

Acts 27:13-26

When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they could carry out their plan. They raised the anchor and sailed close to the shore of Crete.

¹⁴ But before long, a hurricane-like wind, called the “northeaster,” rushed down from the island. ¹⁵ Since the ship was caught in it and could not head into the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. ¹⁶ As we sailed on the sheltered side of a small island called Cauda, we were barely able to secure the skiff.^[a] ¹⁷ After hoisting it on board, the men tied ropes around the ship to reinforce it. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and in this way were driven along. ¹⁸ Because we were tossed around so violently by the storm, the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. ¹⁹ On the third day, they threw the ship’s gear overboard with their own hands. ²⁰ When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the violent storm kept pressing down on us, finally all hope that we would be saved was disappearing.

²¹ After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have followed my advice and not set sail from Crete and avoided this damage and loss. ²² But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because there will be no loss of life among you. Only the ship will be lost. ²³ In fact, last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me ²⁴ and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar. And surely God has graciously given you all those who are sailing with you.’ ²⁵ So keep up your courage, men, because I believe God that it will be exactly the way I have been told. ²⁶ However, we must run aground on some island.”

Dear children of God by grace alone through faith in Christ Jesus,

“This is a disaster!” Ever thought that? Ever said that? For so many of us disasters are not just for our imaginations, but a regular part of our lives and the lives of our loved ones. It sounds all too familiar, even perhaps a daily pattern, that life doesn’t happen according to plan. How do you react to these things?

Over and over we talk about being saved by grace alone through faith, but what is faith? First, we need to remember that our faith rests in Christ alone. Also, that faith is armed and equipped by God through his Word to fight the good fight against the devil and his schemes. We also need to keep in mind how faith grows and blossoms and flourishes as God’s Word waters and nurtures it. Faith is made a living and active thing because of the living and active Word that causes it. Faith has confident hope. It has the joy of heaven! It has the peace of God! It basks in God’s mercy and grace! Faith gives thanks to God for everything! Faith lives receiving God’s bountiful blessings and says, “Glory be to you, O Lord!” Faith, you run with a full tank on the promises of God! Why is this so important? It is important because life on this earth is often time difficult and not very secure, but our theme today will remind us:

Sermon Theme: Faith Always Sees Security

- 1. Even during earthly troubles**
- 2. Because its foundation is Jesus**

But our faith needs to look out! Disaster is headed our way! We may have great confidence in our perfect and mighty Lord, but what will happen to us when every earthly blessing we’ve enjoyed is taken

away. Is our faith really okay with “take the world, but give me Jesus”? What if the world is taken from us...the whole world? Not just a job, not just a relationship, not just a few earthly blessings. The world? Does our faith remember that earthly blessings are secondary to spiritual ones. We agree that we don't deserve any earthly blessing just like we don't deserve spiritual blessings, but God promises us our daily bread and other blessings. That's all we need, right? We are satisfied and content with that, right?

But how strong is our faith? Disasters might be headed our way! We seem to get through one storm, and we learn from it, and we grow, and we trust, but guess what? Another shipwreck is right on its heels! There's plenty of storms out there and they keep coming! Is our faith ready to die right now for Jesus? Ready to lose life itself? Or will we run and change our story in order to save your life? **“Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:35).**

We think of Paul in our text. How did Paul get this point where he was on a ship that was about to sink in a violent storm? It started as he was faithfully preaching God's Word and what happened? A mob tried to kill him and he was almost killed. Thankfully, the Roman garrison is on hand. How did Paul's faith stand during these difficult time? Paul was God called apostle and look at what happened to him. He stood his ground and witnessed to that angry mob about Jesus, his Savior. He stood his ground and spoke the truth in love, but they listened to him with hatred and rejection. What a wonderful ministry, huh?

What happened after his life was spared? He escaped that mob only to spend so many valuable ministry days in handcuffs and on trial? First went before the Sanhedrin (who wanted to assassinate him). Then he was transferred to Caesarea and went on trial before Governor Felix. He spent two years there with no progress in his case. Then Governor Festus takes over and the whole process basically starts all over again. And even when he's finished, since Paul appealed to Caesar, all he can do is pass you on to Rome.

What is ironic is that God had promised that Paul would be his witness in Rome, but I bet he didn't expect to be traveling there in chains. How much ministry could he do if he was in Rome, but under arrest while he was there? Is this really the best outreach opportunity in Rome if Paul arrived appearing like he was on the wrong side of the law? Who in their right mind will listen to him? How do you think Paul's faith was now?

