

PLEASE NOTE THAT IHOPer BOB GEARHART PROVIDED THE QUESTIONS, AND LED THE DISCUSSION, FOR THIS SESSION. Please remember that this IHOP Bible Study is on vacation now until August 2nd when we begin the study of Romans. Please read ahead.

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

20 Acts 27: 1 – 28: 31 “The Trip to Rome” – with commentary

Acts 27: 1 – 12, “Paul Sails for Rome;” Acts 27: 13 – 26, “The Storm;” Acts 27: 27 – 44, “The Shipwreck;” Acts 28: 1 – 10, “Ashore on Malta;” Acts 28: 11 – 16, “Arrival at Rome;” Acts 28: 17 – 31, “Paul Preaches at Rome Under Guard.”

The purpose of the Book of Acts is to record the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Vision and Ministry of Peter and Paul. **Today’s study is the 20th of 20 lessons.**

A contextual statement:

Interestingly, *The Interpreter’s Bible* makes the following observation. In the book of Acts, “The Lord is not returned, but in the meantime the word of God is being carried on by the church. The Gentile mission is itself the eschatological action of God.” (*The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1971. p. 730.)

This I want to affirm as our perspective. **We will study this book from the perspective of the in-breaking of the Holy Spirit.** This puts us on the cusp of a deep and foreboding spiritual hole that is eternally deep. The Holy Spirit is that intuited presence within us that urges us to “Jump.” “Jump!” To take this leap of faith means to surrender ourselves to the eternal deeps. The discovery, to which I can personally testify, is that this deep, dark, mysterious hole is the place where God lives within us. As we lose control of everything—our-selves, our relationships to neighbor and to God—then we can discover that God really does sustain us. But the experience is like falling, and it is not entirely comfortable. But it works.

According to our Study Chart we are studying the last section of our chart called “The Final Journey.”

Read the assignment in one reading.

The following is from Bob Gearhart: INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON

Chapters 27 and 28 of Acts can be taken almost as an analogy of the Christian life. The stage is set, so to speak from lines in Ch. Vs. 4 and 7. “The winds were against us.” And “The wind did not allow us to go on.” The thoughts shared here are from the Exposition of the Book of Acts found in the Interpreter’s Bible.

In life, the winds are frequently against us. No matter what we do or what course of action we may take, we find opposition in the strong voices of others or problems not of our making. Paul attempted to avoid the strong winds by advising against the voyage and frequently we can do the same by either changing the situation early on or avoiding the issues that will eventually overtake us. Finally when the winds become so strong that there is no apparent way to continue, it is our **faith and perseverance** that allow us to continue.

WS: The two words that intrigue me here I’ve highlighted. In Gut Trip Analysis, the word

"faith" means to surrender, and the word "perseverance" means to give up trying to find meaning in anything except our trust in Perfect At-One-Ment (GOD). Success or failure is irrelevant; we learn to give both to God anyway. What do you think?

Following are a few questions for discussion and though based on Paul's journey to Rome according to the account found in Acts chapters 27 and 28. How do these chapters apply to our lives today?

I. Acts 27: 1-11

1. How was the incident of the contrary winds much like Paul's own life? (Think about Paul before and after his conversion.)

WS: Bob began our conversation with this opening question. One IHOPer observed that "Before Paul's conversion his physical life was better and his spiritual life worse. After his conversion his physical life was worse and his spiritual life better."

2. How many times are the winds against us in our own lives? Examples.

WS: Several examples were shared to illustrate this point.

3. Do the strong winds against us prevent us from reaching our objectives?

WS: My own personal example is the time when Beverly and I decided to take our family to live in a Religious Order and to live around the world doing third world rural re-development. Our parents were dead set against such activities, although we lived this way for eleven years.

4. How do we take care of the adverse winds in our lives?

WS: The IHOPers did not address this question directly. My personal reflections are to see the adverse winds as gifts rather than obstructions. The Way Life Is (TWLI) frequently is painful experiences. However, in support of my statement concerning "faith and perseverance," everything is dedicated to God. In this way, it is God's business and I'm only an instrument. This is supported by my statement that God rushes in to make good happen out of bad circumstances.

