

FACING LIFE'S STORMS

Act 27:14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

Act 27:15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive.

Act 27:16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

Act 27:17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

Act 27:18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next *day* they lightened the ship;

Act 27:19 And the third *day* we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

Act 27:20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on *us*, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

Act 27:21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

Act 27:22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship.

Act 27:23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

Act 27:24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

Act 27:25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

INTRO:

On November 5, 2017, a mass shooting occurred at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. The gunman was 26-year-old Devin Patrick Kelley. He killed 26 and injured 20 others.

In these deaths were men, women and children who had simply gone to church to pray and worship God. Their little fellowship will be permanently affected by this loss.

This sort of story probably affects us more than some other mass shootings that we have heard about as it involves a Sunday service in a small Baptist Church like ours. I cannot imagine how our church would deal with such an incident, if it were to occur.

In other parts of the world, we have seen many people persecuted simply for calling themselves Christians. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the Middle East over the past ten years as the rise of ISIS has resulted in the genocide of people who have lived in those regions peacefully for nearly 2000 years. Many no longer exist in those parts of the world. Either driven out or massacred for not following the twisted ideology of the Islam of ISIS.

From the very beginning Christians have experienced the persecution from those inspired by the Satan's evil and that evil has not subsided.

Heb 11:36 And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

Heb 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

Besides the persecution, which we have graciously been shielded from, Christians also experience the same types of tragedies that the rest of the world experiences. The storms of life, such as disease, crippling accidents, death of loved ones, family problems, financial problems, emotional problems and spiritual problems cannot always be avoided, regardless of how good a life you live.

Introduction:

The apostle Paul was no stranger to tragedy, persecutions, trial, sickness, loss of friends and family, feeling alone, being lied about by his enemies.

On his way to Jerusalem Paul caught up with a number of Christians who also knew that if he were to reach his target, he would be imprisoned and handed over to the Romans.

Act 21:10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

Act 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.

Act 21:12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

Act 21:13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Act 21:14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

These Christians loved Paul and did not want him to be hurt by people who hated him. They begged him not to go there. And with all of their pleading Paul admitted that they were breaking his heart. But Paul also knew that he had to follow the Lord, even it brought him in harms way. They were experiencing this storm along with Paul..... when love is involved there is always pain. To love mans to experience suffering in this world.

According to our text today, the ship upon which Paul was a passenger was caught in a violent storm as he was headed to Rome for trial. He had been to Jerusalem and was as expected, persecuted by the Jews there. He exercised his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar because he had been accused of sedition among the Jews throughout the world. Annanias, the high priest, made this accusation against Paul to Felix through the orator Tertullus.

Act 24:5 For we have found this man *a pestilent fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

Standing accused, Paul believed that he would get a fairer hearing in Rome and thus appealed his case to Caesar. (This would be the equivalent of having our case heard before the Supreme Court.)

As he travelled to Rome aboard a ship, the violent storm came upon them suddenly. Every effort was made to ride the storm out in safety. Every effort seemed to fail, though, and the people on the ship

gave up hope of being saved. In this atmosphere, Paul stepped forth to reassure and comfort them. He told them how they could face the storm in confidence and peace. They were to put their trust in God.

This passage makes me think about the storms that come to each of us in this life. The people on board the ship with Paul could have avoided the storm that they were caught in by staying in the safe harbor. However we cannot avoid the storms that life brings.

We can avoid the storms that we bring on ourselves, but we cannot avoid the storms that life brings to us. Since we cannot avoid these storms, we must learn to face them. There are some principles taken from this passage which will help us to face these storms with assurance and peace.

I. PAUL FACED THE STORM WITH CONFIDENCE IN JESUS (ACTS 27:22)

Act 27:22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship.

Paul's exhortation to "be of good cheer" meant that he now had good news for them. These words alone would not have meant much without what followed. Paul assured them, *for there shall be no loss of any man's life, but of the ship*. For these people who had no assurance of life after death, this is what they needed to hear at that time.

