

Paul's Yoke – Finding Peace From Uncertainty

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MAIN VERSES

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Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family. So welcome home.

Shabbat Shalom everybody from Founded in Truth Fellowship. We are so blessed to be here on this Shabbat once again, this day that we've been invited into, but actually very few get the opportunity to embrace the blessing of it.

Entering a New Year with Questions

We've entered into a new year, and as such, we're trying to get a handle on what to expect over the next 11 months, right? So far, it hasn't been too promising, but that's okay. We have a hope from above. But as we look forward into this year and respond to what we just went through this past year, what are we going to do? How are we going to do it? How do we move forward and navigate this thing that we've just been brought through?

The stress and the emotions have likely taken a hold in your life in a way, like mine, that we prefer them not to. I bet you've likely cried more times in the past six months than you would have preferred. You may have been angry more in the past six months than you would have preferred. You may have been depressed in the past six months more than you've preferred. Maybe in the past six months, you've turned to vices to help numb some of the emotional trauma, not knowing where to turn among your friends and family.

In a world of chaos around us, what do we do? What do we think? And how do we proceed? How do we move forward from this, carrying all of this baggage with us? We have a pandemic

that has affected everyone's life in one way or another. And as much as we want to ignore it, we can't. It's too ingrained in our lives at this point. It's too big of an event. How about that presidential election, right? Yeah, it was a bit of a doozy this past year.

A lot of unexpected things, right? How did that one event interrupt your life and your workflow of emotions? How you engage with not just your friends, but also your family on a daily basis? Did it cause you a bit of frustration these past few months? Anger? Hatred maybe, at times, a little bit. Did it make you a bit depressed?

How Believers Should Respond When Overwhelmed

How should believers respond when things happen in their lives that overwhelm them? Is getting angry the best outlet? Of course, we all say no. Some therapists say screaming in your pillow is a good thing. Get it out. Being stressed and anxious all the time to the point where the thing that has initially caused it is no longer able to contain it as it spills out in other areas of your lives. Maybe your zeal and attempt to desperately express yourself to your friends or on social media ends up bubbling over into your family sphere, the most sacred sphere in one's life.

Depression is triggered many times by life circumstances, drawn out with an overwhelming strength that feels like a weighted blanket being pushed on top of you and all you want to do is just breathe.

Do you ever feel like it should be different? Do you ever feel like it should be different as a believer when we walk through times that are complicated? And of course we all do. I mean, that's the obvious answer. But where is the peace? Where is the hope? Where is the calm? It should just be available whenever we want it, right?

Why can't we just click a button that makes our lives so focused on Yeshua that everything else that doesn't matter just fades away? Why can't we have that? Why can't we feel like Yeshua is calming the storms in our lives whenever we want? Why can't we be like Paul?

The Unshakeable Faith of Paul

Despite the political turmoil that was happening—turmoil that would later lead to his being beheaded—Paul was not going to call the head of the Roman Empire, the Caesar or his president, Lord. He would not call his Caesar Kyrios, king. He would instead dare to declare that Yeshua, Jesus, is the only true Kyrios, the only true Lord, master, and king.

What kind of life, what kind of faith, would make Paul so absorbed by the person of Yeshua and the declaration of his kingdom? He would dare to lose all confidence in the most powerful nation in the world, the Roman Empire, so that he could just focus on the mission of Christ and being the image bearer and the ambassador that God had directed him to be. It's incredible.

We've spoken about Luke's ability and skill when writing his account of Yeshua, as well as the account of what it looked like after his ascension into heaven, riding on the clouds into the throne room of God, just as the prophet Daniel said would happen. And the aftermath of that, when all of the disciples were literally scrambling around, trying to figure out: How do we do what Yeshua said? How do we figure this out? And of course, that is the book of Acts, the Acts of the Apostles, where we kind of get a helicopter view of that scramble going on. How do we do this right? What about this? I didn't expect that many Gentiles to respond like this. Or what about this, Paul? We heard about this. But how do we understand this?

And here in the book of Acts, we're introduced to this guy, Paul—the arch enemy of the early Christian believers. And you know what Yeshua does? He literally knocks him off his high horse and transforms his heart from this callous, angry, Torah scholar of the highest degree into a man who now wants to deliver a message of God's redemptive love, power, and peace, not just to the elect Judeans, but to the entire world.

Could you personally imagine going from a person who would gladly start throwing rocks at Yeshua because his teaching about how to live out the Torah was just too radical, encouraging the stoning of early Christians that would just not shut up about what God is actually doing in the world because it contradicted what you wanted God to be doing in the world? I don't know if anyone can begin to relate to that, right? Just so mad that God is actually propelling other people in a direction that you don't want God to go.

