

## Praying for Daylight – The Road, Nov. 19, 2017

Acts 27

### Introduction

This morning we come to Acts 27 This is the story of Paul's shipwreck. Remember that he is being transported as a prisoner of the Roman government for his case to be heard before Caesar. Now, I've never been in a shipwreck. But, this past summer Carrie and I took Dianna and the boys over to Reed Bingham State Park. And Dianna and I decided to rent a couple of kayaks. When we were renting them, I asked the Park attendant about the alligators. And he said, "Ah, don't worry, the big bull alligators usually don't come up to the main lake area." So Dianna and I went around and put our kayaks into the lake. And as we started I was really scared that Dianna was going to flip over. So we went a good ways around and on the way back, guess what happened. Dianna did just fine, but right in the middle of the lake I flipped my kayak over. And there I was. Naturally, the first thing that entered my mind were the alligators. But the second thing was that I was stuck trying to swim halfway across this lake pulling a kayak. And I really didn't know if I could make it. You know in the big picture what I went through really wasn't that big of a deal. Acts 27 tells us about a life-threatening storm and God's faithfulness to his children.

The Storm's Fury, The Lord's Kindness, The Ship's Safe Arrival

### 1. The Storm's Fury

Ch. 23 Jesus told Paul that he "must testify" about the facts of the gospel in Rome.

The interesting thing – the way Jesus was going to get Paul to Rome

God rescued Paul from the hands of the Jews

Even though he was innocent he was being held in prison by the Roman government and was being transported as a prisoner from Caserea to Rome.

Roman Centurion – Julius

hired a coastal ship which was headed to the ports in Asia minor which would get them closer to Rome. After a difficult voyage they made it to Myra where they hired a much larger Egyptian grain vessel which was fit for open sea.

They depart again but there was only one problem, it was late in the year and sailing was very dangerous. With much difficulty they came to a port called Fair Havens.

Paul warned them that the voyage was going to be with injury and much loss

They set out for a port called Phoenix which was much more suitable for a ship and such a large crew to spend winter in.

Northeaster – (a tempestuous wind, hurricane force storm struck)

Very quickly, the crew discovered they were powerless to control the ship in the storm

Look at the description Luke gives of the fury of this storm:

v. 15 they could not face the wind and were driven along by the wind and waves

v. 18 they were violently storm tossed

v. 18, 19 they began to throw the ship's cargo and tackle over

ultimately they threw the ship's grain over

v. 20 For many days they saw neither sun nor stars

v. 33 the storm had been so violent that they had not eaten in 14 days

v. 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."

Friends, you and I may not be sea faring people, but we do know what it's like to face storms in this life. In some ways, this passage is almost like a summary of the Christian life. God has made us promises, we are on a voyage, that leads to the New Heavens and the New Earth. But on our journey the chapters of our lives can almost be defined by the storms that the Lord leads us through.

Now for each one of us, our individual storms may be different

- Maybe right now you have no idea how you're going to pay your bills next week or next month.
- Maybe your whole life feels like it's off course and you're powerless to help yourself.
- Maybe right now your children are far away from the Lord, and your heart is in anguish because they are running from him.
- Carrie and I have friends who recently lost their young adult son in a tragic death leaving behind a young wife and young daughter.
- For some people, we enter these fall and winter months and while everyone else seems to be celebrating the holidays, you're struck with a deep sense of depression and coldness.
- And maybe for you, your storm is something different.

But we all know that in this life there are times, and sometimes there are extended seasons where we are just like Paul and his companions on this ship. We are blown around and it feels like we haven't seen the light of the sun in weeks. We're so turned upside down and inside out that we can't even tell which way is up and which way is down. We feel disoriented and confused and we don't know which way to turn.

One of the most difficult things to learn about the Christian life is that becoming a Christian doesn't mean that we get an easy life.

*Matthew 7:24-27 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."*

Being a Christian doesn't mean that the storms won't come. Being true Christian means that when they come we have a sure foundation. A foundation so sure that ultimately the storm cannot crush us.

## **2. The Lord's Kindness**

Often in the midst of the storms of our lives, the storm becomes the all encompassing reality that we see. So sometimes we fail to see many of our Savior's kindnesses to us even in the mist of difficult times. In Luke's account he highlights many evidences of God's grace to Paul and the men travelling with him. Let me show you three of them.

a) Julius the Centurion – even though he was Paul's captor God showed amazing kindness to Paul through this man. V.3 "Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends to be cared for." Later on in this account we learn that the soldiers planned to kill all the prisoners, but Julius stopped them, the text says specifically because he "wished to save Paul."

