



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

UNSTOPPABLE: God's Work in the World

Life is a Beautiful Ride —
Acts 28:1–16
Tim Badal | April 7, 2019



We've been on a journey with the Apostle Paul for many weeks. He has now left Jerusalem and is making his final missionary journey to Rome. There he will proclaim the resurrection of Christ to rulers, soldiers, and anyone else with whom he comes into contact. In our passage today we'll look at the final leg of his journey as he moves from the island of Malta to Rome, the capital city of the Roman Empire, where he will eventually be martyred because of his stand for the gospel.

What we always need to see as we read these stories is the faithfulness of God. God did not forsake Paul even for a moment, and He does not forsake us either. Not for a moment will He leave us to figure out our own journeys without Him. Jesus had come to Paul's prison cell in Jerusalem (Acts 23:11), and He told Paul he would definitely get to Rome, where he would testify to the people there about Who He was. We too can take courage from knowing that Jesus will be with us each step of the way. No matter the struggles or turmoil we encounter on our path, we can find solace knowing that the God Who loves us and has promised to be with us is the same God Who was faithful to see Paul through to the end.

Turn now to Acts 28. I'll be reading parts of this chapter throughout the message, but for now I want to read the beginning of the passage and also the end, leaving a little tension between the two portions. So let's look at verses one and 16:

After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta....And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier that guarded him.

Malta...Rome. You and I are living in these dots between two places. How we respond to these dots of life will determine whether we enjoy the journey along the way and whether we will experience the fullness of what God has for us.

During one of my study sessions this week, Amanda came by while she was running errands and asked if I wanted to grab lunch with her. I agreed. While we were at lunch, she was talking, but I was distracted—no surprise. She could tell my mind wasn't with her. I was actually looking beyond her at a picture behind her. The caption on the picture said, "Life is a beautiful ride." Obviously, the person who designed the picture loved bike rides, which isn't something I do very often.

I'm sure Amanda was talking about important stuff, but I missed it. My mind went back to the passage I was studying, and I began to ask myself, "I wonder if Paul, when he got to Malta, would say, 'Life is a beautiful ride.'" Remember where his journey had taken him. It hadn't been a beautiful ride at all; it was downright ugly. For example, when Paul got to Jerusalem, he thought there would be a positive response, but instead he was falsely accused. That led to being trampled by a mob, after which he was wrongfully imprisoned. Time and time again along Paul's journey he had been mocked and scorned. Then he was put on a boat headed to Rome, where he nearly died and was shipwrecked.

In our story today, salt was added to the wound, as Paul was bitten by a snake. I can't imagine in all of Paul's humanity that he could say, "Life is a beautiful ride." Yet when he finally made it to Rome, verse 15 says he was able to thank God and take courage

for what he would be facing. How could Paul live such a stinky life, full of trouble and hardship, yet reach Rome and say, “That was great. I’ve got courage and I thank God for what He’s allowed me to experience”? How can we, in the middle of our own struggles, be able to see them and yet honestly say, “Yeah, life hasn’t been easy, but life lived intentionally with God is a beautiful thing”?

Quite frankly, at times life sucks. You can get mad at my vernacular, but let’s be honest—that’s what our hearts cry out. And I have to wonder if Paul thought that as well from time to time. Luke never tells us that, but Paul was human. Those hours and days when he was being tossed by huge waves, he surely must have thought, “This ride isn’t as beautiful as I thought it would be.”

This week I was talking with a man in our congregation whom I greatly respect. When I asked him how things were going, he answered, “Life stinks. Family life isn’t real good right now. My wife and I are wondering if we did something wrong. We didn’t see this coming.” But to be honest, I was encouraged by his transparency. At times, when someone asks, “How’s life going?” we need to admit, “The ride isn’t very beautiful right now. There are a lot of curves and potholes.” I was heartened by the realization that this well-respected man would have the courage to say, “It’s not real good right now.”