No, God. No, God. We often pray like this. I bet especially in the past six months. No, God. I know the plans I want for you. Plans for you to prosper, God. Not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future, God. How many times have we prayed that in one way or another in the past few months? And then we're stuck, ticked off and bitter because God does not work like that.

With Paul going from that place—where the Torah, as you perceived it, was something divisive, something that established a prison, a wall around the kingdom of God, something that empowered your flesh more than your spirit—to a place where you are so on fire for the mission, the love, the mercy, the grace, the justice, and the kingdom of God overtaking the entire world, that it makes the very disciples of Yeshua uncomfortable.

Whoa, now, Paul, slow your roll. This is what the book of Acts is all about. Whoa, Paul, what are you doing? We walked with him, we know his teaching—he was just so focused. And many times in his letters and in Luke's account, Paul doesn't even slow down to make sure he's doing everything right. We see this multiple times. He just plunges forward using the only thing he feels he can rely on, the mercy that Yeshua had demonstrated on him.

The Epic Story of Acts

Maybe it's time for some of us to reread the book of Acts. So turn with me to chapter 27 of Acts, and we're going to read a little bit. And if you are familiar with Acts, you'll know that we're almost at the end of it. And if you've been keeping up with our online youth ministry, then you've read this chapter.

And I have to admit, I've read this chapter a bazillion times, and it was only through one of Pete Wilson's lessons that it really struck me for the weight of what Luke was trying to portray. I greatly appreciate that. I'm so thankful that I can learn and lean on other people within our community to teach me and minister to me through God's Word. And so we're not going to read through all of chapter 27, but I want to show you how Luke is intentionally writing his story.

Luke is writing it as if it is this epic adventure story with a sea voyage, right? And there's action and there's drama. And throughout it's intentional—it's intentional. Everything he's writing is intentional.

To the ancient audience, this was an edge-of-your-seat kind of story. And we'll see that just in the first few verses we're going to read. Let's put those lenses on. We're going to start by reading verses 1 through 8. Here we go:

So Paul is a prisoner and he has been handed over to a high-ranking regiment for transportation to Rome. When we had boarded a ship to Adramidium, we put to sea and tended to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia. Edaristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. The next day we put in at Sidon, and Julius treated Paul kindly and allowed him to go to his friends to receive their care.

(Verse 1)

I'm going to continue through verse 9. Since much time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous because even the fast was already over, Paul advised them saying, Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only for the cargo and the ship, but also our

lives. But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than what Paul said.

And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter and the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

If you looked at the details with the lenses of how this is written, Luke didn't have to include all these details of they went to this port and they went to this port and it was long and it was, oh, and the wind's blowing and, oh, it's kind of getting dangerous. And now it's wintertime, which is more dangerous. And then Paul has this warning, right? We see all these relationships beginning to form with the prisoners and even the soldiers. But again, Paul has this warning. Something bad is going to happen, guys. It's already dangerous, but it's about to get bad, bad. It's going to get very bad. And the captain just disregards and says, you know what? Let's sail full speed ahead.

Now look at the very next verse. I love this verse right here. Verse 13 says, "So you see the tone change from, this is going to be real dangerous, and then it just goes calm. You could almost hear the Hobbit theme song from the Shire playing in the background. Nice and peaceful. Wrong. Verse 14."

The Adventure Movie

So we see what's happening. You see the movie playing. This is an adventure movie that's going on here. And they just went through this awful storm where they ended up just having to throw all the tackle, everything off overboard. They're trying to get rid of the weight.

And now this next section is important. This one verse... we're about to read is going to retroactively give meaning to the entire journey Luke has taken us through in the book of Acts. Paul is now going to remind the soldiers that he tried to warn them, right? In verse 21. And he said, "Do not be afraid, Paul. Here we go, this line right here. Highlight it in your Bibles if you have a highlighter. Did you see it? This is the section that reveals the point of the story.

After all of the traveling Paul did throughout all of the cities, all of the ministering, all of the chaos—all of the relationship issues, remember that time when him and Barnabas, the lead pastor of the church of Antioch originally, got into a fist fight? Okay, it doesn't really say they had a fist fight, but it kind of implies they very well may have, just in the tone. The journey going from town to town, being thrown into prison, being released from prison, being thrown back into prison again, accused by his own peers of constantly abandoning the faith that he was

so zealous for, beaten and being chased around with people that wanted to kill him. This was his journey.

A Journey Built on Faith

He laments about his mental health, trying to figure out how to deal with this thorn in his side and how he has to deal with his own shameful flesh still beating to do things that he knows we should not do. It's been a long journey and it is revealed here in [Acts 27](#) where all of this was taking him. All of the hard times, all of the times where he had doubt, all of the times where he allowed his anger or even maybe fleshly hatred to overtake him. The depression, the sadness, the mourning, the stress, the anxiety, what's going to happen? All of it has now culminated to this point on the ship.

