

Lesson # 5 Storms come, plans change (Read Acts 27 & 28)

When it comes to pivoting—when plans fall apart and direction suddenly changes—leadership is tested most in those moments. There’s an unlikely but powerful quote from heavy weigh boxing champion Mike Tyson: *“Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.”*. Sometimes our plans, strategy and preparation goes out the window when the unexpected happens

At 63, I had a clear vision for this season of life. I planned to continue creating art—the work I’ve always loved—while my wife and I traveled more, slowed work down, and enjoyed life together. I looked forward to playing soccer, embracing the rhythm of the life we had built, and simply growing old alongside her.

Then, in late January, I got punched in the mouth—with a pancreatic cancer diagnosis.

In that moment, everything changed. But what I’ve come to see is this: while my plans were disrupted, God was not surprised. Through this trial, He has been revealing deeper truths—about surrender, about faith, and about purpose.

Looking at the life of the Apostle Paul, I see a powerful example of what it means to pivot under God’s direction. Paul’s plans were often interrupted, redirected, even broken—but each shift became an opportunity for greater impact and ministry.

What I’m learning is that when God changes your direction, it’s not a setback—it’s often a calling. And with the right perspective, what feels like a disruption can become one of the most meaningful assignments of your life.

Saul was a young man with a brilliant mind and a deep understanding of the Torah, Jewish tradition, and the teachings God had given His chosen people. He was highly skilled, driven, and passionate—qualities that led him to become one of the most aggressive persecutors of Christians the world had ever seen.

Then everything changed.

On the road to Damascus, Saul was, in a sense, “punched in the mouth.” He was struck blind and brought to a complete stop. In a powerful turn of events, he was then cared for by the very Christians he had been persecuting. In that moment, God revealed Himself to Saul in a personal and undeniable way.

That encounter transformed him.

Saul became Paul—no longer a persecutor of the faith, but one of its greatest messengers. Next to Jesus, Paul would go on to become one of the most influential voices in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

Paul's voyage to Rome in Acts chapters 27–28 is one of Scripture's clearest pictures of trusting God when carefully laid plans collapse. Paul was a prisoner, yet spiritually he was the freest man on the ship. Though storms, shipwreck, delay, and unexpected detours disrupted the journey, God's purpose was never threatened. (Did you Read Acts 27 & 28?)

1. Human Plans Can Fail, But God's Purpose Stands - The Pivot

Paul warned the crew not to sail because danger lay ahead:

“Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss...”

— Acts 27:10

But they trusted the pilot and owner of the ship more than God's warning (Acts 27:11). Soon, a violent storm (*Euroclydon*) drove them helplessly.

Spiritual Lesson:

Even the wisest plans, expert advice, and careful preparation can be overturned in a moment. When circumstances shift unexpectedly, it is not a sign that God has abandoned the journey.

It is a call to pivot.

A moment to reassess, to lean on the training and preparation you've been given—but above all, to trust. Trust that God is still directing your path. That He is closing certain doors for a reason and opening new ones with purpose.

What feels like disruption is often divine redirection

Proverbs 19:21

“Many are the plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the Lord's counsel—that will stand.”

James 4:13–15

“You ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’”

Sometimes the storm is not a sign of failure, but redirection.

2. In the Storm, God Gives Direction for the Next Step

When all hope seemed lost:

“Now I urge you to take heart... there will be no loss of life among you... For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve.”

— Acts 27:22–23

Paul did not control the storm, but he received direction inside it.

Acts 27:25

“I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.”

Spiritual Lesson:

Faith is not denial of danger—it is confidence in God in the middle of danger.

When plans fail, ask:

- What is God showing me now?
- What must be adjusted?
- What part of the old plan must be released?

God often guides by **course correction**, not by restoring the original route. When we make decisions and plans that are guided by prayer, when those plans are changed or meet a roadblock, we have to rely on prayer and faith that what we learned in the path we took was valuable but now there's a next level we need to go

3. Sometimes Survival Requires Throwing Cargo Overboard

The sailors lightened the ship:

- They threw cargo overboard (Acts 27:18)
- They cast off tackle (Acts 27:19)

To survive, they had to release valuable things.

Spiritual Lesson:

In times of crisis, some things must be surrendered—control, pride, old strategies, even the plans we once held tightly.

Holding onto the past, possessions, or anything rooted in this world can quietly hold us back from true victory, freedom, and breakthrough.