How was Paul able to be thankful? How was he encouraged? Today we’ll look at four things that can take the most difficult circumstances and turn the journey into something beautiful. In the difficult times, when our lives are filled with potholes—whether our struggles are mental, physical, emotional or financial—as believers, we need to be able to say, “Because our God is with us, because He will never leave or forsake us, life with Him is a beautiful ride.” If we as followers of Christ cannot say that, it’s not because God hasn’t given us beauty; it’s because our attention is on our circumstances and not on Him. God has gifted us, just as He gifted Paul, with the ability and opportunity to see that walking with our God day in and day out can truly be beautiful. So how do we get there?

1. Life is a beautiful ride when we depend on God every step of the way.

First, we must depend on God every step of the way. Acts 23:11 describes how Jesus stood by Paul in the Jerusalem prison cell and told him, “Paul, you’re going to make it to Rome.” Paul was promised that his destination had been set by God. Jesus in effect gave Paul his boarding pass on the next boat to Rome. He could be fully confident that regardless of any delays or obstacles, he would make it to Rome.

And as we just read in Acts 28, Paul in fact did get to Rome. That should give us, as children of the most high God, the assurance that by Christ’s work on the cross and His resurrection from the grave, we too have a sure destination called heaven. As Jesus said to His apostles in John 14, “I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, then I will come back and take you to be with Me forever.” That’s our destination and hope. But like Paul, some of us may be wondering if it’s really going to happen. We’re running into a lot of delays, wondering if we will ever get there. Why do we need to depend on God to assure us of our destination?

Life is filled with drama.

There is so much drama facing us this coming week and we don’t even know what it will be. We may be having a wonderful week, but little do we know what’s going to hit us some random Tuesday. We could be encountering struggle and hardship and pain. Maybe it will be at work or in our families, but we have no idea what the future holds. As Proverbs 27:1 states, “No man knows what a day might bring.”

Now, we can live in fear because of this. We can even hole up, trying to protect ourselves from what will happen. But, of course, that is nonsense. On the other hand, we can trust that whatever happens this Tuesday that rocks our world, God is with us.

Paul knew he was going to Rome and he knew the One Who had told him would be faithful to bring it to pass. So regardless of the potholes or curves he encountered on the way, he never swayed from that belief. He never tried to manipulate his way out of the plans and purposes of God.

This should remind us that we are to depend on God and not on ourselves. His wisdom and ways are higher than our own (Isaiah 55:9). His Word is more reliable than our own thinking, so we must lean on Him rather than on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5–6), even when life throws us curves. We have no idea what’s coming.

Our destination can seem worlds away.

Paul woke up every day having no idea what that day would bring, but he knew God said he would get to Rome. God has told us heaven is waiting for us, but it often seems this destination is worlds away.

This last spring break our family went on a 2,700-mile road trip. We drove down to Texas and back, visiting lots of cities along the way. It was a great time. We brought back the same three boys we started with, which was a great thing. We had made sure our journey would be a pleasant experience and a beautiful ride. Each of the boys had batteries, audio hookups, DVDs, tablets, and games. I told them they would never have to look out the window if they didn't want to.

We had just gotten into Iowa—just a few hours into the trip—and my ten-year-old said, “Dad, we’re almost there, right?” We were headed to San Antonio, Texas. “Yeah, son, we’re real close.” No, I said, “Son, we’ve got a whole day of driving.” He thought about it and said, “We’re never going to get there.” There’s some great theology in those words.

Here’s the thing. We hear preachers and teachers tell us, “Heaven is coming.” We busy ourselves with a handful of things and when we’re done, or something takes our attention off whatever we’re doing, we ask, “Are we almost there yet?” Then we read in the Bible where it says a day to the Lord is like a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8). “Are we there yet? We have to be!” We begin to wonder if God is wasting our time, because heaven seems so far away.

Well, yeah! It is worlds away, but the way we can advance in our journey is by taking it one step at a time. We can do what Paul did, which was to break up his trip by saying each day, “God, wherever You have me today is one day closer to Rome.” At some points it seemed as though Paul was going in circles, but he knew that if he was in God’s hands, God was moving him—no matter how slow it seemed. Each step, each day, brought him closer to the destination God had planned for him.

