Session 7 – Following Sunday 20th February

Read Acts 27

This reads like a very English report – all about the weather! (verses 4, 7-9, 13-15, 20, 27) Why is the weather so important to the story telling? Do you think the weather is God’s provision for Paul (to allow him to preach on Malta) or opposition from Satan (to try and stop Paul reaching Rome)? Does it matter which we think it is?

Are there situations in which you personally have you depended on God for protection? In what ways has he provided protection for you?

Look at Ephesians 6:12. Does this inform our view on the question above? How might it change how we pray in that situation? Look too at 1 Peter 3:19ff and Luke 10:19ff. What is most encouraging for you about these verses?

If Paul’s advice in 27:10 was in fact based on a divine revelation, we have here the classical alternatives of revelation or reason, the ‘common sense’ of human knowhow and experience. In what ways are these alternatives posed still in our culture, and in our lives? Is ‘common sense’ never to be trusted?

Julius has to make some difficult decisions. Why do you think he ignores Paul at first (verses 10 – 12) but then listens to him later (verses 30-32)? What has happened to bring about this change?

Verse 23 is clearly the centre point of this chapter. What can we learn from Paul’s approach to God’s word? How was Paul’s trust in God’s word good for others too? What can we learn from this for the challenges we face? When might we not trust God’s word to us? Why is this?

Paul’s testimony in 27:23 is so strong: “God to whom I belong and whom I serve.” In what ways would this be an authentic personal testimony for us? In what areas do we struggle with this?

If Paul were sitting with you in the home group, what reasons would he give for his steadfastness during the storm and shipwreck? Romans 15:20 and Philippians 1: 12-14 will give you some clues.

Read Acts 28: 1 - 10

Hospitality by Publius opens the door for Paul to be clean, refreshed and fed. How does he ensure that he doesn’t lose sight of what is important? How does this become a blessing to others? What might we learn from this? Do we offer to pray for others often enough? Why might we not?

Why do you think there are miracles and healings when Paul arrives in Malta? What can we learn from this about how we might approach those who don’t know Jesus? How too does it shape our prayers for them?

Julius the centurion, an important part of the storytelling in chapter 27 has totally disappeared from view. Do you think he had seen and heard enough to put his trust and hope in Jesus? If he didn’t why might he not have done?

What does this chapter tell us about navigating crises of our own?

Henry Van Dyke (1852-1933) was an American Presbyterian clergyman, educator, and poet. His book of collected poems released in 1911 included the following reflection so appropriate to Paul’s voyage and to our lives.

Oh Maker of the mighty deep

Whereon our vessels fare,

Above our life’s adventure keep

Thy faithful watch and care.

In Thee we trust, whate’er befall;

Thy sea is great; our boats are small.

We know not where the secret tides

Will help us or delay

Nor where the lurking tempest tides,

Nor where the fogs are gray.

We trust in Thee, whate’er befall,

Thy sea is great; our boats are small.

Beyond the circle of the sea,

When voyaging is past,

We seek our final part in Thee;

Oh bring us home at last.

In Thee we trust, whate’er befall;

If time allows do listen/sing this wonderful hymn: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=936BapRFHaQ>