

Surviving Storms

Acts 27:1-28:16

Introduction (pray)

- A. This text has caught the attention of many because it is a riveting story filled with vivid detail which makes for intense drama. This is one incredible trip (storm, wreck, snake, healings).
 - 1. One might think that as God has purposed that Paul go to Rome to share the gospel the trip would be easy and smooth. God would be with Paul in favor.
 - 2. God is clearly with Paul but that does not mean the trip is easy. Friend, it is the same with us in our lives. God is with us but the trip isn't always smooth.
- B. My title is **Surviving Storms**. Here is what I hope to accomplish.
 - 1. I will show you the reason for the story, the confirmations of the reason for the story, and our place in the story.

I. The reason for the story.

- A. I promise you that if this story was ever turned into a Christian movie it would be laughed out of town because it ends well.
 - 1. This story is the account of Paul's journey from Caesarea to Rome where Paul is scheduled to appear before Caesar.
- B. The text has caught the attention of many scholars because there is more information here about first century sailing than virtually any other first-century source.
 - 1. The text is lengthy and it has been noted that more words are used to describe this sailing trip by Paul than the account of creation. This is an important story.
 - 2. But why is this story in the Bible? Luke could have made this one long sentence. "And the next day Paul sailed to Rome." Why the length? Why the detail?
- C. I suggest we have these accounts because the veracity of Paul is of tremendous importance. You may not be aware of this but Paul comes under attack constantly.
 - 1. His ministry was regularly under attack when he was alive, His ministry has been under attack through the centuries, and it will be under attack in the future. Why?
 - 2. It is generally scholars on the attack and they have several reasons.
 - 3. Paul doesn't reference Jesus, Paul contradicts Jesus, Paul started a religion, Paul was a Pharisee, Paul wasn't an apostle, Paul hated women, or Paul is out of his mind.
 - 4. They say Paul is delusional because he went from murdering Christians to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and the man says Jesus appeared to him personally.

Ex: Last report I recall was one preacher saying a 900 ft. Jesus had appeared to him. My response. That guy is messed up. Well, is Paul messed up?

- D. The account Luke records carefully in Acts accurately tells us that as Paul goes through 3 trials, and as he goes through this shipwreck, Paul has a sound mind. This matters.
1. Paul is important to Christianity (hard to exaggerate). Paul was the last of the capital A apostles (not one of the 12). Paul wrote 13 of the 27 (14 if Hebrews) books in the NT.
 2. Is Paul trustworthy? Surely this account shows that Paul is a remarkable man. Paul has integrity, Paul is honest, Paul is reliable.

II. The affirmations of the reason for the story.

- A. We are going to see Paul step up in a crisis. Wouldn't we all like that skill (grace)? That is what we expect from faithful, reliable leaders. Agreed, but some of you are thinking this:
1. I'm not the Apostle Paul. Therefore, I do not see what this has to do with me. You're not the Apostle Paul (nor am I) but let's get this one thought into our minds.
 2. While it is true that some are placed into specific positions I would like to argue that each one of us is called to be a leader of sorts. You never know when your moment comes.
 3. Leadership is influence. Leadership is "one who guides, one who shows the way." (see Gates, p. 23). Leadership is aided by position but Paul has no position (like Joseph).

Every Christian is called to be a leader of sorts, at some level, because all of us are given a mandate to reach and to influence others. Christ's Great Commission is a command to "make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all things that [Christ has] commanded" (Matthew 28:19-20)... all Christians are called to influence others and teach them the truth about Christ. Therefore, no matter your status, position, giftedness, or occupation, you are called to be a leader at some level. John MacArthur in *The Book on Leadership*, p. xii

- B. Paul shows himself to be reliable because according to Jesus a godly leader will sacrificially serve others by selflessly laying down their own life.
1. This text lists 9 traits that God used to influence others and show the reliability of Paul.
 2. Let it be known that Paul is not a crazed person.
 3. Paul did encounter Jesus. What he has written is inspired. You don't put your life in the hands of a madman who can't be trusted (either physically or spiritually).
 4. Nine marks that demonstrate Paul's reliability. Keep in mind that character is the key marker of biblical leadership. What is Paul's character? Rock solid.
- C. One, Paul is **trustworthy**.

Acts 27:3 (ESV) [3] The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for.

1. In verse 1 we learn Julius is a Roman Centurion. A Roman Legion was 6,000 soldiers, and a centurion was in charge of 100 men (so there are 60 centurions in a legion). Centurions, every time they are mentioned in the Bible, are good guys (see Matt 8, Luke 7, Mark 15, Acts 10, 22 & 24). Julius seems thoughtful and considerate.

2. On the second day they stop in Sidon, and Julius gives Paul shore leave to visit his friends and to receive medical care (Paul may have had an eye ailment). Julius is responsible for Paul, and at the risk of his own life if he loses a prisoner, allows Paul this privilege. This requires trust which Paul had earned (perhaps through Felix).

How does a leader build trust? When people are convinced you will do everything in your power for their good and nothing for their harm, they'll trust you... A *true* leader is someone who demonstrates to everyone around him that their interests are what most occupy his heart. A real leader will work hard to make everyone around him successful. John MacArthur in *The Book on Leadership*, p. 12

Ex: Selfish people are not trusted and Paul is anything but selfish. What about you? At work? At home (marriage or family)? Character matters (are you trustworthy?).

D. Two, Paul takes **initiative** when necessary.

1. The trip went slower than expected and they end up in Fair Haven with winter coming on. The approach of Julius is to check in with the pilot and the owner and a majority vote.
2. Paul has assessed the situation, has already been in at least three shipwrecks, probably doesn't want a fourth, and he speaks up (the majority can be wrong).