If you listen to the scientists of today, they are declaring the end of the world by global warming, overpopulation, pollution, lack of water, flooding when the ice-caps melt, asteroids, pandemics of disease, and so on. Many people are in fear of life and some have determined that that our only hope is to head for mars and the stars, even though mars is as dead as a doornail and life cannot exist there and the stars are so far away that the closest one would take 30,000 years to reach with a rocket!

Before the return of the Lord, He tells us Himself that:

Luk 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

Luk 21:26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

* The wisdom of this world is of little value when we face some of life's most difficult problems. Death being the most significant of these. Neither philosophy, nor medicine, nor science can answer the most fundamental questions in life. So the world lives in fear not knowing what will become of them.

But while the world fears all of these things and cannot solve these problems, (they cannot often diagnose the problem) let alone provide a solution, the Bible gives us every reason NOT to fear because Jesus Christ is Lord of All and He will never leave us nor forsake us, even in death!

Paul spoke from the position of having received divine revelation in the matter. This gave him confidence when others had lost hope.

We too can take courage in the face of life's storms because of some assurances that we have by divine revelation—the Word of God. There are many places in the Bible specifically written to encourage us during difficult times. The experiences like those of Paul are also meant to encourage us. That encouragement is fundamentally found in Jesus Christ. Jesus is that friend who will never let you down.

We can face the storms of life with courage when our confidence is in Jesus.

- a. **But we have reason to be confident in Jesus because His word is perfectly trustworthy. His word gives us hope and not despair.** Since Jesus is Lord of all, He is Lord over the storms of life, which come our way.

The Bible presents Jesus as Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and as such, He is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-present. That means that nothing ever comes into our lives that He is not aware of and Lord over. He taught us to anticipate the storms when He said,

Joh 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Jesus not only overcame every attack of Satan, every trial and every temptation that came his way, He not only fulfilled His mission to die for the sins of the world but He also overcame death and rose on the third day. We have every reason to have trust Jesus in our lives and in the afterlife.

We do not know exactly when the storms will come into our lives. They often come suddenly and violently, just like the storm at sea came upon Paul and his company. These storms come when things are going smoothly. Just prior to the storm, Paul and his party were enjoying smooth sailing, even though Paul was also a prisoner on his way to be tried by a ruler who hated Christians!

Since we do not know when these storms will come, we must learn to have confidence in the One who is Lord over the storms.

When we are living in Him, we are braced for the storms that come. Like being in a boat that can never sink, a boat that can withstand any wave. To be in Jesus is the safest place to be. But we need the faith that when we are in the boat and the storm is raging about us with huge waves and thundering, even though the boat will rock from side to side and we may be buffeted about, the saviour will not let us down.

It's reasonable to be confident in Jesus. Since Jesus is Lord of all, even the storms, it is reasonable to trust Him. Confidence is just another word for trust. Just like Paul did, we learn to trust Jesus as we walk with Him. **Php 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.**

It's Right to be confident in Jesus. As we get to know Jesus, we discover more and more that He is completely worthy of our confidence because he is faithful. My prayer is that we could have the hymn writer's confidence for the storms of life.

What have I to dread, what have I to fear, Leaning on the everlasting arms? I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, Leaning on the everlasting arms. Leaning, Leaning, safe and secure from all alarms; Leaning, Leaning, Leaning on the everlasting arms. Elisha Hoffman, 1887

II. PAUL FACED THE STORM BY DECLARING HIS COMMITMENT TO THE LORD (ACTS 27:23)

Act 27:23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

Paul knew very well, who Jesus was. He knew very well, the story of when Jesus and the disciples were in the boat on the sea of Galilee and a storm threatened to overturn the boat. But when they feared for their lives they called on Jesus, who when He rebuked the wind and the waves, calmed the sea. To Paul, Jesus was Lord of the Universe.

He told them that an angel of the God to whom he belonged and whom he served had appeared to him that night. Alexander Maclaren called this statement "a short confession of faith."

"Whose I am" Paul said in effect, "I belong to God." And this is exactly what he taught others. He had taught the Corinthian church: *For ye are bought with a price* (1 Cor. 6:20a).