II. Acts 27: 12-44

1. Paul advised the crew no start out, but they did. What happened? What did Paul feel compelled to tell them?

WS: He was the great encourager. From my perspective of Gut Trip Analysis, this means to keep surrendering their circumstances to God.

2. Why was Paul so sure that he would arrive safely in Rome? Do we have that kind of assurance?

WS: Two places in Acts that Luke reports on God's activities. In 23: 11, the Lord appears to Paul to reassure him that he will make it to Rome. Then, in 27: 23-25, Paul reports on the appearance of an angel again with the same message. The IHOPers talked at length about the significance of God's providence. In Gut Trip Analysis, providence is experienced in our decision to persevere, that is, to surrender all that happens, or doesn't happen, to God.

3. What was the importance of staying with the ship?

WS: In practical terms, to have done otherwise would be foolhardy. In metaphorical terms, the "ship" is the Body of Christ.

4. Can we think of a modern example of someone exhibiting the faith that Paul did?

WS: The two examples that came to my mind are Cory Tenboom and Ann Frank. Interestingly, both of these are Dutch women who lived and died because of the Nazi occupation of their country in WWII.

III. Acts 28: 1-10

1. Discuss Paul's three months in Malta.

WS: Bible Gateway explored this period in terms of the "Ministry of Mercy."

2. What kind of welcome did they get? What could have happened?

WS: The IHOPers agreed they lucked out! They were treated with kindness instead of killing.

3. Using the story of the snake as an analogy, how does it speak to us today?

WS: The IHOPers decided that the snake episode was a useful metaphor. It brings to mind the experience of Moses in the desert when the desert was filled with snakes. The result was that Moses lifted up his staff, and when people gazed on it they were healed of their snake bites. Since then, the medical profession uses the image of the snake on a staff as its symbol.

From the perspective of Gut Trip Analysis, the snake is a representative of TWLI to which we are given the choice to be victims or victors.

a. Does our fortune or misfortune have anything to do with weather we are good or bad people? Why or why not?

WS: The IHOPers agreed that the circumstances of life are just that, circumstances. There is no moral value to be applied.

b. Was Paul a murderer or a god?

WS: Paul was neither. He was just a human being. At times he was humane and at other times he was not. The people superstitions were ungrounded in reality.

IV. Acts 28: 14-31

1. How were the Jews in Rome like many people today? (The world is full of people who claim that they are willing to give everyone a hearing, but really have no intention of being open to other viewpoints or opinions.)

WS: The IHOPers did not dwell long on this question. My illustration is how political divisions listen to each other.

2. What was the universal significance of Paul's trip to Rome as described by St. Luke in the book of Acts?

WS: The IHOPers explored this question for some time. One consensus is that the trip to the highest levels of the Roman political world made it possible for the largest audience and eventual influence. Some comment was made about trying to get similar attention in today's

political world—almost impossible. Yet, eventually, after other 200 or so years, King Constantine was converted and in the process converted all of those within the influence of the Roman world.

My example was the difference between getting written up in "The Salina Journal," or in the "Washington Post."

3. Do we know what happened to Paul after his two years in Rome?

WS: Gearhart noted the various discrepancies in the story of the end of Paul's life. Some believe he was tried in Rome and released. Others report Paul was cleared of his present charges, but later rearrested for being a "rabble rouser." Today, he would be considered a terrorist. He was executed by the Roman state.

WS: The following question is for our brooding during the month of July while we take a rest of the month of July off.

IV. Please re-read the contextual statement above concerning the quotation from the *Interpreter One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. The question to answer is how can these final two chapters reflect the "eschatological action of God?" Do some research on the word eschatology. How are the closing events in Paul's ministry representative of the "last things," or an illustration of the continuing "in breaking" of the Holy Spirit?" Be careful not to get locked up in Head Trip Analysis. Keep asking, "What is God doing at this point of the story, and how do I experience it?"

Alright folks, talk to me!