Acts 27:9-12 (ESV) [9] Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, [10] saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." [11] But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. [12] And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, 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.

3. Paul had sailed the Mediterranean Sea a good bit and his reasoned experience is what provokes Paul to speak up. There is danger here (they do not listen to Paul). Paul maintains a positive attitude toward his fellow sailors.

Ex: What does Paul know? Who does Paul know? God's will cannot be thwarted.

E. Three, Paul uses **good judgment**.

1. There are times to take risks and there are times not to take risks. The safe leader only takes calculated risks.

Ex: In WW II Gen. Patton said your goal is not to die for your country. Make the enemy die for his country. Patton took risks but they were carefully calculated risks.

2. Good leaders think but they aren't fearful. Good judgment will give you even more clout and credibility later on.

F. Four, Paul speaks with **authority**.

1. The storm hits and the 40 mile proposed journey (on the chance) is not looking so good.

The men onboard the ship lose hope (Paul doesn't). Faithful leaders don't lose hope.

2. Paul steps up and speaks. He says two things. First, I told you so (to gain credibility), and second, He has a word from the Lord (an angel had appeared). The account:

Acts 27:20-26 (ESV) [20] When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned. [21] Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. [22] Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. [23] For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, [24] and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' [25] So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. [26] But we must run aground on some island."

3. When things are difficult someone needs to say "take heart." Paul knew there was a God who had spoken and His God would see them through the storm. God is faithful.

G. Five, Paul **strengthens others**.

1. Paul did this by telling them what was to come. We must run aground. But, trust God that this will work out as I have explained.
2. Paul has this remarkable tenacity when it comes to helping others. Paul continues to urge them regarding the best way forward.

H. Six, Paul is **optimistic**.

1. Paul's optimism is based on God, His power, and His Word.
2. We have good reason to be optimistic. Christians may be called upon to die or suffer for the faith but we know how the story ends. We are in good hands (have you trusted?).
3. Paul is going to die in Rome. But he will get to Rome and faithfully share the gospel of Jesus Christ there. To live is Christ and to die is Christ.

Ex: Do you know how hard optimism is to come by? We see problems, like the 10 spies in Canaan, and we fear, but a positive outlook goes a long way. How do you get that? You know God is at work. You trust Him.

I. Seven, Paul **doesn't compromise the absolutes**.

1. Some of the passengers wanted to leave the ship. Paul had a word from God that if they stayed together they would all survive. This was no time to compromise.
2. Compromise is necessary in life. Whether a marriage, a business, a government, a sport, there are times to compromise. But, never compromise an absolute.

J. Eight, Paul has a **focus on the needs at hand**.

Acts 27:33-38 (ESV) [33] As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. [34] Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength,

for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.” [35] And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. [36] Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. [37] (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) [38] And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

1. Notice the way God’s sovereignty and human responsibility interact. Eat some food, you won’t perish. You need strength, but God will save you.
 2. Notice also the way Paul gives thanks. In the presence of all. Paul is always pointing the people he is around to God.
- K. Nine, Paul sets an **example**.
1. Paul’s example brings encouragement. They eat, and they work, and they go through a shipwreck. As promised they all live.
 2. People who are influential show others the life of integrity and wholeness.
- L. As you examine Paul’s actions you notice he cared about everyone, he looked out for their best interests, and he wasn’t selfish.
1. They have landed on Malta. You go through another shipwreck, and you’re getting warm in a fire, and a viper fastens to his hand.
 2. And I really didn’t need that. God works it for good, Paul doesn’t die, they think he is a god, but Paul seeks to minister. He prays for the sick and they are healed.
- M. And so Paul makes it to Rome.
1. Paul is not a madman, Paul is reliable, and the words He has written will endure forever because they are also breathed out by God.

III. Our place in the story.

- A. Close with this. This is a miraculous story and throughout Acts we have noticed events we call “sign miracles.” The miracle points to the gospel and our salvation.
1. Peter and John heal the beggar at the gate Beautiful (Acts 3), the conversion of Saul (Acts 9), Peter miraculously released from prison (Acts 12), and this shipwreck.
 2. In this case, 276 men on board the boat must stay in the boat to be saved. We must be in Christ to receive eternal life.
 3. To try and get eternal life (the knowledge of God) any other way is to fail. Why? We have a problem because the standard is perfection. Jesus offers us His perfection.
- B. Salvation is found in no other name.
1. Do you recall Acts 4 and Acts 17?

Acts 4:12 (ESV) [12] And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Acts 17:30-31 (ESV) [30] The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, [31] 54because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

2. This does not mean that storms won't come your way. You are safe in Christ and yet there is this matter of surviving storms.
- C. In every single instance of life, Christian, God is with you. He has a purpose for your life and He will bring you through storms until you see Him face to face.
1. I quote this song written by Mosie Lister that was a favorite of my dad.

In the dark of the midnight have I oft hid my face
While the storm howls above me, and there's no hiding place
'Mid the crash of the thunder, Precious Lord, hear my cry
Keep me safe till the storm passes by

Many times Satan whispered, "There is no need to try
For there's no end of sorrow, there's no hope by and by"
But I know Thou art with me, and tomorrow I'll rise
Where the storms never darken the skies

When the long night has ended and the storms come no more
Let me stand in Thy presence on the bright peaceful shore
In that land where the tempest, never comes, Lord, may I
Dwell with Thee when the storm passes by

Till the storm passes over, till the thunder sounds no more
Till the clouds roll forever from the sky
Hold me fast, let me stand in the hollow of Thy hand
Keep me safe till the storm passes by
Thomas Mosie Lister (Sept 8, 1921 - Feb 12, 2015)

Pray

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