

Providence in the Storm - Acts 27:1-28:10
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

What a storm! And this was not the way it should have been, or so we think. When we read the narrative in Acts we expect Paul to hop on a boat and make a quick journey from the port near Caesarea and have a smooth voyage to Rome. This was God's promise, wasn't it? He would make it to Rome, stand before Caesar, proclaim the Gospel there? What we find is one of the most detailed and accurate accounts of maritime practice in the ancient Middle-East as Paul and two traveling companions join a squad of soldiers, a crew of sailors, and a group of passengers who are criminals. But the story is nothing like what we expect. The group begins on a smaller ship which skirts the coast making it to Asia. There they jump on a much larger boat from Alexandria, Egypt making its way to Rome with a load of wheat. Rome was dependent on imported wheat from Egypt, shipping 150,000-200,000 tons of wheat annually. This boat makes it to the island of Crete. But the entire journey seems to have been against the wind, slowing the trip down. So from the port called Fair Havens (literally meaning good port) Paul warns them that the trip is too late, after the Day of Atonement in early October. The Mediterranean Sea was notorious for rough waters and awful storms during the winter months, so the best thing to do was to hang out in Fair Havens and wait for Spring, which Paul makes clear. But the ships captain and owner poll the sailors who are confident in their sea-faring abilities, and they believe it would be better to push on to a better port to the west.

But this decision seals their fate, and we hear of a boat caught in a typhoon that loses all control, is pushed out into the open sea where it drifts for fourteen days. This whole time they never see stars or the sun (which would help them navigate and therefore they have no idea where they are in the sea or what dangers might await them). After taking all human measures to protect the boat, this group of 276 people loses all hope of being saved. Their human resources and the gods to whom these people pray are not sufficient to end the storm and protect them in it. For them, the storm is random, purposeless, and will end in loss of life or great suffering for no reason.

Luke writes the narrative in such a way that we are supposed to see a stark contrast between the crew and passengers and three other men in the boat. These men are the Apostle Paul, Luke (author referenced in the passage by telling the story in 2nd person plural, "we"), and Aristarchus from Thessalonica. These three men have already been rescued by Christ, and know that He is the Lord of the storm. When the situation is bleakest, an angel of the Lord comes to Paul to remind him that the promise to stand before Caesar will be kept by God. Furthermore, God will spare the lives of all on board for Paul's sake. So Paul shares this announcement from, "The God to whom I belong and whom I worship." Catch this here. As followers of Jesus, these men belong to God, they are His, meaning God can use their lives however He chooses. Second, they worship Jesus their God. The word used here for "worship" is a word that refers to an object set apart for holy purposes and used in service to the Lord. It could be used for objects (like lampstands or tables used in the Temple), or of people whose lives and actions were dedicated to the Lord in worship of His glory. These three men knew the God who actually controlled the wind and the waves. He could speak and make them stop. But if He didn't there was providence in the storm and purpose for it. They may not know that purpose, yet, they knew that their aim was to glorify God by trusting Him and making Him known.

The story ends with the ship being destroyed on a reef just off of Malta, yet all on board were saved. But the adventure does not end here. On Malta Paul is attacked by a venomous snake. The natives believe that the goddess Justice has finally caught up with him, and they stepped back expecting Paul to drop dead. When he doesn't they begin to think that he was a god. While Luke does not pause to state this, we can rest assured that these people heard the Gospel. And then Paul heals the tribal ruler's father and a whole bunch of other people on the island. Interestingly, all through the text Luke uses the language of "salvation" to describe what happened in the storm. The Greek word for "salvation" (*sozo*) or its derivatives are used at least 8 times in the story. This is not by chance. God had a purpose for the three men on the boat and in the storm. Their presence and worship led the salvation of the crew, the Gospel to Malta, and the healing of a bunch of people. None of this happens if the boat sails on gentle seas to Rome.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Daniel 7	Ezra 8	Ezra 9	Ezra 10	Nehemiah 1	Nehemiah 2	Nehemiah 3

Reading from this past week: Acts 27:1-28:10

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 28:11-29

Family Worship

Song - *Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone)*

<https://youtu.be/QBRwoqJP2sk>

Gospel Project

Unit: The People Prepare

Story: We should be sorry for sin

Big Picture Question: How should we feel when we sin?

Answer: When we sin, we should feel sorry that we have disobeyed God and want to turn from our sin because we love Him.

Scripture: Romans 8

New City Catechism

Question #8: What does God require in the First, Second, and Third Commandments?

Answer: First, that we know God as the only true God. Second, that we avoid all idolatry. Third, that we treat God's name with fear and reverence.

Verse: Deuteronomy 6:13-14

Acts 27:1-28:10

- This is an amazing sea-voyage story. What parts of the story catch your attention?
- How does Luke point us to the difference between the reactions of the other people on the ship and that of Paul and his 2 buddies?
- How can this story help us navigate the storms in our lives?
- What are some ways we can trust Jesus when the storms of life blow in and we cannot find the purpose for the storm or even see God's providence in the storm?

Prayer

*Pray that God would use us and show His glory in us during the storms of life.

*Pray for the Secret Church event this Friday evening.