

**(Running the Race to the End)****Introduction**

- Introduction to this mini-series
  - the last couple of chapters of Acts...
  - wonder if I asked you how Acts finishes how many of you could tell me!
  - Paul on his way to and finally imprisoned in Rome, having been arrested in Jerusalem back in chapter 21/22
- Each week we will simply pick up some of the issues that rise up out of the developing narrative:
  - some that are core to the overall picture Luke is painting, of the gospel being preached from Jerusalem to Rome
  - some that are more incidental, such as the way the Christians treated each other, the way Paul trusted God in the midst of the circumstances God took him through...
- Reminder of where we are up to in terms of the narrative
  - in particular, the geography of the journey and something of the background of the weather, wintering, implications for the choices made by characters in the story
  - looking at how Paul "ran the race to the end" (2 Timothy 4:7)

**The Fellowship of Believers (v.3)**

- The fellowship of believers, and how they loved and supported one another
  - note also repeated use of "we" in this section of Acts; were Luke and the others also under arrest?!?
- Do we provide for one another, look out for each other?
  - do we not tire of doing this, but keep on keeping on doing the good work the Lord lays before us?

**God's concern for those on the boat (v.9-10)**

- God's concern for the well-being of all on the boat, expressed through Paul
  - God is concerned for people, for their well-being
  - physical, emotional, as well as spiritual
  - compare warnings that are implicit in, eg, 10 commandments, not just the obvious about stealing and murder, but also things like Sunday, working from rest, things like faithfulness in relationships - marriage and parental relationships are picked out there...
  - God is concerned for our good...
  - incidentally, this is a helpful foothold for explaining to non-believers why we might believe something like the concern to not work on a Sunday has universal significance, and is not just a command for Christian believers, who chose to live their lives in step with Scripture...

**Dangers of defying God's prompting (v.11)**

- The centurion makes what will humanly seem to be a mistake:
  - insisting on sailing on in the dangerous winter season
  - resulting ultimately in a shipwreck

**God weaving human mistakes into his purposes (v.11-12)**

- But remember that God wove this dangerous defying of God's prompting into his purpose
  - using this mistake to display his glory, for instance in his rescue of the crew and deliverance of Paul from the snake

- and not permitting mistakes to thwart his purposes - Paul still arrives in Rome, despite the shipwreck...

## Conclusion

- *The Fellowship of Believers (v.3)*  
- do we look out for one another?
- *God's concern for those on the boat (v.9-10)*  
- do we look out for those outside the faith?
- *Dangers of defying God's prompting (v.11)*  
- do we take care not to defy God, his prompting and his revealed will?
- *God weaving human mistakes into his purposes (v.11-12)*  
- do we glory in God's ability to take our mistakes and weave them into his purposes, not discarding or condemning...?