



Sermon Notes, 6 December 2020

Term: Autumn 2020

Series: acts: Manual for a scattered church

Gathering: 11:00

Title: God's vision for our lives

Preacher: Chris Brown

Reading: Acts 27:20-26 (looking at all of Acts 27 & 28)

In Acts 27 & 28 we see the final set of events that conclude with Paul staying in Rome under house arrest for two years. God's primary vision for Paul is that he follows Jesus and is filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). Within that, God's vision for Paul is for him to proclaim Jesus 'to the Gentiles and their kings and the people of Israel' (Acts 9:15). We see through Acts how this vision shapes Paul's decisions and choices. Paul chooses to follow Jesus and to proclaim Jesus to those he meets. God calls Paul to Rome (Acts 23:11) and Paul chooses to follow God's call by appealing to Caesar (Acts 25:11), this sets in motion a sequence of events that lead to Paul being put on a ship in Caesarea to sail to Italy (Acts 27:1).

A violent storm arises on the voyage and the people on the ship fear for their lives (Acts 27:20). In the midst of this storm, Paul's attention is directed towards God. God confirms to Paul, via an angel, that he 'must stand trial before Caesar' (Acts 27:24) and that all people on the ship will be saved even though the ship will be lost. They are shipwrecked off Malta and make their way to shore where God leads Paul through a sequence of events that result in him praying for many people on the island whom God heals.

Paul knows God's big vision for his life, to proclaim Jesus to the Gentiles. He also knows God's specific instruction that he must go to Rome. Whilst choosing to follow God's big vision, Paul also listens to the Holy Spirit in every circumstance and so is able to encourage the ship's crew, pray for people on Malta and above all, proclaim Jesus to these people.

God has a vision for your life, but, he doesn't force his vision on you.

God has a vision for your life, a primary vision for you to follow Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit and within that a vision specific to you for how you can work with him to build his kingdom. God's vision for us is always invitational. He doesn't force us to follow him, he invites us to follow. The choice to follow is in our hands. We choose to follow Jesus, we choose how we will respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. When we choose to follow God, his vision for our lives becomes a reality in our lives.

Paul chooses to follow God, this takes him to Rome, into the cultural, political and geographical centre of one of the largest gentile empires of the time (look it up, it's vast). Whilst there, God gives Paul free reign, within the bounds of a relaxed house arrest, to proclaim Jesus to all whom he meets. God invited Paul to proclaim Jesus to Gentiles and their kings and here he is doing just that!

Questions:

- God gradually revealed his vision for Paul. What aspects of God's vision for your life has he revealed to you?
- Are there times you have followed the Holy Spirit's prompting? Share these with each other if you are happy to.
- Have you followed God through challenging situations, how has/is he giving you strength to keep following?
- Take time to pray into what God might be inviting you into and what impact for his kingdom this might have. You may sense things for you all as a small community and for individuals.