

Be Connected Acts 27:27-44

When was the last time you sat by a warm, crackling fire with a bowl of popcorn and a challenging jigsaw puzzle? Puzzles can provide an evening of entertainment or frustration. Not for the faint of heart or the impatient personality the world's largest jigsaw puzzle measures 14' x 5' and has 24,000 pieces. A large space and a lot of time are necessary to put that together, and oh, don't forget to put the cat up.

I have put together a fair number of puzzles in my day from David's giant piece John Deere puzzle to a 3,000 piece picture of Mt. Rainier. I have put puzzles together without straight borders and puzzles with three layers, and puzzles that are a challenge to the mind as you try to match up all the images. There have been puzzles where except for the edge pieces all the interior pieces were the same shape. Then there is the mystery puzzle. A story gives clues determining where puzzle pieces go that eventually lead you to answer the mystery. The most frustrating puzzle was the one that had a purple background with some lighter lavender vines running perpendicular. What made it difficult is that the picture revealed a 3D image only visible by staring at it for a while.

From the simple picture puzzles we do with our kids or grandkids to the more complex puzzles to pass time for an evening, puzzles, though fun, can be a challenge. Finding the right piece that goes with an adjacent piece that fits perfectly by connecting the interlocking parts not only makes the picture complete, it keeps the picture together, it keeps the picture connected.

Turn in your Bibles with me to [Acts 27](#). We left the Apostle Paul with a shipload of sailors, soldiers and prisoners adrift at the mercy of a violent storm that began brewing almost immediately after they left Crete. The storm was so severe that seasoned

sailors had given up hope of surviving. But Paul stood before them as a beacon of hope to encourage them with words of comfort God had promised that those on ship would be saved. In our text today we note from the example of Paul how important it is to be connected to God. The greater connection to God, the greater our faith.

I find it humorous that beginning with our text in [verse 27](#) that they have been at sea for 14 days and it has been 14 days since we left them at sea. Let's work through the passage and then draw some conclusions about how we can be connected to God. Read the passage with me.

That Luke references the Adriatic Sea here is not speaking of that body of water between Italy and the Balkan States. In Paul's day the Adriatic Sea encompassed a much larger portion of the Mediterranean Sea. Looking at a map you will remember that they left Crete headed for Rome when the Northeaster Storm hit and drove them off course. The previous passage indicates that the sailors feared they were coming dangerously close to Syrtis. That is a region off the northern coast of Africa in what is Libya today. Many a ship had met its demise in the quicksand off that coast and they were afraid they were getting close.

Put yourself on that ship and imagine what must have been going through the minds of the passengers and crew. For 14 days they had seen neither sun by day nor moon and stars by night as the storm raged. Though they didn't know where they were somehow the sailors sensed that land was nearby. Whether it was through years of experience sailing or just some hunch they believed land was approaching. Sensing that land seemed near they let down a rope with lead weights on the end. It was used to determine the depth of the sea. Their first reading found that the waters were 120 feet deep. A short time later they found it to be 90 feet deep. Shore was approaching.

A British yachtsman by the name of James Smith was curious about this passage. Being a sailor himself he wanted to determine the accuracy of Luke's account so he went to the Mediterranean area to interview experienced navigators. He asked them all a simple question. If a ship left from this point during a storm with hurricane like forces what is the mean rate of drift for a ship in such a gale. Their answer revealed just how accurate Luke's account is. They indicated that a ship facing such a storm could expect to travel about 36 miles per day. Luke records that after leaving Crete they sailed past a little island named Cauda. Verse 27 notes that it had been 14 days since they left. The distance from Cauda to Malta where the ship ran aground is approximately 475 miles. According to Smith's calculations given that distance and the rate of drift for a ship in a storm those interviewed stated that it would take 13 days, one hour and 21 minutes. Scripture is amazingly accurate.

Back in **verses 22-26** Paul spoke these words to bring reassurance to those on board **“I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as He told me. Nevertheless we must run aground on some island.”**

Verse 22 “take courage.” Verse 29 “Fearing...”

