

Acts in Motion

Part four: “An Off-Road Experience”

Reflection and study notes

The Road Ahead

My Lord God

I have no idea where I am going
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain
Where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself.
The fact that I think
I am following your will
does not mean
that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that
the desire to please you
does in fact please you,
And I hope I have that desire
in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do
anything apart from that desire.
I know that if I do this,
You will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore, will I trust you always
though I may seem to be lost
and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear,
for you are ever with me.
You will never leave me
To face my perils alone.

Thomas Merton

“He is like a man building a house
who dug down deep and laid his
foundation on a rock.”

Luke 6:48

Introduction

Proverbs 3:6 “He will make your paths straight”

They say that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. However the reality is we all experience times when the path we take in life feels anything but straight.

How do we understand these “detours” of life? Are they a part of God’s will for our lives?

Straight Street

When Paul first became a follower of Christ – or a follower of the Way - his first stop was Judas’ house on Straight Street, perhaps the only reference to a street name in the Bible.

(Read Acts 9:11)

Paul could have been forgiven for concluding at this point that following “the Way” was going to feel like a direct route, after all he had finally arrived on Straight Street.

However, in the 23rd chapter of Acts, Paul receives the instruction from God to go to Rome. Paul’s route to Rome was an extreme off-road experience (see also Acts 16 & 20 for Paul’s other off-road experiences).

Do you remember being on one of life’s off-road experiences?

1) Storm

As Paul sailed for Rome, he foresaw that a storm was on its way. He even warned those he sailed with, but they didn’t listen to him. As a result they weren’t prepared.

One thing we know for certain is that we all have to go through storms in life. **Paul’s off road tip: Be prepared.**

Jesus tells the parable of the importance of building our lives on solid ground so that when the storms of life come we are not swept away.

How can you prepare for the storms of life? What role does Jesus play in these storms? – read Mark 4:35-41

NOTES	Acts in Motion Part four: "An Off-Road Experience"
<p>"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1</p>	<p>2) Blown off course Sometimes it is not possible to be prepared; some storms in life appear suddenly, without warning. We can even find ourselves blown off the course that we previously believed God had set for us. In Paul's journey the ship could not head into the wind, and so it gave way to it and they were driven along. Acts 27:16 Paul's off-road tip: Sometimes you have to navigate by faith. Read through Hebrews 11 and reflect on the difference faith made to the lives of the ancients.</p>
<p>"So keep your courage, for I have faith in God it will happen just as he told me." Acts 27:25</p>	<p>3) Shipwrecked Paul knew what it was like to find himself in a terrible situation. In fact he had been shipwrecked before. In 2 Corinthians 11:24-27 he lists the trials he had undergone in his life. <i>"Five times I received 40 lashes minus one, three times I was beaten with rocks, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I have been constantly on the move, in danger from all sides, I have laboured and toiled and often gone without sleep, I have known hunger and thirst, I have been cold and naked."</i></p>
<p>"Therefore I tell you do not worry about your life." Matt 6:25</p>	<p>Paul's off road tip: Don't give up Life can be hard but in these times God is saying, <i>"My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in your weakness."</i> 2 Cor 12:9</p>
<p>"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose." Rom 8:28</p>	<p>4) Stranded The next stage of Paul's journey was spending three months stranded on the Island of Malta. He experienced this island like a calm after the storm, even though he still wasn't where he wanted to be. Paul's off-road tip: Adopt a relaxed and upright position. Sometimes we all get too uptight about situations that are outside of our control. If you are in the middle of an off-road experience it is important to relax. Spend some time in prayer handing over your worries to God. Eventually, as God had commanded, Paul arrived in Rome. You too can be confident that he who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it, even if does feel like an offroad experience.</p>