It's a wonderful thing to belong to God, that is because there are only two options when we discover what the Bible says about where we belong. If you do not belong to God by a choice to receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then you automatically belong to Satan's Kingdom whether you realise it or not.

Paul not only declared that he belonged to God but that he was also "a servant of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:1). Paul intended to convey the truth that he belonged to God through redemption and calling. This is true of every born again believer. The precious blood of Christ was the price of our redemption.

1Pe 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

1Pe 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

God's people are redeemed from the bondage of sin. As so we now belong to Christ.

"*Whom I serve*" . Paul's attitude was, "I belong to the Lord and I serve Him." By this statement, the apostle intended to teach that his life was in submission to and devoted to the Lord.

It is impossible for Jesus to be Lord and for one not to serve Him. In Luke 6:46, Jesus asked a very important question. He asked, *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Paul's ability to ride through the storms of life, came from a strong belief that he belonged to Jesus and because of that, he regarded himself as a servant.

Do we regard ourselves the same? Knowing that you belong to Jesus is a blessed thing, because there is no one who loves you more, no one more caring, more dependable than Jesus. To belong to Him is to have peace in Him, regardless of your circumstances. Living for Jesus keeps us focussed on eternal / important things and able to overcome the temporary and less vital things. Lessens anxiety.

III. PAUL FACED THE STORM WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S PROMISES (ACTS 27:24)

Act 27:24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

Paul could face the storm in which he was caught because he had a message of assurance or consolation from God. We too have promises from God concerning our storms of life. We must learn to take consolation from these promises.

A. He Was Assured Of A Mission God assured him that he would bear witness to God before Caesar. When God makes a promise, He will always come through.

God's message to him was, *Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cesar*. In other words, death would not occur until his mission was accomplished. Our times are in God's hands. We should trust Him to accomplish His mission in our lives and then take us safely home.

B. He Was Assured Concerning His Companions. He was given a message that those who travelled with him would be spared. The angel said, *God hath given thee all them that sail with thee*.

We Have Been Given A Message Of Assurance. The message is for every Christian. It is that Jesus will not forsake His own, even when they are in a violent storm.

- One of the principles that we learn in the Bible and this is one of them is that, often the people of the world receive the blessings of God because of the children of God. In this story, the people on the ship were given protection from the storm simply because Paul was on the ship.
- God, often delays judgment because of His children. This is the story of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah... God promised Abraham that he would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if there were only 10 righteous people in the entire city.
- We must understand that our presence in this world is a blessing to them... Not just our presence but our interaction with them can make a huge difference.
- While the majority of the people in this world live their lives in a sea of despair and darkness. Neither knowing where they are, or where they are heading. We can behave as lighthouses, shining our light from the shores of the steady rock on which we stand. We can help them to see the truth, to know that there is a safe shore they can reach if they would simply put their trust in the Captain of their souls – the Lord Jesus Christ. This brings us to our final point.

IV. PAUL FACED THE STORM BY BECOMING AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH

Act 27:25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. Paul's example to the others on that ship demonstrated the truth of his words. Paul's conviction was: *I believe God*. Paul knew that God was trustworthy and could be counted on to do what He said that He would do. His testimony was, "I know that God is dependable."

If we are the ones who can face the storms of life, standing on the promises of God's Word, we can be an encouragement to the people around us experiencing the same trials?

Sometimes, we may wonder why the Lord allows us to go through storms in our lives, but we find out that "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord". And our experience can become an example of the grace of God. We can be like Paul, a light in the darkness, an encouragement to those in distress... all the while pointing them to the source of our strength – Jesus Christ.

2Co 1:3 Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

2Co 1:4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

2Co 1:5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

CONCLUSION:

The storms of life are going to come, but we can face them with confidence and peace if we have Jesus.

If you do not have Jesus this morning then you have neglected the only one who can be your navigator and captain through the storms of life. He is also the only one who can lead you safely to heaven. You have no hope if you try to do it on your own. Today is the day to put your faith in Him, trust Him to save you and to keep you safe through all.