Their emotional state hadn't changed, they were still afraid. Apparently they hadn't learned the lesson of trusting that God will do what He says. **How many times have I read the promises of God only to step out in fear rather than have faith?** In the storm one day, Peter saw the Lord walking on water. If it's really you Lord, tell me to come out on the water. And the Lord told him to step out. What began as a walk of faith quickly evaporated in

a cloud of fear as he became overwhelmed by the power of the mighty waves rather than be kept by the power of the miracle worker.

Notice they did in attempt to survive. They dropped four anchors from the stern of the ship. The anchors would not only act as a drag to slow their speed as they headed to shore, but the hope would be that they anchors would catch hold on the sea bottom and keep them from heading too close to shore where the ship might be torn apart. In an act of desperation, the sailors went to the front of the ship and attempted to put the lifeboat back in the water to escape. They were going to abandon ship and leave the others to fend for themselves. They felt their chance of survival fared better if they took off in the small boat without having the responsibility of the other passengers.

Paul then reminded them of God's promise that unless they stayed with the ship their lives would be lost. Now he didn't mean that if the sailors left the ship there would be no one left capable of sailing it resulting in the death of everyone else on board. He was reminding them of God's promise that their safety was tied to staying with the ship. To survive they needed to be connected with the ship.

Because they were nearing land, and that they had eaten little to nothing during their 14 day ordeal, Paul urged them to eat to regain strength. They ate their fill and then threw the rest of the grain into the sea to further lighten the ship. They cut the anchors free, hoisted the sail and headed the ship to a spot on the shore that looked like a sandy beach. What they didn't expect was a sudden stop as the ship hit a sandbar some distance from shore. The beating force of the waves against the stern of the ship couldn't free it, but began to break it apart. The only course of action was now to abandon ship. Some swimming, some surfing to shore on planks or debris from the ship all 276 passengers made it to shore as Paul said and God promised they would. Paul had remained connected to God through it all.

What are some lessons we can learn from this passage about staying connected to God during the storms we go through? Keep in mind that for all to make it safely to this unknown island Paul spoke about, everyone had to be connected to the ship. Someone has rightly said that God's promise does not negate human responsibility. God said they would make it but they had to remain on board. By losing the anchors and dropping the lifeboat and throwing all the tackle overboard they had abandoned all their own logical means of surviving. Like Paul, they had to come to place of trusting this God that he had pointed them to. **Man is not saved his by his way, but by God's way. How do we get connected to God?** That leads us to our first point.

I. BE CONNECTED TO GOD THROUGH HIS SON

Paul had come to a point in his life many years earlier where he recognized that Jesus was the Messiah. In doing so, he understood that Jesus was God in the flesh, come to die for sin and then to be resurrected. The resurrection is proof positive that His sacrifice on the cross where He shed His blood was accepted by God as payment for sin. If it hadn't been accepted He would still be physically dead and in the grave and we would still be spiritually dead. But His death burial and resurrection paid the penalty for our sin so that by faith in His finished work on the cross we could be saved.

John 1:1, 14, 12

I Peter 2:24

When we trust Christ for salvation by repenting of our sin, believing Him to be the only Savior who died for our sins we are then connected to Him in a very unique way. In a very simple illustration Jesus expresses this connection through visual imagery. In **John 15** He speaks about a vine and branches. There is the vine and there are branches. For the branches to have life, they must be connected to the vine. Jesus refers to Himself as the vine. For us to

have the life He gives we must be connected to Him. Eternal life is guaranteed to those who are connected to the Son through faith. Not being connected to the Son of God guarantees that we do not have this life.

I John 5:11-13

John 3:16

John 5:24

Paul had taken that step to be connected with God through saving faith in His Son. That connection produced an ongoing growing faith in depending on God to keep His promises. We know Paul believed God for the promise of eternity because back in **verse 23** he said he belonged to God. We know Paul believed God for the moment because he said in **verse 25** that he believed God would keep his promise regarding their physical safety.

If we are rightly connected with God through saving faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, then that saving faith should be producing sanctifying faith where daily I'm growing to be more like Christ and because I'm becoming more like Christ in my character I am also trusting Him more each day through all the life events that occur. That kind of faith doesn't happen overnight. It takes a lifetime of being connected to God.

