

Intro: In any race, how you start and how you finish are so important.

1. You will still be surviving storms and snakebites

Acts 28:1-5 (ESV)

¹ After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta.

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.

³ When 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.

⁴ When 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."

⁵ He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 (ESV)

²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.

²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;

²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;

²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

2. You will seek God's approval, not shifting public opinion.

Acts 28:4 (ESV)

⁴ When 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."

Acts 28:6 (ESV) ⁶ They 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.

Acts 28:7-9 (ESV)

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.

Galatians 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

3. You will still need the support and encouragement of the saints.

Acts 28:10-15 (ESV)

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

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.

1 Corinthians 16:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence,

¹⁸ for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men.

4. You should steadily proclaim Jesus Christ.

Acts 28:23-24 (ESV)

²³ When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

²⁴ And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.

Acts 28:30-31 (ESV)

³⁰ He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,

³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Invitation: After the final lap of this race there is a finish line and a victory lap in heaven for those who follow Christ.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 (ESV)

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have **finished** the race, I have kept the faith.

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

When you get where you are going, where will you be?