

Acts 28:11-31

Glorifying God in Difficult Circumstances

Today we come to our final study in the book of Acts

A) We began this study over 18 months ago on September 11, 2022 - March 10th 2024

B) In-depth journey looking at the early church

C) The book of Acts Chronicles a group of men and women who under the Power of the HS **did not leave their world the way that they found it.**

D) It was said of this group of believers Acts 17 **that they turned their world upside down.**

They were ordinary people who under the power of the HS did extraordinary things.

A) It was the beginning of a movement that continues to this very day.

B) This is the final study in our series –always a good feeling finish a book

C) But this is not the end of the story/The Holy Spirit is still working thru ordinary followers of Jesus today

1) He is still using - Ordinary people to do extraordinary things for the kingdom of God

We left Paul on a ship last time headed to Rome after being shipwrecked at an island called Malta.

A) Paul – the crew and the other prisoners stayed there 3 months – waiting for the winter to pass.

B) Pick up today in V.11 where we see that Paul finally arrives in Rome.

C) Today we are going to learn 3 principles from Paul's life of how to glorify God in difficult circumstances

11 After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island. 12 And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. 13 From there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli, 14 where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went

toward Rome¹⁵ And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage..

Here we get a wonderful note. There at Puteoli Paul was met by Christians.

A) Others come from Appii Forum and Three Inns

B) As best we can determine this was about A. D. 60. Paul had never been to Italy before.

1) Nor, to our knowledge, had any of the other apostles.

C) And yet there were Christians in many of the cities of Italy as well as in Rome itself.

D) A great testimony to the power & the spread of the gospel.

Paul gets there and these believers come out to greet him. **GREAT COMFORT**

A) His heart was encouraged - that God had already been working in Rome

B) I think this little scene is a great reminder to us of the importance of being a part of a church body

A) We need those connections that can encourage us.

B) Struggling – we want to retreat – isolate ourselves

C) But in reality that is when we need to be around the body the most.

D) Even the great Apostle Paul was encouraged by other Christians .

16 Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

When he arrived in Rome he could see God's hand still at work!

A) Paul was put under house arrest rather than in a dungeon – he was able to have visitors –

B) So Paul is in a better situation than he could have been in - but he still wasn't free - in Custody

C) But we will see that even in this difficult situation Paul still lived to glorify God -

1) Consider today 3 ways that he sought to do that

D) What we can learn about glorifying God in the midst of our difficult seasons

#1 He pointed people to Jesus

17 And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, 18 who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death.

19 But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. "I am here on a judicial matter," "I have come to clear my name, not to condemn Israel."

20 For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, **because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."**

The Hope of Israel - was a Reference to the Messiah

A) The Jews today are still waiting for the Messiah to show up -

B) Paul's story - I was found by him - I know Him!

21 Then they said to him, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you.

It is rather revealing that these Jews in Rome had received no word about the apostle.

A) It is possible the word was sent to them in the ship that went down. - Wouldn't that be ironic.

B) Paul is going to get a chance to speak to these Roman Jews without prejudice.

22 But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning **this sect**, we know that it is spoken against everywhere."

(Sect = followers of Jesus) - they were being maligned by both Jews and Romans throughout the empire

C) Remember this is over 20 yrs after the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost

D) Christians would refuse to declare Caesar was Lord - it was becoming a problem

E) These Jewish leaders want to hear what Paul has to say

Acts 28:23a So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, **he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. 24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.**

So Paul beginning with the law, and going through the prophets,

A) He explained the kingdom of God as it related to Jesus.

B) I would love to have MP3 of that study.

C) No doubt Paul starting pointing to all the prophecies that the Jewish people ignored

1) Concerning the birth, death, and Resurrection of the Messiah

D) Then he will finish his message off by sharing his own testimony - how he met Jesus

The beauty of Christian Faith - it is based on evidence of fulfilled prophecy.