Christian, you too are one day closer to heaven than you were yesterday, and you’ll be a day closer tomorrow. God is calling you to depend on Him in the details of your life. Give Him your dreams and plans, along with the disappointments. One at a time, lay them all at His feet. Say to Him, “God, whatever You bring to me today—the good, the bad, and the ugly of life—I will depend on You. My strength and encouragement will come from You. I will glorify You, because apart from You, I would be sunk on this trip.” We have to depend on God—as Paul did. He had to.

I’m thankful for Jon Culver leading us through Acts 27 a couple weeks ago, where we read about the turbulent storm Paul encountered. Storms cause us to depend on God. Paul depended on God and God proved to be faithful to both him and to the 270 others who were on the ship with him. They found themselves on the island of Malta.

Let’s read about this, beginning in Acts 28:1: *“After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta.”* They had no idea where they were. Some of you are in circumstances in which you have no idea where you are. Your life has been turned upside down. But even if you feel completely lost this morning, God knows where you are.

Let’s continue in our text and see what happened after they arrived in Malta:

²The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. ³When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. ⁴When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.” ⁵He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. ⁶They 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.

Wow! Paul and others got out of the water, totally exhausted but thanking God for saving them. They were greeted by natives on this island who were kind to them. They had started a fire because it was cold and raining, and perhaps gave them some food as well.

We could take this text in a number of directions. We could see it as a reminder that it’s important to care for strangers who come to us. We could point to Paul’s willingness to do the menial task of gathering sticks. We could find some spiritual significance in the fact that it was a serpent that bit Paul. We could look at the superstitious way the people responded. But I’m going to look at this in a practical way.

2. Life is a beautiful ride when we let God, not others, define who we are.

The second way our life can be a beautiful ride is when we let God and not others define who we are. We’re not on our journeys by ourselves, but people are watching us as we walk. They’re going to size us up. As soon as Paul walked on to the beach, the people of Malta were sizing him up.

You came in this morning sizing up those around you. Especially if you’re fairly new here, you were in the process of sizing up what you saw. That’s what humans do. We watch how people conduct themselves, how they dress, what they drive, and where they live.

We might size them up based on their jobs. Our opinion of them can fluctuate based on any number of external things, but at the end of the day, most of these things mean nothing.

The people in Malta wanted to know who Paul was and what he was like. As he was gathering sticks and putting them on the fire, the heat of the fire wakened a viper, which grabbed hold of Paul's hand. Right away, the people saw this as bad news. Bad things don't happen to good people, so they assumed Paul was a bad person. That was their mindset. At the end of verse six, however, we read that they changed their minds because Paul didn't die. So rather than being a murderer, they concluded that Paul was a god.

As you sit here this morning, you need to realize people have opinions about you. Based on their thinking, usually apart from anything you can do, they will conclude that you are somewhere on that spectrum between being a murderer deserving death and being a god. You and I are then tempted to live in bondage to the court of public opinion. We are deeply concerned about what people think of us. In fact, far too often we are more concerned about what others think than we are about what God thinks about us. We're always checking to see who liked our Facebook posts or who retweeted our tweets. We hope to sit at the popular kids' table or be invited to the right parties. We want to think our kids are the ones who are well liked by their classmates. It's dangerous to be consumed with these thoughts, but it's even worse when we begin to believe what people say about us.

Paul came to the island, he was being watched by these people, then he was bitten by a snake. Now if you were to see me being bitten by a snake right now, I hope your first thought would not be, "Ha! He's a criminal. I'm not getting close to him." Paul was also human, and he might have been disturbed when, instead of helping him in his time of pain, the people accused him of being evil and moved away from him.

Yet all of us come to conclusions about people based on what happens to them. We think, "A plus B always equals C." These people concluded that the god "Justice" was killing Paul because he was a murderer. But as they watched, Paul did not swell up and die. As they continued to stand back from him and watch, they realized he wasn't going to die. This made them change their minds completely. Instead of being a criminal, they decided Paul was a god.

There's an awesome truth here. I see three reasons we need to let God instead of other people define us.

Never forget people are incredibly fickle.

These people in Malta went from "He's a murderer" to "He's a god" in probably a couple hours. Talk about whiplash. Have you ever gone from being the greatest thing in the world to the worst thing in the world? Nothing changed, but they liked you one minute and hated you the next.

