from the text. You trust God, you thank God, you give grace, you proclaim the gospel. A faithful servant of Christ from what we'll see from the text.

[10:45] Trust God, trust God, thanks God, gives grace, and proclaims the gospel. We're known to be people who trust God.

We give thanks to God. We give grace to others, and we proclaim the gospel. That's a faithful servant. So we'll work our way through. Number one, a faithful servant trusts God.

Verses one through six. Trust God because circumstances give me an opportunity to trust God and glorify Him with my attitude and my actions. I made it personal for you.

So if you're writing notes, you can make it personal. A faithful servant trusts God. I trust God because circumstances just give me an opportunity to trust God and glorify Him with my attitude and my actions.

That's what we see in Paul. In verses one through six. So from last week, we looked at chapter 27. Shipwrecked.

[11:50] They landed, and at that time that they landed, they learned the name of the island was Milite, or it's also known today as Malta. It's 58 miles south of Sicily.

See that ten times real fast. They stayed here for three months for the winter season. Well, they couldn't go anywhere anyways. They didn't have a choice.

Nobody was traveling at this time. Notice verse two. The natives showed us extraordinary kindness because the rain that set in, the cold, they kindled the fire. Interesting, Luke called them.

Here, the Greek word is actually barbarians. Those ignorant of Greek or Latin or maybe they were culturally, lack cultural background. Interesting he uses this word though.

But most of them didn't know Greek. They were probably Phoenician in their origin. They spoke mostly Punic, not Greek. Interesting too though.

[12:49] These people showed such kindness to them. All 276 persons. They killed a fire. Interesting. Did they have some huge, huge, huge fire for them?

Or did they have like little pockets of fire or something? We don't know. It doesn't say. But from Luke's perspective, extraordinary kindness. Verse three. Paul's gathering a bunch of sticks.

A viper comes out, fastens on his hand. Interesting, the irony. If you survive a shipwreck, you get killed by a viper. Well, that's a bummer. I survived a shipwreck.

Oh God. Bummer. And notice what the native natives reaction. Undoubtedly, this man is a murderer. He's been saved from the sea.

Justice has not allowed him to live. Justice is personified here. Justice was the daughter of Zeus and Thales. She was a goddess.

[13:47] She was the one directing events. She's not going to let him live. However, he shook the creature off into the fire, suffered no harm. They were expecting he was about to swell up suddenly or fall down dead.

So they're waiting, they're waiting, nothing happened. They changed their minds and said he was a god. Yet it didn't occur to them to ask the question how this so-called god would be, would allow himself to be under human custody.

Hmm. He's sitting there in chains and yet he's a god. That makes sense. Anyways. Same thing happened, if you remember, in the book of Acts, chapter 14. Paul and Barnabas, they're in Lystra, they're like, oh, these guys are gods.

And Paul and Barnabas are like, no, no, no, we're not. And they took the opportunity to proclaim the gospel. Well, why doesn't Paul do this here? Why don't we see Paul do this here? We'll look at this in just a moment.

In a few moments, we'll look at this. I do think that Paul did proclaim the gospel, but Luke doesn't focus on this for some reason. Why? We don't know. Except that maybe he was trying to get to the main aspect of the letter, which is the fact that they were trying to get to Rome.

[14:57] needless to say, what's the point? Circumstances is give us an opportunity to trust God. Here's Paul.

Shipwrecked. I mean, he gets bit by a snake. It's cold. It's wet. I'm going to trust God's word. For us, when circumstances don't go our way, I don't know about you, but I crumble.

And I whine. And I bicker. And I get mad. I know none of you do that. But only pastors, we're the only ones who do things like that.

We whine, bicker, and get angry, and sulk. Is that how we respond? Or, faithful servants trust God because circumstances just give me an opportunity to trust God and I'm going to glorify Him with my attitude and my actions.

Is that how we're going to respond? That's what a faithful servant, look at Paul. That's what a faithful servant of Jesus Christ does. Look at Paul's example. Look to him.

[16:18] This leads to the next two points, two and three. A faithful servant gives grace and proclaims Christ. A faithful servant gives grace to others and proclaims Christ to others.

Here's some statements for you. Because God was so gracious to me, again, I'm making it personal for you. Because God was so gracious to me in the gospel, I'm going to reach out to others and show them grace as opportunities arise.

Plus, I will take advantage of the situations God gives me to proclaim to another person the saving gospel word. This is Paul's thinking.

It's like, it's like, boop, boop, boop. It's on his radar. He's always, who can I give grace to? Bam! Who can I give the gospel to? Bam! He just takes the opportunities. Me, I start whining and get mad.