A) Our own personal testimony of meeting Jesus and being transformed by Jesus is powerful

B) But it is backed by the evidence of fulfilled prophecy

1) The Prophecies are like Puzzle pieces - that neatly fit together - give you a beautiful picture

My wife loves to build Puzzles - especially 1,000 pieces or more

A) One time on vacation - her puzzle - working on it all week.

B)She got to the end and there was one puzzle piece missing

C)When it comes to the first coming of Jesus Christ and the prophecies concerning his

1)Birth - life- death and Resurrection - THERE ARE NO PUZZLE pieces missing - ALL FULFILLED

The OT gives us 300 prophecies of the concerning the Birth, death and Resurrection of Jesus

A)And those prophecies are like the lights in a strand of Christmas lights

B)Each one testifies to the glory and the greatness of Jesus

C)And every single one of them needed to be fulfilled in order for the strand to work.

1)One light out affects the whole strand

D)Listen there are no lights out - all 300 prophecies pointing to the birth, life, death - Resurrection - Fulfilled

So I wonder did Paul take them all the back to Genesis 3:15

Genesis 3:15

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

A)Interesting prophecy considering the woman doesn't carry seed. – The man does

1)Prophecy of the Virgin Birth –

B)Isaiah followed this up Isaiah 7:14 – **this will be a sign – A virgin shall conceive**

Listen a young girl pregnant was not THE SIGN

A)Go into any Hospital in America – go to the maturity ward – Young women pregnant

B)That is not a sign – that is normal

C)The Sign was a virgin!

1)a woman who could be checked by a doctor and discovered to have never been with a man sexually

A prophecy that the Messiah would come from the household of a man named Jesse from Bethlehem.

A)Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit (Isaiah 11:1)

B)Jesse was a Sheep herder– living in Bethlehem

C)700 years before the Birth of JESUS - the prophet Micah identified

1)that Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem.

Micah 5:2 declares that out of the city of Bethlehem, “shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

D)Mary and Joseph were in living Nazareth

1)In order for God to get them to Bethlehem - Caesar Augustus – prompted to take a census.

His Life and Ministry

The Messiah would be preceded by a forerunner

Prophecy: “A voice of one calling:

‘In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain’” (Isaiah 40:3–4).

Christ's ministry would begin in Galilee

Prophecy:

“Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan— The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (Isaiah 9:1–2).

His Arrival into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday

In Daniel 9, the prophet predicted the very day the Jewish King would appear to the nation Israel.

It would be 173,880 days from the time that King Artaxerxes gave the decree to go and rebuild and restore Jerusalem.

Paul probably pointed to Zechariah 9:9 Messiah would make his triumphal entry lowly riding on a Donkey

“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and victorious,
lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9).

His Betrayal

He will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver
Prophecy: (Zechariah 11:12–13).

His Death

Isaiah 53:12 **He would be numbered with the transgressors -**

A) Jesus was crucified between two thieves

B) Death by Crucifixion

The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;
¹⁷ I can count all My bones.
They look *and* stare at Me.
¹⁸ They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots. Psalm 22:16-18

C) But David is writing in 12th century BC – and crucifixion would be invented in the 6th century

1) David describes a form of death – 400 yrs before it was invented.

D) And over **a thousand years before Jesus** was crucified.

E) In Crucifixion – The criminal was pierced in hands and feet - Stretched – all bones visible

Isaiah 53:5 **But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.**

His Resurrection

A) Jesus Himself predicted that he would rise from the dead.

For He taught His disciples and said to them, “The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.” Mark 9:30

Now I quickly went through 14 Hints or prophecies that were completely fulfilled – Christ Birth, life, death and Resurrection

A) But there are actually over 300 Prophecies that Jesus fulfilled perfectly – Birth life death Resurrection.

B) How incredible is that !