In my catering business one of our customer sales reps was fired this past week. He said it wasn't too long ago that they were saying he was the best salesman around. What happened? People are fickle. Things change. Opinions change.

I want you to notice the idiocy of our own fickleness when we're defining each other. When Paul was bitten by the serpent, verse four records what the people said: *"No doubt this man is a murderer."* Hands down, iron clad; he must be a murderer. Oh, he didn't swell up and die? They were wrong.

We speak as if there is no doubt in what we presume to know about people, but little do we know we have no idea what we're saying.

Never forget most people's presumptions are false.

Second, never forget the reason we should never let others define us is that most people's presumptions are false. I have two questions. I'm looking for a yes or no answer to these questions. Starting with the second question, was Paul a god—yes or no? No. Was Paul a murderer—yes or no? No, he wasn't. He did do some things that allowed deaths to take place, but he himself would never have been charged with murder. But the people in Malta got this wrong on both counts.

Most of the time when people make presumptions about you—especially those who have recently gotten to know you—their impressions are usually wrong. If I were to tell you all the things I was told as a high school kid, you'd be blown away. I was told by both Christians and non-Christians alike, "Don't make many plans. You're not all that good for anything." And yes, I gave them some reasons to believe that. I was a dumb teenager doing dumb things, but they were wrong.

Maybe you've been told when you were a young kid, or as a wife or husband, or as an employee, "You're good for nothing." The things you've been told are lies. God's definition of you is that you are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). God's word

for you is that He has great plans and purposes for you. You are His workmanship, created in Christ—not to do bad works, not mediocre works, but good works for the glory of God in heaven.

Paul wasn't a murderer, nor was he a god. Paul understood that he was a servant of the most high God. When you're concerned about your popularity, remember that you serve a constituency of One—God. The only person I care about, whom I allow to define me, is God.

Never forget it leads to feelings of either pride or failure.

Don't let people put presumptions on you that are not true. Why? Because they will lead to one of two things: failure or pride. Paul was first called a murderer. Maybe you've been called some pretty nasty things as well. If you hear something enough, you start to believe it. "I am really no good for anything. I'm never going to make anything of my life." Or "I really am as ugly as people say I am." Or "I'm as unlovable as people say I am; there must be something wrong with me." When you live by their definitions, you will be a failure.

Paul didn't believe them when he was called a murderer, and he also did not believe them when they called him a god. Some of you are at a workplace where they're saying, "You're the best thing in the world. We don't know where we'd be without you." And you're starting to buy that press. There are a lot of pastors who think they're the greatest thing the world has ever seen, and little do they know, it's by the sheer grace of God that their church is growing as it is.

We are not gods and we are probably not the ugly things people call us either. We are somewhere in between. We need to make sure God is doing the defining and that He is speaking through the right people to help define us according to His Word, not their capricious thoughts or desires. Notice that Paul doesn't give any time to either of these conclusions. He's not fooled into thinking he's either a murderer or a god. He doesn't even think what it might be like to be worshiped as a god.

I have a friend who spoke at the Promise Keepers rally in Detroit back around the year 2000. It was the largest crowd he'd ever preached to and he preached his heart out. As he was getting on the plane to travel back to Chicago, he was all excited. Then a friend called to tell him he was on the front page of the Detroit Free Press. My friend asked his friend, "What did it say?" But right then the cell phone service dropped and he heard nothing. So during the whole plane ride home, he was thinking, "This is the greatest thing in the world. I'm the next big thing. I'm on the front cover of a major newspaper, talking about my message."

He got home and his friend arrived on a later flight, bringing a copy of the paper with him. On the front cover, with him preaching his heart out in full color, there was a headline that read, "Promise Keepers doesn't bring in the numbers in Detroit." Oooh. Here he was, the preacher, and Promise Keepers doesn't bring in the numbers.

You see, we can read the headlines and when we do, we will fluctuate up and down, up and down. But God wants us to know who He says we are and wants us to live in light of that. When we do, it will make our journey more beautiful and easier. It also will allow us to do something very different than we would otherwise do. Paul did not respond to the people when they wanted to treat him like a god. Rather, look at what Luke has us focus on, beginning in Acts 28:7:

⁷ Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. ⁸ It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him. ⁹ And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured.