Jesus makes this clear in the Gospel of Matthew: we are called to **die to ourselves** and take up our cross. This is not symbolic language alone—it is a call to complete surrender.

Baptism reflects this truth. As we go under the water, the old self is buried. As we rise, we step into new life—a new creation in Christ. It is the picture of being born again, leaving behind who we were and fully yielding to who God is calling us to be.

This kind of surrender is not weakness—it is strength aligned with God.

A pastor friend once shared a story about a man facing an incurable disease. When asked what made the greatest difference in his journey, he answered simply: ***“I surrendered early.”***

He chose, from the beginning, to let God take full control.

That is the lesson: surrender is not the end of the fight—it is the beginning of true victory

Hebrews 12:1

“Lay aside every weight... and run with endurance.”

What feels like loss may be preparation for preservation.

4. Shipwreck Is Not the End of the Mission

God’s promise stood, but the ship was still destroyed.

“And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.”

— Acts 27:44

The vessel broke apart, but the people were saved.

Spiritual Lesson:

Sometimes God saves us **through the wreckage**, not from it.

The plan may sink. The calling does not.

Your “ship” may be:

- A treatment strategy
- A business plan
- A timeline
- Expectations about how healing or victory should come

If God’s purpose still stands, then the mission is still alive.

We have to remember—our time here is short. This is not heaven; this is preparation for it.

Healing doesn’t always look the way we expect. It’s not limited to this life or this body. True healing is deeper—it is spiritual, eternal, and complete in what lies ahead.

What happens here is temporary. What God is doing in us is forever.

Romans 8:28

“All things work together for good to those who love God...”

5. Unexpected Detours May Become Places of Ministry

Paul lands on Malta—an unplanned stop.

There:

- He survives the viper (Acts 28:3–6)
- He heals Publius' father (Acts 28:8)
- Many on the island are healed (Acts 28:9)

The detour became ministry.

Spiritual Lesson:

Interruptions can become assignments. It's very important. We always keep a level of margin in interruptions. That's why it's important to keep margin in our lives—so when divine appointments appear, we don't miss them because we're consumed by our daily routines.

Every interaction is an opportunity. When we speak to people, serve them, or support them, we step into the very purpose God has given us: to share what He has done in our lives—our personal testimony.

Often, meeting someone's physical needs opens the door to something greater. It creates a bridge to introduce them to God—the One who meets their deepest spiritual needs.

What seemed like delay was divine opportunity.

Isaiah 55:8–9

“My thoughts are not your thoughts... neither are your ways My ways.”

6. Flexibility Is Often an Expression of Faith

Paul's route changed repeatedly:

- Sidon
- Fair Havens
- Shipwreck
- Malta
- Rome

Yet God's promise remained:

Acts 23:11

“You must also bear witness at Rome.”

The route changed. The destination did not.

Spiritual Lesson:

Faith is not rigid insistence that God fulfill our plan.

Faith is trusting Him when He fulfills His purpose another way.

Sometimes spiritual maturity means saying:

- “Lord, this is not what I expected, but I will adjust. Lead me to the next faithful step.”

Conclusion

When plans fail, God often shifts the method without changing the mission.

- Storms may redirect you.
- Loss may lighten you.
- Shipwreck may preserve you.
- Detours may position you.
- Changes may become God’s better route.

Paul’s Message in One Sentence:

Hold loosely to your plans, hold tightly to God’s promise.

A Faith Declaration from Acts 27:25

“I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.”

When the voyage changes, may that remain our confession.

Twice, the disciples found themselves out on the sea when violent storms arose.

The first time, Jesus was in the boat—sleeping.

The second time, He came walking on the water to reach them.

In both moments, the disciples had not planned for a storm. They set out with intention and direction, yet were suddenly overwhelmed—“punched in the mouth” by circumstances beyond their control. And in both moments, Jesus came to them. He didn’t abandon them—He revealed Himself in the middle of the storm. But each time, He also challenged them. He looked at them and said, “*You of little faith.*”

Not to condemn—but to call them higher.

The lesson is clear and personal: it’s not the storm that defines the outcome, it’s the level of faith within it. What God is showing me through all of this is simple, but not easy:

I must have faith.

- Faith that moves mountains.
- Faith that changes outcomes.
- Faith that does not waver under pressure.
- Faith that refuses to compromise, even when everything around me is shaking.

Be ready . . . You will get punched in the mouth!!!!