This is how incredible it is. A Scientist by the name of Peter Stoner did some research on this

A) He wrote about it in his Book Science speaks Law of compound probability

B) He said that the Mathematical probability of one person fulfilling 8 prophecies over a 1,000 yr period

1) Not 3000 years - which would have been more accurate in the case of Jesus - Genesis to birth - 3000 yrs

C) Only 1,000 yrs - the mathematical probability of one person fulfilling 8 prophecies in 1,000 yrs

1) Would be 1 and ten to the 17th power

D) A 1 with 17 zeros after it
1,000,000,000,000,000

Now to illustrate just how radical that would be Stoner said this "supposing that we take one in ten to the seventeenth power silver dollars and spread them around the state of Texas -

Now just to give you an idea of how big that is - California is the 3rd largest state.

A) The land mass of California could fit into Texas over 1.5 times - Texas is Huge

B) So the whole state of Texas is covered 2 ft deep in Silver dollars - You paint one silver dollar Red

1) Bury it in the pile somewhere - Blind fold a man and let him roam for days

C) The Chance that he would find that marked silver dollar would be 1 in 10 to the 17th power

D) That is for 8 prophecies being fulfilled - Jesus fulfilled 300

Notice the reaction: v.24 again - 24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

A) The word persuaded means to bring to bring someone to a decision.

B) So some were persuaded and made a decision to follow Jesus

C) Others disbelieved = they refused to believe - meaning they would accept the evidence

D) They had a choice and they chose not to believe

Watch what Paul does next -

How do you glorify God in difficult circumstances?

#2 You tell the truth even when it is hard V.25-29

²⁵ So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, ²⁶ saying, **Quote from Isaiah 6**

'Go to this people and say:

*"Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand;
And seeing you will see, and not perceive;*

²⁷ *For the hearts of this people have grown dull.*

Their ears are hard of hearing,

And their eyes they have closed,

*Lest they should see with their eyes and hear
with their ears,*

*Lest they should understand with their hearts and
turn,*

So that I should heal them." '

So Paul is quoting here from Isaiah 6 -

A) This passage is from Isaiah the prophet is used 7 different times in NT

B) To reveal that humanity is blind and deaf to the truth of the gospel - because we refuse to believe

C) It is like what the Lord declared through Hosea the prophet when he said this - *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge - Hosea 4:6*

D) The Lack of knowledge to the truth was not that it was available - it was available but it was rejected

1) That is exactly what is happening here - it starts with becoming dull of hearing

Do you see the heart of the Lord in this quote from Isaiah - I wanted to draw you in - heal you.

A) You wouldn't listen - ignoring my pleas - ignoring the conviction of the Holy Spirit

Even as believers in Jesus our hearts can become dull to the things of the Lord.

A) **Grown dull** - Hebrews 5 says they had become dull of hearing.

B) **It is a progression** Not on fire one day and cold the next - gradual decline.

Being dull of hearing is not a problem with the ears, but a problem with the heart -

A) It is when you aren't really interested in what God has to say to you.

B) Dullness = being sluggish, a laziness, apathy and complacency that prevents spiritual development.

CONTRAST Jesus said Matthew 5:6 *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness ... filled*

A) This is the opposite of that - hunger is gone

B) It describes a person who's appetite for Word has been replaced by a desire for other things /

1) The fire that once burned bright in life: dim flicker

C) The zeal and excitement that once characterized their desire for God,

1) His Word, things of Kingdom / is gone

D) Replaced by sense of duty, routine even boredom

What causes the heart to grow dull? Note Few insights from Scripture:

A) #1 **Spiritual pride**: Rev 3 - Church of Laodicea they said *we are rich and had it together!*

B) But Jesus perception of them was quite different

C) **Poor, miserable, blind, and naked!** LUKE WARM

1) They were so blinded by their spiritual condition they had no idea - Jesus was outside the church

D) He was knocking on the door wanting back in - wanting - fellowship.

1) Great Reminder there is always hope.