The question remains today for you to answer. **Are you connected to God through His Son by faith? Do you know Him as your personal Savior?** He invites you to have a personal relationship with Him. **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."** There's the connection.

If you are connected to God through salvation in His Son, has that faith grown beyond the salvation experience? Has that faith produced a calmness and contentedness and centered focus on Christ in each storm you encounter: the storm of unemployment; the storm of financial need; the storm of temptation or peer pressure; the storm of difficult relationships; the storm of illness; the storm of...?

When we are connected to God through His Son there is nothing to fear. Being connected to God through His Son creates another connection with God, a unique connection. Not only are we connected to God through His Son, but we are connected to God through His Spirit.

II. BE CONNECTED TO GOD THROUGH HIS SPIRIT

I recently was talking with a friend who started attending another church. They have begun studying the book of Acts as well. My friend isn't quite sure yet about where the Pastor stands on the Holy Spirit. This pastor believes that Acts is about the Apostles and that the Apostles were the only ones to receive the Holy Spirit to carry out the beginning work of establishing the church.

I Corinthians 2:12

I Corinthians 3:16

Romans 8:9

Ephesians 1:13

Ephesians 4:30

According to **John 14:16-17** the coming of the Holy Spirit was promised by God the Father to those who believed in Christ. The Holy Spirit has come not just to dwell among us, but to dwell within us. He is the presence of Christ in us. Jesus told His disciples He couldn't stay, but in His absence another would come to take His place to dwell in us. When we become connected to God through salvation by faith in His Son, the Holy Spirit enters us and changes us in a way that makes us presentable to God so that He sees us as holy. The New Testament word is regeneration. The simple definition is that we are born again. Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about it in John 3.

The act of regeneration is His giving to us the divine nature. We do not become God, but our nature, our character is changed to be like that of God – holy. In writing to the Galatians, Paul

indicates that this regeneration makes us the sons of God. Being connected to God not only gives us a new nature, it gives us a new family, and a new home. We are brought into a unique relationship with every other person who is so connected with God making us into one body as Paul points out to the Corinthians. **I Corinthians 12:12-13** **“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...”**

But the Holy Spirit doesn't just give us a new eternal nature, a new family and a new home; He also gives us a new purpose. That purpose is to glorify God. We glorify God when we yield ourselves to His control allowing Him to change our character so that it mirrors that of Christ. That character is summed up in **Galatians 5:22-23** **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”**

Being rightly and constantly connected to God through the Holy Spirit changes our character. **So another question for us to answer today is this: how well are we connected to God through the Holy Spirit? Are we letting Him change us or are we resisting Him in some way so that we are still holding on to some of those traits of the old nature?** We can glean from the writings of Paul in the New Testament that he had a tremendous transformation in his character because of being connected to God through the Holy Spirit by His faith in Jesus.

Paul not only had a change in character, he also had a change in his calling. When rightly connected to the Holy Spirit, there is a desire to obey God, to do His will over our own. Self is dethroned and God is enthroned on the will of our heart. Doing what He wants becomes paramount. Paul's one and only desire was to do all that God asked him to do and he recognized that he couldn't do it in his own power but only in the power of Christ **“I can do all things**

through Christ who strengthens me.”
(Philippians 4:13)

We learned early on in our study of Acts that when we are rightly connected to God through His Spirit, He will empower us to be bold witnesses in proclaiming news about Christ. **(Acts 1:8)**

Be connected to God through His Son.
 Be connected to God through His Spirit.
 Be connected to God through His Sword.

III. BE CONNECTED TO GOD THROUGH HIS SWORD

Paul had a solid grasp on the Old Testament. He describes himself as a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He had a thorough command of the Scriptures. When he got saved we learn that he went off to study. Isolated from others, he spent time scouring over the Old Testament. From his training and understanding of Scripture He had doctrine, traditions and prejudices that had to be purged from his thinking that then had to be reshaped. Standing on that deck in howling winds of a raging storm, Paul could encourage passengers to trust God as He had promised because he had become convinced of the truth of God's Word that God is faithful to keep His Word.