His journey's end is being revealed right here. You must stand before Caesar. You will declare your faith in the true king to the personified beast of the world, Caesar of Rome, the most powerful man of the most powerful nation in the world. Paul is going to testify of Christ's power over the man who has ultimate authority, to his face. That's the mission that is going to spark a shockwave throughout creation. That's the mission that God had Paul on. And this is the journey that is preparing Paul to do just that. This is the journey that has been preparing Paul to stand there without a doubt of the power of God to face Caesar to fulfill his mission.

The journey has been built on Paul's faith. The journey, properly understood as Paul understood it, built him up to be placed before the audience of the world and the world powers to shine as the image bearer God had called him to be.

Standing Before Caesar

Dr. Craig Keener, an amazing scholar in his Acts commentary, makes a brilliant statement here. He says this about this incident of Paul: "The ship is now going to crash." The ship is now going to crash. Everybody knows it. The ship is going down. 276 people on board may perish. Paul says no one will. I don't know. Is Paul right? This could be the end of everybody.

And amidst all of this drama of everybody on board, out of all of this suspense in the story, Paul decides it's a good time to break bread with the soldiers and the prisoners and the sailors on a ship heading towards its own fate.

Verse 34, [Acts 27](#), verse 34. Here's what happens. We were, in all, 276 persons in this ship. So here, Paul is so convinced of God's plan, despite his own troubles, his own past, his own

weaknesses that he battles daily, that he just keeps moving forward.

The Breaking of Bread

Bible nerd moment. We have one of those every week, right? He takes bread and he gives thanks to God, like a blessing, right? The Greek word used here for giving thanks throughout the New Testament is eucharisto. Eucharisto. It's where some Christian traditions get the term Eucharist from, right? Isn't that neat? Because the bread is giving thanks. You're giving thanks for the bread. I find that really neat. I don't know. I'm going to do a message on it, I guess, sometime.

But this moment, Paul gathers around the sailors and he wants to prepare them for what's about to happen. They're going to wreck. It's going to happen. It's going to be stressful, chaotic, hope you can swim. And they had not eaten in so long. So he wants them to be nourished.

These are not his buddies from Jerusalem. These are the soldiers, with swords out, not knowing what to do with these prisoners. Might be better just to go ahead and kill them. These sailors that are now responsible for transporting prisoners and slaves around. And fellow prisoners.

Paul the prisoner wants to make sure the sailors and the prisoners and the soldiers—let's put it this way. Paul wants to make sure the Nazi soldiers, the Al-Qaeda fighters, these Roman guards are well fed for what they are about to experience as well as the prisoners. And not just that, he used this moment to draw attention and orbit of the entire audience to this eucharisto, this giving of thanks to God. Can you feel it?

A Light in Darkness

In this dark place of this ship, Paul is surrounded with this audience of elite soldiers and sailors and murderers and thieves and liars, sinners, prisoners. And in the center is the breaking of bread and the proclamation of gratitude and thanks to God for all he is.

If Paul was too busy being mad about the politics within Rome, would he have missed this opportunity? If Paul was so concerned about the ship crashing and everything going to Sheol in a handbasket, would he have missed the opportunity to be here in that moment? Gosh, I would love to have a painting of this scene. On a boat, everyone on the boat surrounding Paul and him in the middle with this light, if you will, metaphorically light, as he breaks bread and cries out to God with thanksgiving. That's just so absolutely epically beautiful as Luke portrays it here.

I have a quote here by teacher Pete Wilson I'd like to show you. And it was from his commentary on [Acts 27](#). And he says this: "This chapter shows us that rather than go to Rome as a prisoner to face judgment, Paul goes in God's providence. Just as Yeshua went to the cross, God protects Paul from the storm, overzealous soldiers, and from being shipwrecked so he can fulfill his purpose in Rome. It's the mission of the Lord."

God's Purpose for Your Circumstances

"It shows us no matter what, God is in charge. Paul goes to Rome because that is where God wants him, not because Rome requires it."

What if the world you find yourself in right now was specifically intended for you to be in? The circumstances that cause stress and doubt, the events that cause sadness, anger, outrage, the uncertainty about the future. What if Paul seemed to find a type of transcendent rest in his declaration of knowing that God has been with him this entire time on the journey?

And Paul's decisions to keep his focus on the finish line and not be persuaded to revolt against the soldiers that held him captive, stripping him of his alleged liberties and losing his temper whenever summoned to the meeting after meeting of his elders or his peers, or just saying forget this, I'm going home after that dang snake bit him. Paul's examples throughout the book of Acts are an extreme encouragement to me because I am totally susceptible to not responding like Paul in those circumstances.

Paul's examples here give me so much hope despite what I'm going through and despite what I need to do to get through it. I am still on a bigger mission than my circumstances. You are still on a bigger mission than your circumstances. Stay focused and stay faithful.