E) Warning - I wish ...hot cold -vomit

#2 Cares of the World! - Parable of Sower!

A) Seed sown among thorns Word choked out -

B) become unresponsive to it by getting focused on cares of world! Pursuit of Riches

C) DISTRACTED by other things

#3 A lack of exercise - Hebrews 5

A) Problem was a lack of use.

B) Be doers not just hearers – Physically only eat never exercise – fat – lethargic.

C) The problem in much of the church today is not a lack of Knowledge - rejected the knowledge

D) Red Sea verses the Dead Sea – Out flow is the Key
1) Life – vs death

A U.S. Army officer told of the contrast in his pupils during two different eras of teaching at the artillery training school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

In 1958; the attitude was so lax that the instructors had a problem getting the men **to stay awake** to listen.

But During the 1965; classes, the men, hearing the same basic lectures, were alert & took detailed notes.

The reason for the difference in 1965: *those men knew that in less than six weeks they would be facing the enemy in Vietnam.*

Christian life a playground vs a battle ground.
ARE U IN the Battle?

Here the application for us in what Paul is doing here.

A) When these people turn away - Paul doesn't just write them off - he isn't going to take no for answer

B) So when some his Jewish brethren refused to believe - he gets very straight with them

C) Just like Isaiah said - **you guys are sick and God wants to heal you if you would let him**

Here the application we must take away from this, if we truly love unsaved people - we have to be truthful

A) You don't want to lead with Hey do you know you are going to hell. -

B) Lead with God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life

C) But if they refuse to listen - we have to be willing to tell you them the truth.

Think of it this way if you went to the doctor for an exam and he discovered that you had Cancer

A) You would expect him to tell you - and let you know what the options were

B) You would be angry with your doctor if he said - ok you look great - have a nice day

C) You would expect him to give you the options and the warning -

1) That if you don't do anything you are going to die

D) If he really cares for you He is going to be truthful

E) We need to be truthful with our loved ones and friends who don't know Jesus

The Fact that Jesus fulfilled all of those prophecies concerning his first coming

A) Also means he is going to fulfill the promises about his 2nd coming

B) And everything going on in our world is pointing to the reality - we are getting close

C) So Paul was honest and shared the hard truth with them - that is glorifying to God

²⁸ "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" ²⁹ And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.

D) They still refused to believe - SAD - but that happens - nothing we can do about that

How do you glorify God in difficult circumstances?

#3 You make the most of every opportunity V.30-31

³⁰Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,
³¹preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

So Paul is in custody - under house arrest

A)He is making the most of every opportunity while in this place

B)He is not mad or angry or questioning -

1)Jesus I thought you said I was going to testify of you in Rome - how is that supposed to happen here ?

C)So everyday Paul is in his house - bound with a chain - chained to a guard

1)The Guard thinks this is my captive to watch so he doesn't escape

D)Paul sees the guard as his captive audience who cannot escape - He starts talking to him about Jesus

E)Through the course of a 24 hr period there would be 3 guards who would be assigned 8 hr shifts

That is 3 guys each day Paul got to talk to Jesus about

A)We are told in the book of Philippians - the gospel spread throughout the whole palace guard

B)All these guys are hearing the gospel and some are getting saved - from spending time with Paul

C)Then it also says in the book of Philippians that the gospel spread to the household of Caesar

1)Body guard detail

D)So Paul is making the most of every

opportunity 1)and God is using him to reach a group of people that he might not of had access to if he were free

If Paul was free he probably wouldn't have had an audience with that group.

Not only did Paul make the most of his opportunity to preach

A)He also made the most of his opportunity to write

B)During this two years in prison in Rome - Paul would write Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians

C)So this is how the book of ACTS ends - sort of a Cliff hanger -

But I think it ends this way on Purpose

A)The work of God didn't end with Paul - it didn't end with the Apostles

B)It continues to this very Day- through Ordinary people like you and me