But this isn't the worst! He gets on the boat for Rome, and that boat itself doesn't make it. It get caught in a hurricane-like wind and the only option was to give way to it and they **“were driven along”**. They tried everything to save the boat, but Paul told them to trust him and his God. They were to trust that they should stay on the ship and the ship would be destroyed, but none of the people on the boat would lose their lives. This didn't seem logical. The storm wasn't stopping and the stars had been hidden for many days and the people were filled with fear and anxiety. **“When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the violent storm kept pressing down on us, finally all hope that we would be saved was disappearing..”** Where was Paul's faith now? Was his faith sinking with the ship, or was he still trusting in the almighty God? Did he still believe that God was working all things for his good, or was it time to panic?

There are tons of different “storms” in our lives, but it only takes one to shipwreck our faith. One accident that changes our life. One new hospital bill. One too many bills. One sin that ruins our most treasured relationship. One pink slip. One test result in school. One rejection letter. One divorce. One transition in life. One doctor's bad news. One death in the family. One item that people in our family hate us for because of our love for Jesus. There are so many bad storms out there. It's not that God is too small or has ever failed us. It's just that so often all we can think about is that there are so many storms. And some of them happen fast. Some of them really feel like they are taking our world away from us. They rush at us with such fierceness that we all too often fall into despair and fear.

2. Because its foundation is Jesus

With so many bad “storms” on our lives, it’s hard at times to see Jesus, the foundation of our faith. There’s a part of us that says, “I’ve got a thousand reasons to worry, to give up, to question, to doubt, to panic.” So that’s often what we do. And those are all rotten ideas because none of them are actual solutions! They only compound the problem, blinding the eyes of faith, adding more stress, breed more unbelief and condemning us as faithless before God.

Jesus has the solution for us. How about we trust in Jesus and his unconditional love and fix our hearts and minds on heavenly things and see God’s and his unending love and grace above the “storms” of life. Let us gaze together at the one **“Who has gathered the wind in the palms of his hands. . . Who has wrapped the water in a garment. . . Who has set up all the ends of the earth has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands.” (Proverbs 30:4)** I’d say God’s got all the power he needs to handle any and all storms and disasters combined, wouldn’t you?

But notice something else about our God. He hasn’t sent you to hell, has he? How many times have we spoken and acted like we had no one helping us, like we had no God? How many times has he not treated us as our sins deserved? We’ve never been to hell, have we? There’s a reason for that. He sent his Son to calm the worst storm – the storm of his wrath against our sins of doubt and fear. He spared us from that “storm” of eternal destruction in hell. In Jesus, God has given us a storm-free life. Condemnation free. Wrath free. Punishment free. Our relationship with God is not a stormy relationship. It’s peaceful!

Look at the Son who loved us so much that he redeemed us. He bought us as his own, with his own blood. We can say with Paul to the sailors. This is my God whom I serve. He did it all. He’s got me. I didn’t deserve it, but he paid the full price. I’m his forever! He’s the kind of God that works all things for our eternal good and keeps all the promises he has made. Our God is so personal! Just for us, even when we are drifting around like Paul who literally was in the Mediterranean Sea, our God sends his angel just to tell us not to be afraid and to reassure us of his plans for us, just as he promised. Even here, in the middle of wherever we are, he’s thinking of all of us personally too. Not one of those who are his will be lost.

What a God and what a foundation we are built on! God has the biggest heart of love for all our souls, and he took the greatest of actions to save us. The perfect Words to give us life. He has even give us the gift faith that holds on to all of God’s promises and makes us strong. Faith, like the one he gave to Paul which looked at the storm. Faith that led Paul to see God has a perfect plan for that storm. There were 275 other men aboard Paul’s ship who at first didn’t trust Paul or take his advice when he told them that they shouldn’t set sail. Now there are 275 hearing hope when they were hopeless. 275 men hearing an encouragement from a God they did not know. That’s just one of the great blessings from this “disastrous” trip, I’m sure! The storyline of that storm is not “disaster and shipwreck” but God who is in control or all things and that he is the Light of the world! That’s how God uses storms – both literal and figurative. God’s plans are never to harm and always to prosper. He works all things everywhere out for your eternal good.

It is only in faith that we can love the last line: **“However, we must run aground on some island.”** After all their efforts, they still lost the ship. We often lose things we try so hard to save. But Jesus doesn’t lose us. I hope we agree that even ending the story with a sunken ship doesn’t make it a disaster. In fact, God worked great blessings for Paul’s faith and for his kingdom just as God uses the many “storms” of this life to strengthen our faith and guide as he make our way through this sinful world. What a blessing to our faith as we look at our troubles through the lens of God and the faith he has so graciously worked in us. How blessed we are to know that everything turns out just as God promises. To God by the glory! Amen.