Do you realize that often times God shows us kindness even through the most unlikely people or circumstances?

b) The second great kindness that God showed Paul was by his providence allowing Luke and Aristarchus to accompany Paul on the ship to Rome. Outside of Christ's fellowship, there is nothing that encourages the heart of believers like friends to walk with us through the storms of life. When I was a little boy I was pretty much a scardy cat. When I was about Ethan's age, my parents were trying to send me to bed all by myself but I was scared. So I was trying to get them to let my younger brother sleep with me. And my Dad said, "Son, what are you so afraid of?" And I said, "I'm afraid of monsters getting me!" And my dad said, "Well, how's your brother going to help protect you from monsters?" To which I replied, "Well, at least I won't die alone."

My friends, it is the great kindness of God to give us friends to weather the storms of life with. And can I say this, if you're here this morning, that means that God has given you friends so that you don't have to walk alone! I want to encourage you here this morning, if you've been walking with God for some time, I want to encourage you to make every effort to reach out to others around you. If you're a newer believer, I encourage you to open yourself up to sharing the life that we have in Christ with one another as a deliberate strategy for enduring the storms of life.

c) The third great kindness God gave to Paul was that he sent an angel to confirm the promises that God had made to Paul. Acts 27:21-25 "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.

The God to whom I belong – do you realize that if you are a believer, you belong to God! That means you are his treasured possession. That means you are loved.

*That's why in v. 34 Paul echoes Christ's words to his disciples in Luke 21:18, "Not a hair of your head is to perish."*

Believer, please hear me... In the words of Peter, our God has "granted to us his precious and very great promises." One of the most important principles for surviving the storms we face in life is constantly reminding ourselves of and clinging to the precious promises Christ has given us. The secret of making it through the storms we face is not focusing our attention on the storm but focusing on Christ and his word. Let me give you 3 promises that you can walk out these doors today holding onto, or maybe you can help someone else with.

a) Hebrews 13:5-6 "[F]or he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

b) Romans 8:38-39 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

c) John 14:1-3 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

On a daily basis we need to remind ourselves of God's promises and we can say with Paul, "Take heart... for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told."

### **3. The Ship's Safe Arrival**

After 14 days of being tossed and pounded by this storm and lost at sea, the sailors sensed that they were near land. Well, you might think that was encouraging but you must remember, it's the middle of the night and there's a great fear that they're about to crash on a shoal of rocks. And if they did, the ship would be destroyed along with their lives.

So they let down four anchors. Now here's what an anchor is for. First of all when a boat is on the water and you want to stay in one place and not be driven by the wind and the waves, an anchor attached to a chain will be thrown overboard and it will drag the bottom of the body of water an help to keep it in place. In this case they let out the anchors in order to prevent the boat from crashing against a rocky shoal.

*And that's where they pray for daylight to come...*

At daylight, the storm was still raging but they could see land, so they cut the anchors and raised the forward sail. They wanted to run the ship up onto the beach. But instead, they struck a reef or a sand bar. So the front of the boat was stuck but the waves were demolishing the back of the ship. So the centurion gave the order for everyone to swim for shore. And as Paul predicted every life was saved.

Look at the end of v. 44. says

Acts 27:44 And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

Notice exactly what Luke just told us. In theology, this is a divine passive. A divine passive is when something comes to pass, and God is the actor performing the action. Look at it again.

“All we’re brought safely to land.”

What we’re being told is that it was God who brought them safely to land, and the idea is that God used the storm to do it.

Now, there’s one last interesting thing that I want you to see. Outside of Acts 27, there’s only one other place in the entire Bible that speaks about an anchor.

Hebrews 6:17-20 So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, 18 so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Friends, the soul that is anchored to Christ, though the winds howl, though the waves pound us, we shall be brought safely over. And when we arrive safely home into the arms of Christ the greatest storms of this life will seem like they were no bigger than me falling out of a kayak in a little lake on a warm summer day.

Our God has called us out onto the waters on mission with him. And there will be storms, but he will be with us and he shall bring us safely home. We are his precious possession. His promises are true and firm. We are bought by him and anchored securely to his heart.

Those He saves are His delight  
Christ will hold me fast  
Precious in His holy sight  
He will hold me fast  
He’ll not let my soul be lost  
His promises shall last  
Bought by Him at such a cost  
He will hold me fast