

The Storms of Life and God's Sovereignty

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Acts 27:1–28:16

[Sermon Video](#)

[Sermon Recap PDF](#)

Main theme: The storms of life cannot possibly thwart God’s sovereign purposes for our lives.

- We went through the narrative. This summary contains the key applications we heard.

“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.” -- Acts 27:20

- So it was dark. No one could see – so they were disoriented. The wind and the waves threatened to capsize and destroy the ship. Unless a miracle took place, they were going to die.
- This situation was about as bad as it can get.
- Many of us have experienced similar situations--not on a ship out in the middle of the Mediterranean -- but in life. We know what it’s like to be storm-tossed as it were.
- We’ve experienced seasons where waves of trials crash in upon us.
- And we know what it’s like to not be able to see very well either--to be perplexed, disoriented and unable to navigate our way to safety—no matter how hard we try.
- Encouragement: don’t try to author your own story. What I mean is—don’t try to write the rest of your own personal narrative—your own biography.
- In a storm, our tendency can be to make a bad situation worse by predicting a bad ending. We can think to ourselves-- “this is it. This trial is all there is. It’s over. This ship is going to capsize”
- The men on this ship had given up all hope that they’d be saved. But Just notice --in your Bible their story didn’t end at chapter 27:17....their story continued.
- Our stories continue as well as is evidenced by the fact that we are still here, we’re still alive and we are still breathing.
- Let’s not try to write our own biographies. The good work God began, He will bring to completion. And who knows how God may be working mightily in and through the storms of our lives to bring us to a better place—just as he did with Paul.

“Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 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.’ So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.” -- [Acts 27:22-25](#)

- The angel of the Lord speaks—and Paul believes the word of the Lord through the Angel.

- He was not like Sarah – who laughed when the angel of the Lord told her she would conceive in her old age.
- And he was not like Zechariah who did not believe the angel when he was told that his wife would conceive the child who was to be John the Baptist.
- Rather, Paul was like Abraham who believed God’s promise when God told him He will be the Father of many nations when as of yet, he didn’t even have a son.
- Paul was like Mary who believed the angel who told her she would conceive the Messiah by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- At the moment Paul received the promise from the angel, it did not look like they would be delivered from their present trial.
- The storm was still raging. The waves were still crashing over the side of the boat. It was still dark. They were still lost at sea and couldn’t see anything.
- The outward evidence supporting the word from the angel was not exactly strong.
- But Paul believed the promise given to him by the angel and he didn’t doubt. He believed the word he heard so strongly that he stood up and boldly exhorted a ship full of unbelievers, to take heart in this word the Lord had given Him.
- The lesson here for us is this: In whatever trials we are in, believe the word of the Lord. By believe it, I mean bank your life on it, your future, your children’s future—bank everything on the Word of God.
- We may not have an angel saying to us “this is how I am going to deliver you.” However, we do have the Bible. We do have God-breathed words, Holy Spirit words — that we have access to. We do have God’s promises. And we have the Holy Spirit as well.
- The Holy Spirit delights to illuminate scripture to our hearts and minds and to lead us in the way He would have us to go.
- The difficulty is—we often struggle with the age-old problem of unbelief which causes us to doubt God’s Word and His promises.
- The winds and the waves of life’s sorrows come crashing in on us—> and suddenly we doubt God’s sovereign wisdom and goodness.
- May we seek the Lord in prayer, repenting of our unbelief, asking the Holy Spirit to strengthen our faith and our resolve to more deeply believe His Word

After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. -- Acts 28:1

- Let us be reminded, fierce winds, the trials of life —are at times — the means God uses to take us in a direction that is far better for us than where we currently are at.

Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” [32] Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship’s boat and let it go. -- Acts 27:31–32

- Do you notice the kind of leadership influence Paul has throughout this story among unbelievers? People who don’t know Jesus? In the midst of this harrowing, life-threatening

situation--the Roman centurion and soldiers listened to Paul's advice and acted upon it. Remember, the apostle Paul is but a prisoner on the ship!

