

When the Storm Hits – Acts 27:1-44

Introduction:

The ship was sinking, and fast. The captain of the ship called out, “Anyone here know how to pray?” One man stepped forward and said, “Sir, I know how to pray.”

“Good,” said the captain. You pray, and the rest of us will put on lifejackets. We are one short...!”

Well, it is a good thing that the Apostle Paul knew how to pray. He knew how to connect with God, even when the ship was sinking. Knowing God was with him the Apostle was the only one who was at peace in the midst of the storm.

We too will face storms, and like it happened to Paul and his companions, our worlds may go to pieces but God has not abandoned us. Even in the midst of the worst storms God’s presence brings hope and peace and even life. This chapter outlines the Apostles ill-fated ship ride to Rome, and throughout we see the faith of Paul stand strong despite the storm.

The Journey Begins – Acts 27:1-12

1. We are not told how long it was before the journey to Rome began, but who would be in charge of Paul on this journey (v. 1)?
2. Verse 2 tells us about the ship Paul would be on, and a traveling companion named Aristarchus, on his way to Macedonia (implied: he is a believer). Who else is on this ship according to this verse?
3. What favor did the centurion grant Paul in Sidon (v. 3)? What might this indicate about Julius’ opinion of Paul?
4. The going was slow and difficult because the winds were against them (v. 4). Sail ships were always at the mercy of the winds. In verse 6 we hear they find a ship from Alexandria. It would have been a part of the imperial system that transported grain from Egypt to Rome. Why would this boat be a good choice for the journey to Rome?

5. The boat struggles up the coast and finally makes it to a port called Fair Havens (v. 8). In verse 9 we are given a time reference – what time of year is it?¹ What message does Paul have for the Centurion in regards to continuing the journey to Rome (v. 10)?
6. Who did the Centurion listen to when the decision was being made whether they would sail or not (v. 11)? Why might they choose to press on? Where were they headed (v. 12)? Why?

Caught in a Storm – Acts 27:13-20

7. What enticed the ship's crew to sail out according to verse 13? Are we ever tempted to do something because the way seems easy even though we know we probably should not?
8. What happened that soon turned the tide against the little ship and its crew (v. 14)? What in verse 15 lets us know how bad the situation has become?
9. In verses 16 through 19 we see the crew doing five things to try and bring this ship through the storm. What were they? How is each act a little more desperate than the one that preceded it?
10. What was the mood in the ship according to verse 20? Why the mention of no sun or stars for many days? Why is that important?

Paul Speaks Up – Acts 27:21-26

11. Verse 21 sounds an awful lot like “I told you so.” Is that the real intent? Explain.
12. What message of encouragement does Paul give the people in the ship (v. 22)? But what is the downside?

¹ The Fast was a shortened version of The Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur which occurred late September or early October. Winter travel between November and March was discouraged.

13. What gave Paul the confidence to say “it will be alright” despite the terrible circumstance they were in (v. 23-24)? What purpose of God must be fulfilled (v. 24)? What might be implied by the wording of verse 24, “God has granted you all those who sail with you...?”
14. In verse 25 Paul makes clear that despite what he sees around him – a howling storm and a ship stripped of all gear to steer and maneuver it – all will be okay. Where does he get his confidence? What should the crew prepare themselves for?

The Fourteenth Day – Acts 27:27-38

15. On the fourteenth night what did the sailors suspect (v. 27)? How did they test their theory (v.28)? Fearing they might hit rocks, what did they do (v. 29)?

NOTE: They did all they could do but still needed to trust in the Lord to bring them through. When we face the storms of life we should do what the Lord enables us to do and still trust Him for the best outcome.

16. What were the sailors trying to do in verse 30? Why does Paul tell the centurion about this (v. 31)? What did the centurion have the soldiers do (v 32)? What does this action mean to the people on that boat?
17. What does Paul encourage the people on the ship to do as the day dawned (v. 33)? Why was it important to follow the advice of Paul?
18. What did Paul then do on that ship that seemed to be doomed (v. 35)? How did the rest of the people on board respond (v. 36)?
19. Why do you think we get a head count at this time in the narrative (v. 37)? How many were on that ship?
20. After their meal, what did they do with the rest of the cargo (wheat) (v. 38)? Why?

The Shipwreck – Acts 27:39-44

21. When day broke what encouraging sight did they see (v. 39)? Where did they try and steer the ship?
22. Verse 40 describes all they did to head the ship to the little bay with the sandy beach, but it does not work. What happens in verse 41?
23. With the ship breaking apart, what is the plan of the soldiers (v. 42)? Why? However, the centurion in charge gives orders not to do this. Why (v. 43)? Do you think the Centurion might trust the advice of Paul now?
24. What order does the Centurion give (vss. 43-44)? How successful was the plan (v. 44)? That is rather miraculous. Why did it work so well?

Conclusion:

Someone has wisely penned this thought at the conclusion of a sermon on this chapter:

“Even when life goes to pieces, the Lord Himself stands by, saying, “Do not be afraid!” Make Him Captain of your life. It’s better to face the stormy waters with Christ than smooth waters without Him!”²

276 persons were saved because one man had the faith to not only trust God for his own life, but for theirs as well. He stood up when it counted and shared the Word of the Lord for that situation, and because the people listened (some willingly, some with some coercion) all were rescued from the sea.

Would Paul have been satisfied with simply the sea rescue? I doubt it. There was one more rescue he desired for every person on that ship: that they would be saved spiritually as well. And Paul knew His God was able to “save to the uttermost those who come to God through [Jesus]” (Hebrews 7:25).

May we have the kind of faith that not only brings us to safety but rescues others as well when the storms of life hit us.

² Randal Denny, “In Jesus’ Strong Hands”(Beacon Hill Press, 1989), p. 111.