

Logan Reynolds
First Belton
October 11, 2026

Series: The Story Continues

Title: The Way Through

Text(s): Acts 27-28, 26:32

Big Idea: When the way is hard, keep going – God’s grace will meet you there

INTRODUCTION

There are some things in life you can avoid. There are problems that you can solve, situations you can change, and even some roads you can choose not to travel.

But there are other things in life, like Robert Frost says, “where the only way out is through.”

For example: You don’t get to go around grief; you must go through it. You don’t get to get around disappointment; you must go through it.

Sometimes it’s disease. Sometimes it’s a marriage struggling. Sometimes it’s a child who has wandered. Sometimes it’s losing someone you love. Sometimes it’s a dream that didn’t happen. Sometimes it’s a season when you did everything you knew to do, and it just seems like everything is against you.

And one of the hardest questions of faith is: ***Where is God when I have to go through it?***

In our text today, we are going to see a tension play out between the trials we face and God’s grace in the trial. So far, we know where Paul is going – Rome. We know God has a purpose, and we know Paul is obedient to live into his calling, and yet, almost everything between Paul and Rome goes wrong. That’s Acts 27-28.

And MAYBE... that’s your life too. Like Paul, maybe you have experienced seasons where it just seems that...

1. SOMETIMES THE WINDS ARE AGAINST US

It all begins in 26:32. After Paul explains his case, King Agrippa looks at Festus and says, *“This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”*

Do you feel that gut punch? Caught in a power play, attempting to get out of their power struggle, Paul appeals to Caesar, and his impatience here costs him his freedom. He could have been set free; everyone knows he is innocent. And yet, the chapter turns, and Paul is still wearing chains.

But his chains are only the beginning. You may think, “Finally, Paul is about to begin his long-awaited journey to Rome.” But look how Luke describes his journey. As they board the ship and set sail along the coast of Asia... V. 4 says, *“The winds were against us.”* V. 7 says, *“We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty.”* V. 8 says, *“Coasting along (the*

lee of Crete) with difficulty, we came to Fair Haven.” V. 9, we learn that they had been waiting far too long to set sail again, so the voyage had become *“dangerous.”*

Nevertheless, the crew sets sail anyway. And to make matter worse, a large storm called a “northeaster” hits and they lose control over the ship. To survive, they begin throwing cargo and equipment overboard. And then comes 27:20. Luke writes, *“When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.”*

At this point – Paul and those aboard the ship have “reached the bottom,” as we like to call it. This is really hard, and yet, it is our shared human experience – sometimes life just doesn’t go our way. But in these moments, we must be careful to push against a kind of belief that says, “If I am doing what God wants me to do, things should work out.”

Acts teaches us that **sometimes obedience puts you on a ship where the winds are against you**. Sometimes you are faithful and still get cancer. Sometimes you pray and the relationship still falls apart. Sometimes you raise kids to know Jesus and they still wander. Sometimes you make the wise decision and still experience loss. Sometimes you follow Jesus and still end up in chains.

But listen to me very carefully because this is SO important: **Just because the wind is against you doesn’t mean that God has left you.**

In fact...

2. GOD’S GRACE MEETS US IN THE STORM

Yes, it is true that sometimes obedience puts us on a ship where the winds, and maybe everything else, seem to be against us, but don’t miss this: There is another theme that runs through this story – **God’s unwavering grace.**

Look back at 27:3. Paul is a prisoner, but Julius, the soldier responsible for Paul *“treated him kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for.”*

In 27:24, Paul and company are lost in a storm, starving, and have no direction or hope for survival... and God shows up in the presence of an angel and tells Paul, *“Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted life for you and all those who sail with you.”*

Encouraged by Paul’s words, it is almost as if there is peace on the boat in the storm. In 27:33-38, Luke records these words: *“And when he had said these things, Paul took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat.”* Now notice this: *“Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. We were all 276 persons in the ship. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.”*

Notice – they were satisfied with provisions to spare. Powerful.

And in just a moment, they run onto shore, and the ship begins to break apart. Though everyone makes it to shore, the soldiers begin plotting a plan to kill all the prisoners, fearing they may run free. But by God's grace in v. 42-43, Julius intervenes and spares all their lives for Paul's sake.

The story continues. You may picture the scene – All the men, exhausted from an emotional experience, crawl onto the island of Malta, cold and soaking wet, fearing what awaits them on the island... starvation, attack from natives, will they survive? But to their surprise, Luke tells us in 28:2, *"The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold."* What a moment.