Of the weapons that God gives to us in the spiritual battle being waged against us, God has told us to take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God **(Ephesians 6:17b)**. We cannot effectively march into battle and expect to be victorious if we do not take with us the weapons that are designed to defeat the enemy. It was that very weapon Jesus used against Satan when after 40 days of fasting in the wilderness he craftily came to entice the Son of God by tempting Him. On each of those three occasions it was the Word of God that Jesus used to refute the wiles of the devil.

How much of God's Sword do you use? How much of it do you know? How precious is the Word of God to you? How connected are you to God through it?

There is a story of a pastor who took a Sabbatical for several months. He decided to travel to Israel and visit the many places Jesus had traveled. Arriving in Jerusalem he met a man who claimed he could recite the Old Testament in Hebrew. The pastor was excited and looked forward to their meeting the next day. As they sat down the Pastor asked where his new friend would like to start. Beginning in the Psalms and then in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, the man flawlessly quoted passage after passage. Then the proverbial shoe dropped, the pastor found out that the man was an atheist. I have read more than one account or statistic that concludes many atheists know more about the Bible than do those who profess to be Christians. That needs to be remedied folks. To make it through the storms of life we need to be connected to God through the Sword which is the Word of God.

Speaking of God's Word Jeremiah writes **“When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear Your name, O Lord God Almighty.” (Jeremiah 15:16)**

Here's how the message renders the verse: **“When your words showed up, I ate them-- swallowed them whole. What a feast! What delight I took in being yours, O GOD, GOD-of-the-Angel-Armies!”**

I want to close with six ways you can stay connected to God through His Sword – the Word of God. Five of them are not original with me, they come from an illustration created by the Christian group The Navigators. It's called the Word Hand.

HEARING

Romans 10:17

Hearing the Word from godly pastors and teachers

provides insight into others' study of the Scriptures as well as stimulating your own appetite for the Word. If Jeremiah's words are true in your heart then it won't matter the time on the clock when you come to hear. You come hungry and you leave still wanting more.

READING

Revelation 1:3

Reading the Bible gives an overall picture of God's Word. Many people find it helpful to use a daily reading program which takes them systematically through the Bible. In its history the Church has never had greater access to solid Bible teaching than they have today. Pick up the Daily Bread, or In Touch or Turning Point and get their monthly Bible reading plans. Access resources that are on the internet. Connect with God by reading His Word.

STUDYING

Acts 17:11

Studying the Scriptures leads to personal discoveries of God's truths. Writing down these discoveries helps you organize and remember them.

MEMORIZING

Psalms 119:9, 11

Memorizing God's Word enables use of the Sword of the Spirit to overcome Satan and temptations or to have it readily available for witnessing or helping others with a "word in season." Take advantage of the memory verses inserted in the bulletin each month or other Scripture memory programs. After Dawson Trotter was saved he memorized a verse every night before going to bed.

MEDITATING

Psalms 1:2, 3

Meditation is the thumb of the Word Hand. It's used in conjunction with each of the other methods. Only as you meditate on God's Word--thinking of its meaning and application in your life--will you discover its transforming power at work within you.

I want to add a sixth way to stay connected to God through His Sword – the Word of God. It helps us have a firm grip on the Sword.

OBEYING

John 14:21

Here's the thing. You can hear and read and study and memorize and meditate all you want but unless you obey what it says all that knowledge doesn't amount to a hill of beans. If you want to be connected to God, I mean really connected to God through His Sword, you need to obey it. Only then does this verse tell us you demonstrate love God. James challenges us to **“be doers of the Word and not just hearers only.”**

Because Paul believed God's Word to be truth, Paul could be faithful to obey God's Word. Dear friends, I want you to love God's Word, embrace God's Word, obey God's Word. I want it to be sweet to your taste, the source of strength to which you turn in times of the fiercest storms. Don't let it be the book that just sits on your coffee table and records your genealogies. Don't leave it on the dash of your car so that it's handy for next Sunday. **If someone came and confiscated all your Bibles because it was illegal to own, would you miss it?**

I close with these words from **Psalm 119:105** taken from the Message: **“By your words I can see where I'm going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path.”**

Life can be just as difficult as a bunch of puzzle pieces but we can make it through when we remember to:

- Be connected to God through His Son.
- Be connected to God through His Spirit.
- Be connected to God through His Sword.