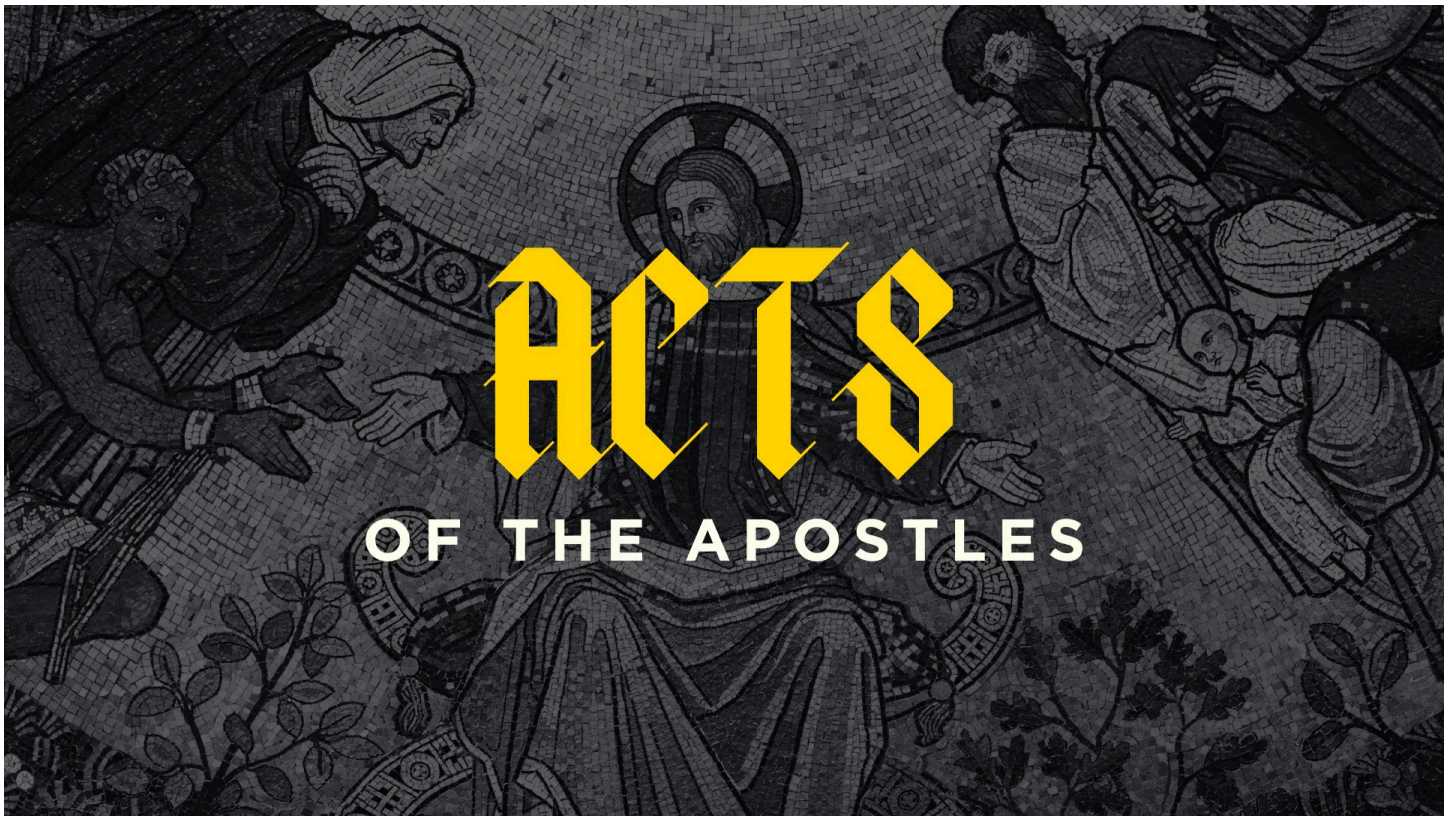




September 7, Acts Series

Acts 27

Ends of the Earth: Storm

Acts 27:19–26 (ESV) 19 And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 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."

In our text Paul is on a ship heading to Rome, and gets caught in a storm.

- Luke calls it a tempestuous wind. The word is the word from which we get typhoon. The ship is going through a hurricane.
- Luke says (vs 20) neither sun nor stars appeared for many days...the storm just continues to rage so that everyone on board begins to fear for their lives.
- Luke writes of the desperation: "all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned."

The storm is another piece of Paul's suffering. And it's a picture of all suffering.

- Seeing how Paul deals with his storm is going to teach us about how we can deal with our own.

The puzzle of storms.