Then, unexpectedly, things turn from good to worse *real fast*. Paul, gathering wood, is snake-bitten by a viper. To the natives, Paul was as good as dead. In v. 6, the natives *"were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god."*

In a life-threatening moment, God saved Paul's life. But there is more: not only does God save his life, but God also uses Paul to heal and save the lives of others. In v. 8-9, God heals a man and then begins to heal others on the island as well.

Three months later, a ship *suddenly* arrives on the island. And because of God's blessing to them through Paul, in v. 10 we learn that God uses these pagan people to supply everything they need for their journey to Rome. Wow!

Now, Paul is finally back on the journey, and in v. 16, he arrives safely in Rome. But even then, after all they had been through, guess what? Paul still remains in custody. But here is the grace: When they arrived, Julius allowed Paul to stay by himself.

Okay, here we go! Earlier I made the point that sometimes the wind is just against us. But remember this: **The wind didn't silence God's unwavering grace.**

In this story, what kept them afloat wasn't man's ingenuity; it was God's grace. In Paul's case, God's grace didn't keep Paul from the storm, but it did sustain him in and through the storm.

Hear this: Sometimes God's grace keeps us from the storms of life. Sometimes He prevents us from the hard stuff. But sometimes God's grace carries us through the storms of life.

Sometimes grace looks like enough strength for today. Sometimes grace is Julius. Sometimes it's a meal when there wasn't enough. Sometimes it's an island you didn't intend to visit or the kindness of strangers you don't know. Sometimes grace is seeing God do the unexpected, like preserving your life from a snakebite. Or using you to bless someone else. And sometimes... grace is realizing that, though I would have never chosen this road, somehow God has met me at every turn.

So, what do we do?

3. WE KEEP GOING

In Acts 28, Paul finally arrives in Rome. Paul's story teaches us that old familiar line from Robert Frost's poem *A Servant to Servants* ... "The best way out is always through."

Paul doesn't get to skip the storm. He doesn't get to skip Malta. He doesn't get to skip the snake. He doesn't even get to skip the chains. The only way out is through. And eventually, Paul makes it to Rome. But not without the scars. Not without loss. Not without suffering and hardship. Not without moments of fear and hopelessness. Nevertheless, he made it.

A few years ago, I was going through a very difficult time in my life, and it was all-consuming. And a very wise friend told me: "Right now, this situation feels like it consumes everything in your life. But one day, it will be over, and you won't be thinking about it anymore."

One of the things that I have learned from that situation and many others is that the person that I long to be is developed not by going around the storm, but through it. Through the storm is where we find that perseverance isn't just gritting your teeth and trying harder. Perseverance is that place when you have nothing left, but you find that God is faithful to sustain you through it. And it is in this place where God begins to mold you into the person He longs for you to be.

That is so good.

CONCLUSION

But it doesn't end there. Fix your eyes on v. 28:24. Paul finally arrives and "makes it through the storm," so to speak, and you might think, "He has arrived, and everything is suddenly going to get better, right?"

But when he arrives, he is met by an underwhelming experience. There is no greeting, no pomp and circumstance, just a group of people who seem to be clueless about all he has experienced. Can you imagine? Wait, you didn't know? All of that... for what?

So, Paul does what he only knows to do – he preaches the gospel to them. V. 24 tells us, *"And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved."* You may have thought when Paul got to Rome, thousands would be saved. After all, God promised to get him there. Surely, He would do something special! But again, an underwhelming experience.

But though it seems underwhelming, don't miss this – **While many didn't believe, some did!** So often, we overlook the little things for the big things, and we call that "success". But what if success isn't the big things but rather the small wins that somehow stack up to create a legacy of wins?

Here is what I mean. Luke closes the book of Acts with a big question mark. Paul stays in Rome and continues his ministry and then it just ends. After all that, it's just over? Yep. There is no big plot twist, no massive movement of God's power and grace, just Paul continuing to do ordinary ministry.

That is one way to read it. But perhaps Luke ends the story this way because it was never truly about Paul—and it was never meant to end with him. This is only the beginning of God's ongoing story: how He works through ordinary people in ordinary ways for extraordinary purposes. It is the beginning of how God continues to use us, right here in this room, to carry the gospel from our doorstep to the ends of the earth.

So, will you take up your place in the story? How will you live into your role? And how will we, as a church, continue this story as we do ministry today and prepare for the launch of our new facility?