¹⁰ They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.

What I'm about to say is critically important. If you are so focused on your personal status or persona, you will never see the needs of others. We think, "God, You're not opening up opportunities for me. I want to serve and love people; I want to share the love of Christ with people. I don't have the opportunities Paul had."

Could it be, my friends, that we are more focused on building up our own image than serving the needs of others? We don't have time for them, nor eyes for them. We don't even think about that, because we're too busy worrying about what others think about us.

3. Life is a beautiful ride when we dedicate ourselves to the service of others.

Notice how quickly Paul moved from being defined by the people to dedicating himself to serving them. Life is beautiful when we take our eyes off ourselves and focus on the hurts, struggles, and needs of others. It can be hard to be concerned about someone

else, especially when you have a viper hanging from your hand. But God tells us that as we have been comforted in our time of need, we should go and comfort others in the same way (2 Corinthians 1:3–7).

This is what Paul did. Even after enduring the storm and being shipwrecked, Paul did not stop to complain about how hard his journey had been. Rather, he saw the needs around him and began to minister to the people. We're told that the father of Publius, the island chief, was sick with a fever and dysentery. He wasn't crippled or blind or deaf like so many who had been healed by Jesus or Peter or Paul. His problem was pretty common, but it was still a struggle for him, as it would be for us. But this man had none of our current cures. Paul might have considered the fact that these symptoms could be contagious, yet he chose to visit the man. He got close enough to lay hands on him and pray for him, and God healed this man. As a result, *"The rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured"* (verse nine).

Now remember, Paul had a lot to worry about. He was on a journey to Rome and he may have been wondering when God would let him continue. But instead of thinking about himself, he focused on the needs of those around him. Where did he learn that? He learned it from Jesus. We read in the Matthew 9:36 that Jesus saw the crowds of people who were harassed and hurting, like sheep without a shepherd, and He was filled with compassion.

I can't say this to you enough, brothers and sisters of Village Bible Church: if our focus is only on our lives, we will never live out the great commission of Christ. We have to lift our eyes and see the world around us. We have to stop focusing on our own issues and struggles, recognizing that God has promised our journey will be taken care of. When we realize this, it gives us the luxury of not worrying about our lives, about what we'll eat or drink or wear or where we'll live. Our destination is set. Rather, we have the luxury of seeing and meeting the needs of those around us. How do we do this? Serving others involves three things.

A life of service involves sensibility.

We have to sense others' needs. How are your senses? Are you too busy or caught up in your own life so that you're unwilling to enter into the lives of others? Sympathy and empathy are the process of putting ourselves into the skin of others. Paul didn't just tell Publius, "It sounds like your dad is doing badly." No, he said, "Let me go see him. Let me put myself in his situation."

I don't want to get too graphic, but dysentery involves incredible stomach cramps. Publius' father might have been lying in bed screaming, but Paul still wanted to get close to him. That's the love of Christ—entering into people's hurts. You might say, "Well, I can do that for my kids." But Paul was helping a man he'd never met before. Are we willing to show that kind of love to strangers?

Of course, we could spiritualize this: "Well, what the man really needed was not healing from his dysentery. He needed the gospel." But nowhere in our text are we told that the gospel was preached to these people. Yet all over the book of Acts we read about how Paul preached everywhere he went, and our motivation should be the same. We should be ready to preach and teach God's Word in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:1–2). Yet there are times when preaching is not what's needed—what's needed is loving care. Paul ministered to these people. We have no idea if any of them came to Christ.

A life of service involves availability.

Second, Paul made himself available to these people. He had many other things on his mind, but he made time to heal, not just one person, but many people. Paul had no idea when he would be leaving. He didn't know how he was going to get off the island. But he made it a priority to be available to the people—and we need to as well.

Are our lives so full of things we have to do that we pass by others in the grocery aisle or in our school or community, rather than stopping to ask them, "How are you doing?" And if they say, "I'm not doing too well," do we respond, "What can I do to help you? How can I serve you? How can I show you the love of Christ?" We have to be available.