- The Roman Centurion and the soldiers we're listening to Paul! And the people on the ship listened to him as well.
- In verse 33 he urges them all to take some food to eat because they hadn't eaten. He then leads them all in a word of prayer and thanks to God... and the text says that they all were encouraged and they all ate...
- Again, don't forget Paul is just a prisoner! May we never underestimate the power of the light of Christ shining through us by the Holy Spirit to those around us!
- As we stay close to Christ, as we trust him in difficult circumstances, as we are confident in God, in the midst of storms of various kinds---we can trust that the Holy Spirit will open doors for us like this to influence others towards the Lord as well.
- In this world there are many storms. Often those storms affect more than just us.
- When storms come, people feel their weakness, their vulnerability and they are very drawn to those who seem to have peace in the midst of it all.
- So As various storms come — in our jobs, in our workplaces, in our families, in our communities, in our world may God use us to be a calm, wise, courageous steadying influence for Christ.

The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. [43] But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, [44] and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.
-- Acts 27:42-44

- What I find amazing here is this is at least the third time so far in this narrative that God saved Paul's life.
- The storm could have taken his life. When the sailors initially planned to leave the ship — that could have resulted in him, and all of his fellow shipmates dying.
- And then here as well the Roman soldiers were planning to kill the prisoners so that they couldn't escape.
- In each one of these situations you see God protect Paul. You see God keep him safe.
- And God does the same for us. He protects us from absolutely everything that would prevent His sovereign purpose for our lives from being fulfilled.

“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.” God's providential purposes and perfect, good, all-wise plan for our lives and the world can never be thwarted. They will come to pass. what a comfort ! -- Job 42:2

- This point is emphasized in vs.44, when Luke tells us Paul and everyone on the ship “were brought safely to land”
- Again, chapter 28 verse one Luke says the same thing -- “we were brought safely through”
- On the island of Malta, Paul's life was miraculously once again spared. So this is the fourth time in our story Paul's life was saved! A poisonous snake bit Paul and Paul was fine.

Summary/Conclusion:

- The storms of life cannot possibly thwart God's sovereign purposes for our lives.
- Through the events of this entire narrative, there was never a single moment where God was not totally, absolutely, completely in control.
- In all of these events God was watching over Paul. He was protecting him. He was keeping him safe. And He was ensuring that he made it to Rome, where from there he would proclaim the gospel. That was God's sovereign purpose for Paul—that he would proclaim Christ in Rome.
- This should give us great confidence and hope as we consider our own lives.
- Just as God was providentially watching over and caring for Paul, making sure that his sovereign purpose for Paul's life was fulfilled-- so he's watching over you and me as well.
- May we not forget -- the storms aren't in charge of our lives! God is! And God hasn't just left us to the fate of the winds and the waves.
- God's hand is upon us. Just as he had good purposes for Paul, He has good purposes for us as well.
- Eph 2 says, God has foreordained good works for us to walk in. So in the midst of storms we face, we can be confident, our God is caring for us, making sure that His sovereign purposes for our lives are fulfilled.

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Look over the text, Acts 27 - 28:16 and take time to summarize the narrative as a group. In other words take a few moments to re-tell the story of what is happening here. What initial observations and insights do you have from this story?
- How is God's sovereign care for Paul evident in this passage? In what ways does God's sovereign care for Paul encourage you regarding His sovereign care for you?
- Can you think of a time when you experienced a "storm" of some kind, a trial of some kind that you thought would end badly--but God rescued you?
- When we are in the midst of storms, how can we be tempted to unbelief and lack of faith in God's Word?
- What lessons can we draw from Paul's influence on unbelievers here in this passage?
- Consider taking time to pray that no matter what "storms" we encounter on our way to heaven God would help us to trust Him deeply.