- Paul stands up and begins to take charge. He says, *But keep up your courage. Here's why: last night an angel of God visited me and told me not one of you will die. We're going to lose the ship. Can't avoid that. But not one of you will be lost.*
- Paul had been given a prophecy by God himself that he would get to Rome, and that no one on the ship would be lost.
- Now skip down to verse 30-31. There is so much fear among the sailors that they attempt to escape the ship.
- Paul discovers what they're doing. He goes to the centurion in charge and says, if they leave, then what I told you God said is off.
- So the centurion has his soldiers go and cut the lines to the lifeboat so it drops into the sea and they let it go.
- See here: God promised that no one would die. Then Paul says unless the sailors stay with the boat, no one will be saved.
- You see the problem there? If God has determined that everyone will live, then why does it matter if the sailors stay on the boat or desert the boat?
- What does it tell us? We believe that if God is totally in charge, *then it no longer matters what we do.*
- What if it's not either or, but both/and? What if God is in control of every single thing that happens in life...and yet our choices also absolutely matter?
- See Peter. (Acts 2:22-23) He says, Jesus was delivered up according to a plan. God's determined plan. And yet, he says, "You used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him." Meaning, the choices you made are responsible for Jesus hanging on a cross.
- It was God's plan. It was the choice of the people. God ordains exactly what he wants through our free choices, that we're responsible for. 100% God. 100% me.
- When I know that my choices matter, then I can't be passive in the storm.
- Also, when I know that God is 100% in control, it's consoling/comforting. My choices won't mess up his plan.
- When we hold both of those things together we can handle the storms with poise.

The point of storms.

- Why? That's the question. Why would God allow this?
- Every storm that comes into your life is ultimately **for your good**.

Your good.

- At the very end of the Joseph story, Joseph's family is all together with him in Egypt. His father Jacob dies. His brothers get nervous. They fear Joseph is finally going to get his revenge for what they did to him. They come to him, and beg and plead for forgiveness and mercy.
- Joseph says to his brothers: Genesis 50:19–20 (ESV) *19 But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*
- You've heard that line in its form as Paul writes it in Romans 8:28 (ESV) *28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*
- Not everything **is** good, but that God very carefully works everything out for good. Even evil things accomplish the exact opposite of what the evil intended to accomplish.
- That's God's purpose in **all storms**. Not just your storm, but in all storms. He's working for your good.
- Take Job. Do you know Job's suffering was for you?
- Satan, evil, intended one thing: to take one man away from God. Not only did he not accomplish that, but because of Job's story, untold millions have been able to stay faithful to God during their hardships.
- Take Jesus. You do know Jesus' suffering was for you.
- The anger of the religious authorities and the sin of the world and the fury of Satan and evil were being thrown onto Jesus. And what did it want? To kill God. And to kill us.
- What did it accomplish? The exact opposite. Jesus came out alive. We came out with a path to life. The salvation of the world was accomplished.
- Why is it, that you never hear that about Jesus? *I reject God...because he let Jesus die.*
- Here's why: It's because we know without a doubt why God let Jesus die.
- But what we don't know is why God is allowing my storm. That's why we question.
- The help is to see why he's allowed the storm for others. The storm was for good. I can trust that even when I can't see the reason, the suffering God allows in my life is also coming for my good.

The presence in storms.

- When Paul first tells everyone aboard the ship that God spoke to him, he says it this way: (27: 23) *Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship stood before me....*
- God says often, You will be **my people**, and I will be your God.
- **My** is reserved for the closest relationships. Here is Paul, in the middle of the storm, and he's able to say, **my God**.
- In suffering, on one hand we can think God is punishing us for something. And we despair.
- On the other, we think that we're suffering because God is absent. And we despair.

- Paul says neither. Not he's had it with me. Nor he's absent from me. But he is with me.
- Because he knows God is with him, and he knows that God is for his good, then he has to concluded that the storm will only make him better in the end.

How can you really know when bad things happen that God isn't giving up on you, or through with you because he's had it with you?

- Here's how. Jesus in Matthew 12 talks about Jonah. Jesus says "*a greater Jonah is here.*" He was speaking about himself being the true Jonah.
- When Jesus says I'm the true Jonah he's saying there's a storm that God is sending. It's coming for you. You deserve it and you know it. You've sinned. You've run from God. You've failed to live rightly. You deserve the storm of God's wrath.
- But Jesus steps in and says, Throw me into the storm. I'll take the wind and the waves of sin for you. I'll be consumed by God's wrath. I'll take the suffering and be abandoned by God.
- You'll know it's not God leaving you...because he left Jesus instead.
- God will be with you in your pain, and will bring you out to the other side.
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- He really is with you in whatever storm is blowing. He's faced it too, and he is there.
- And if he's your God and he's there, then the pain isn't punishment. It's just part of a broken world that God still controls, and controls to bring about your good.

*With Christ as my vessel I can smile at the storm, smile at the storm, smile at the storm.
With Christ as my vessel I can smile at the storm until he leads me home.
Sailing, sailing home. Sailing, sailing home.
With Christ as my vessel I can smile at the storm until he leads me home.*

*God when bad things come in to our lives, we need this text. It helps us make a little sense of the suffering we encounter. But more than that, it reminds us of the God who is with us, who loves us, and who is working...always...even in the evils of the world...to bring good. Help us to see the suffering of Jesus, and trust this is true. In the name of the God who went through the storm for us...the greater Jonah...in the name of Jesus, we pray, and trust, and give thanks.
Amen.*