I know none of you do this. Just us pastors. Faithful servants give grace. Faithful servants proclaim Christ.

[17:24] Because God has been so gracious to me in the gospel, I'm going to reach out to others and show them grace. I'm going to take advantage of the situations that God has placed me in to give someone else the gospel that needs to hear the gospel.

Christian, take every opportunity that's given to you to minister to others following Paul's example. This is what he does.

He didn't whine. He didn't rant. He didn't get mad. He didn't go sulk in a corner. He's crying. Look at what he does. Verse 7. Now in the neighborhood of that place, land is belonging to the leading man of the island named Peerless. He's chief of the island.

Notice he welcomed, entertained us courteously for three days. He's like the procurator or the landowner. We're not sure his title.

[18:30] Possibly New Greek. His father, the father Peerless, was suffering from fever and dysentery. Possibly it's from a microbe that comes, or it's found in goat's milk there at Malta.

The fever that someone would have from this microbe could last weeks, months, even years because that microbe is in your system. What does Paul do?

Shows grace. Goes in to see him. And after he prayed, he laid his hands on him, which by the way is the only place in Acts where prayer and lay-on of hands are put together.

By the way, the guy has dysentery, which is highly contagious. And he healed him. Paul showed God's grace and kindness to this man's father by healing him.

And we know and we believe the way that God was authenticating the gospel that he was speaking revelation was through miracles and healings. So here's a way to authenticate the gospel that Paul was proclaiming so we can deduce from this that Paul actually proclaimed the gospel in the midst of this.

[19:48] I mean, the guy was there for three months. He didn't say the gospel at all? Well, that's kind of stupid to think that. Of course he did. Luke just doesn't focus on it for some reason.

Notice verse 9. After this happened, the rest of the people in the eye go, Hey! This guy got healed. They brought their diseases. They're coming to him. They're getting cured. And they also honored us with many marks of respect and when we were setting sail they supplied us with all we needed. Many others from the island that came to Paul and they were cured. Paul's healing a number of people and then they showed their gratitude to him. Not just for healing but again, we're deducing that Paul most likely was proclaiming the gospel.

They showed their gratitude to the travelers by giving gifts they would need for the trip to Rome. They gave them everything they needed. You see how Paul's healing ministry and gospel proclamation how it brought blessing to many?

Not just to the people of Malta but to his own traveling companions. The other 275 guys that were with him. And remember, not all those guys were Christians.

[21:04] Once again, God showed His gracious blessing to these pagans. God saved them from being killed from the shipwreck. From that major storm. And now He's shown the grace not just in terms of saving them but now they had everything they needed to go to Rome.

These guys wanted nothing to do with Christianity. but here's Paul showing grace. And God giving His blessing because Paul showed grace.

As we're faithful to minister to others and care for them, God will bless not only us but also those who are with us. Even those who are not necessarily ministering to or caring for others.

Paul just took the opportunity. Just by way of illustration, when Paul made it to Rome, he's in prison. In Philippians 1, verse 12, he says, I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, the advancement of the gospel, the gospel being proclaimed. I would be whining, crying in the corner because I'm in prison.

[22:14] Not Paul. He says, the gospel is being advanced. The gospel is being proclaimed because of my circumstances. When we find ourselves in dire circumstances, are we trusting the Lord and taking the opportunity to give others grace and even proclaim the gospel to someone?

to whom can you show grace today? Who are you going to give grace to today? Who needs grace today?

Maybe it might be that customer at Walmart. Maybe it might be your neighbor, a family member. Are you here today and you need God's grace?

You need God's grace in the sense that you're not a follower of Jesus Christ and you need to repent and put your trust in Jesus. Maybe you need to be shown grace by God Himself.

Are you a follower of Jesus? Do you know Him? The Father sent His Son on behalf of sinners to live and to die as a substitute for sinners and yet brought Him back to life.

[23:36] If you repent and put your trust in Jesus alone, He will save you. He'll give you grace. So faithful servants, faithful servants, they give grace, they proclaim the gospel, they take these opportunities.

Last, number four, a faithful servant thanks God. A faithful servant thanks God. We looked at a faithful servant trusts God.

A faithful servant gives grace and proclaims the gospel. And last, number four, a faithful servant thanks God. Thanks God because God will always keep His promises to me and because it's encouraging to me to see God's people committed to the truth.

God will always keep His promises to me. Again, making it personal for you and because it's encouraging to see God's people committed to the truth.

11 through 16. These verses seem uneventful. They're there in multiple three months. They set sail out for Rome. It's about February AD 60.