You may have things in your life that you're struggling with. These are things that neither define you nor define the mission in your life. Your mission has already been established and you are where you are because God has already placed you there as his ambassador of his kingdom, a representative of his king, your King Yeshua. The obstacles in your journey are there to prepare you to go further in that mission.

Stay focused and stay faithful. That's the story of Joseph, betrayed by his own family, thrown into a pit, abandoned for profit, sold into slavery, taken into a strange land. All he wants to do is stay focused, stay faithful.

Where Focus and Faithfulness Lead

Potiphar's wife enters the picture, causes all kinds of issues for him. He says no. He's thrown in prison as a result. A life of constant pitfalls, pain, suffering, shackles. That's when he realized—the journey brought him there for a mission. Guys, I cut today's message short this morning after a time of prayer, reviewing what I thought God wanted the message to be. So we're going to continue this topic next week from the standpoint of Yeshua and Matthew, how he speaks about taking upon his yoke because his yoke is easy and he is the source of ultimate rest. But today I want to ask you a question.

And that question is, where is your focus and where is your faithfulness? Today, where is your focus? Where is your energy going? And the reason why that's a good question to ask in a self-audit is because where your energy goes is where your resources go. And where your resources go is where your heart goes. And where your heart goes shows where your allegiance truly is. Where is your allegiance today? Who or what have you given your faithfulness to?

Maybe You're Distracted

Maybe you're at a place today where you realize you've become distracted. Very possibly by the onslaught of one event after another over the past year. And maybe it's brought you to a place of just not knowing anymore where you were going because you've been spun around over and over again. Overcome with the bubbling over of emotions here and there, trying to address each event as it's thrown at you. But maybe it just feels so heavy after a while.

If you're in that place today, I'm going to ask you to join me in prayer in a moment. But I want to remind you that God has not forsaken you. That God is so proud of his ambassador that he called on his mission. And that you have never stopped being on the mission to proclaim and live out his kingdom. Despite where you're at today. You're on the mission where you're at today.

Find Help

And if you find yourself in a place where vices have overtaken you, find help. Do what you need to do. Don't entertain that. Overcome it. Do what you need to do and find help. If you find yourself just so angry every time someone has the audacity to speak about anything, get help. Do what you need to do. Reach out to whoever you need to reach out to. If you find yourself in a dark place, maybe triggered by recent events, there's no shame in finding help. Reach out to whoever you need to, to overcome this, to move on to the next checkpoint of where God intends you to be on his mission.

God Has Not Forgotten You

You can get through it because I know this is not the place where your journey ends. God has a spectacular, amazing adventure of a mission ahead of you still, just like Paul. And while some would think the finish line is anticlimactic, God is rooting you all the while that you are running this race. He's cheering you on. That's everything that the message of Yeshua is about, especially the mission that he left us. Guys, I am with you always. Go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go. Keep going. Keep climbing. Keep crawling. Keep running. Go. I'm with you. Don't look back.

So I don't know where you're at today, but I can tell you that God has not forgotten you. God loves you. God is proud of you. And God has equipped you to get through this so that you can continue forward. That's the message that I see plainly in Scripture.

Prayer

So if you would, please join me in prayer. Our Father, our King, we find ourselves in a complicated time. We find ourselves in a time where we are baited to overflow with emotion as we are distracted by events that do not matter for the sake of your kingdom. These are only temporal. Father, I ask in the name of Yeshua that the spirit that you have given to each one of us, that is within us now as a gift of pledging allegiance to your son, would become so activated in this time that we would remember our first love, that we would remember the focus, that we would remember the allegiance and the faithfulness we committed to our king, and that we would remember that we are on a mission for you, that this is a journey that has an ending point. That this spirit would be so active within us that nothing would stop us from continuing the journey.

And though we may have things shackled around us in this very moment, whether it be vices, whether it be emotions, whether it be dark places, dark thoughts, or depression, God, in the name of Yeshua, I ask for those shackles to fall off in this moment. That we would move on from this place taking with us the experience to only strengthen our faith, moving forward to the next checkpoint on the mission so that we can find ourselves at the finish line, just like Paul did, proclaiming Christ our King.

We thank you, Father, for the spirit that you've given to us, this gift, the comforter that gives us rest no matter what's going on around us, but also empowers us with the authority of Yeshua, that we would not stop marching forward, no matter what the circumstances are, that we would not miss the opportunity to break bread, to Eucharistos, to give thanks before everyone. And in

that moment, your peace and your rest and your plan and the power of your kingdom overflow to everyone around us, that we would be those types of witnesses for your kingdom, not the ones that sit in one place. We thank you, Father. In the name of Yeshua, we pray. Amen. Shalom.

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