A life of service many times leads to reciprocity.

As Paul was being sensible and available, you might think he was wondering about his own needs. But here we see something that is also found throughout Scripture: the principle of reciprocity. We read in verse ten, *"They also honored us greatly."* That's awesome. Oh, how I want our people to be honored for the good things they've done. I love it when I hear you've been honored at your workplace or in your school or in your community for the good you've done. But don't ever let it define you. Point to Christ and give Him the glory. It's an awesome thing when you're doing something great and people are seeing you fill needs. They honored Paul, realizing he had filled a great need, then through this God took care of Paul's needs as well.

When we are more concerned about others, when we seek God's Kingdom first, God will add to us all the things we might have been worrying about. A boat was brought to Paul and the others, and they were provided with whatever they needed. Publius and his people showed their gratitude by giving them the supplies they would need on the last leg of their journey to Rome.

Do you find yourself in the service of others? God wants us there.

4. Life is a beautiful ride when we experience the joy of deep friendships.

Let's finish with Acts 28:11-16:

¹¹ After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead. ¹² Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. ¹³ And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. ¹⁴ There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome. ¹⁵ And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. ¹⁶ And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.

Paul made it to his destination. As we depend on God, as we let Him define who we are, and as we dedicate ourselves to a life of service, God graces us with something we don't often think about. Yet when we are encountering the potholes of life's journey, what we most need is friendships. God gifted Paul with deep friendships that brought him great joy.

Throughout Paul's entire journey, there were a lot of inconsistencies, a lot of variables, a lot of curve balls thrown his way. But there were two consistencies: the faithfulness of God and the friendship of other humans around him. Luke talks about how he and Aristarchus had traveled with Paul as his close companions. The centurion became his friend. Publius became his friend. When Paul finally got to Rome, there were brothers who were there to care for and encourage Paul and his companions.

Here are some things to consider about friendship that far too often I can take for granted.

Real friends are essential for our journey.

I'm talking to the introverts right now, to anyone who thinks they don't need other people. Yeah, you do. God said in the beginning, "It is not good for a man to live alone" (Genesis 2:18). We assume He was talking about marriage, but I think He means more than that. Man was not created to live in isolation. God Himself eternally exists as three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If God desires and wants community as the Godhead, surely we need that as finite individuals. We need friends.

We live in a world that seems more connected than ever before, but which actually has the fewest real friends. If you ever hear yourself saying, "I don't need people," that's a lie from the pit. You need people. You need people you can trust. You need people who can love on you. You need people who can accept you. You need people who can pick you up when you get knocked down. No doubt Paul would not have made it if it weren't for the grace of God and the friendship of others. You and I won't make it either and the ride won't be as much fun without friends.

Real friends should cause us to express our thanks.

When was the last time you thanked God for your friends? When was the last time you thanked God for what the people around you have done? We're coming up on the fourth anniversary of Amanda's cancer diagnosis and surgery which was a dark season for us. I can't imagine making it through without friends. People dropped things at a moment's notice to be with us and care for us.

This begs the question: "Am I doing that for others? Who is thanking God because of me? I'm thankful that so-and-so is in my life. Are there people in your life who are thanking God for bringing you into their lives?"

Real friends are there to encourage us.

Friends are God's gifts to encourage us. We read in verse 15 that "*Paul thanked God and took courage.*" Who can you call today or reach out to, giving them courage amidst the storm? Paul's friends in Rome encouraged him and we are called to encourage one another. Who can we put courage into this week? Or who can we turn to when our courage is gone?

You see, God has given us a journey and has told us it won't be easy. Jesus said in John 16:33, "*In this world you will have tribulation....*" Some of you are feeling it right now. But Jesus went on to say, "*Take heart; I have overcome the world.*"

Believer, Jesus has given you everything you need, not only to make it through the journey, but to enjoy it every step of the way. So enjoy the ride. It's a beautiful ride, not because of the circumstances or the situations, but because we know the God Who promised us is faithful. Just as Paul eventually arrived in Rome, so we will arrive where God is calling us to be.

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.com).