[25:02] Alexandrian ship. Notice it says there in verse 11, which had the twin brothers for its figurehead. Twin brothers were Castor and Pollux, the sons of Zeus and Leda. Interesting.

They were the Savior gods. How ironic. Jesus Christ is the Savior. And yet, as their figurehead, they had the Savior gods.

But uneventful, Syracuse, Radium, Puteoli, which is 130 miles south of Rome. Notice it says here at verse 15, and brethren, when they heard about us, oh, excuse me, verse 14, there we found some brethren and were invited to stay with them for seven days.

They exhorted or prevailed upon Paul to remain. And they needed a good rest since the rest of the trip at this point would be done by foot on land. Now, did these believers provide only for Paul and his companions or did they provide for all 276 people?

All those persons. We don't know. It would not be unbelievable for that to happen. There could have been quite a few believers that were there to help and take care of all of them.

[26:16] Notice at the end of verse 14, thus we came to Rome and the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the mark of Apicius and the three taverns to meet us. Traveling from the Forum of Apicius was 43 miles south of Rome.

The three taverns or the three inns was 21 miles south of Rome. So, they finally made it to Rome. Normally, in good conditions, to travel from Caesarea to Rome took five weeks, right?

the total time it took them to travel to Rome was well over four months. And so, notice, two separate groups of the Christian community came from Rome to meet Paul and his companion in those

places as well as to accompany them into Rome.

This would no doubt be astonishing to his travelers. verse 16. And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself with the soldier who was guarding him.

He was guarded by one soldier instead of the normal two-soldier guard. Most likely, he stayed in rented quarters, which possibly was paid for by the believers in Rome, so people could visit, he could teach, and discuss things.

[27 : 37] We'll see that take place next week when we look at verse 17 through the end of the chapter, verse 31. But I want you to notice something in verse 15. And when Paul saw them, the believers, he thanked God and took courage.

It's encouraging to see other godly, like-minded believers come together to encourage each other. That's encouraging, to see them encourage each other. That's the importance of the Christian community.

Believers generously and graciously, they welcome Paul. Which, by the way, just by implication, that's the importance of church membership.

That's why we here at Calum of the Bible believe in church membership because it shows you're committed to this one particular church not just from your perspective but from our perspective. because there's like-minded believers coming together to encourage one another.

So Paul thanked God not just for making it to Rome but for the commitment of God's people to the truth. It's so encouraging to see other Christians staying faithful to Jesus Christ.

[29 : 01] John mentioned this in 3 John. We looked at that this morning. 3 John with Gaius. John was so encouraged. He said this, Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health as your soul prospers.

I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth how you were walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this to hear of my children walking in the truth. It's encouraging to see other believers walking in the truth.

That's what encouraged Paul. Just like we saw in Luke chapter 17 how we read that this morning. A true disciple of Jesus serves God laboring faithfully and obediently in any area he calls him or her. That's what encouraged Paul. He took courage when he sees believers encouraging him. It's not that our followers followers of Jesus Christ that they're supposed to do this they're supposed to do that they just say I'm just I'm not looking for honor and prestige I'm just doing what God wants me to do.

I'm just staying faithful. So what do we see from Paul's life today as an example to us? we see a man who trusted God a man who thanked God a man who gave grace to others a man who proclaimed the gospel to others praise the Lord for this faithful servant.

[30 : 40] Maybe you might know of someone in your own life or someone in someone else's life a person who's been faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. they're the ones that we should emulate.

And here's Paul faithful servant in the midst of these horrible circumstances that he can find himself in and in any different way that he could respond what does he do? He's trusting God.

He's thanking God. He's taking opportunities how can I show this person grace and how can I proclaim the gospel to that guy? What a guy. Father we need to be like Paul.

You've been so gracious to us in Jesus Christ and we're so thankful for a guy like Paul. And the horrible things that he found himself in he's still just trusting you.

He's still thanking you. He was so encouraged to see the Christians. He took the opportunities to give grace to others and to proclaim your gospel.

[31 : 59] Father help us. Help us to emulate Paul's example.

I am one to whine and to be angry and become depressed. There's anxiety worry. We respond that way when things don't go the way we want them to go.

Maybe even someone here had a hard time getting out of bed this morning because they're so depressed. Give us grace.

Give us your grace Lord Jesus to emulate Paul's example. It's just rock solid.

Take a few moments and think and ponder what we've seen here in the book of Acts chapter 28.

And after a few moments of silence we'll continue our time of worship.

[33 : 09] We can worship the Lord through our giving. We'll worship Him by singing two more songs and having our closing prayer and worshipping Him after that to have conversations that honor Him.

So right now take a few moments and ponder and think. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.