

Sailing Into Storms

Acts 27:1-44

The stormy seasons of our lives are providentially planned places of fruitful service and witness for Christ.

“The primary theological message of this voyage narrative fits the message of the rest of Acts: nothing – whether persecution, division, or natural obstacles will stop the gospel and God’s plan.” Craig Keener

“Most amazing of all, we were in the best place we’d ever been for witnessing to people hungry for the gospel of Jesus. We had spent ourselves and our resources traveling all over the country with the message of salvation, always mindful of the danger if the wrong person overheard us. Now we were stuck in jail, and God was bringing spiritual seekers in waves. The living conditions weren’t very good, but we didn’t have to deal with travel and traffic! And we could tell our fellow prisoners the story of Jesus openly because no one would come into this rat hole to spy on us.” Maryam Rostampour and Marziyeh Amirizadeh

I. Establish Trust: Hard Places Afford Us The Opportunity to Build Trust with Unbelievers. Acts 27:4-12

"The next day, we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for." Acts 27:3

Example: Joseph

“And Pharaoh said to his servants, ‘Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God.’ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.’” Genesis 41:38-40

Example #2 – Paul and Silas

"But Paul cried with a loud voice, ‘Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.’ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then, he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’” Acts 16:28-31

Our willingness to endure hardship often creates an opportunity to build trust and credibility with unbelievers.

II. Speak Truth: Hard Situations Provide The Opportunity to Speak God's Truth.

Acts 27:4-12

"Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the fast was already over, Paul advised them saying, 'Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also our lives.' But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said." Acts 27:9-11

When we aren't trying to save our lives, we sometimes have the opportunity to boldly speak the truth in love in people's most precarious moments.

Speaking the truth when no one listens is a holy calling. This is what it means to be faithful to God and it is part of the mission of the church.

Example: Ezekiel's Calling

"And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house." Ezekiel 2:7

Example: Jeremiah's Calling

"So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you. You shall call to them, but they will not answer you." Jeremiah 7:2

"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you and evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away to the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called today, that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Hebrews 3:12-13

"Take heed, therefore, ye careless, curious professors, if any such be here present, how you hear. Remember, that whether we think of it or not, 'we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;' where ministers must give a strict account of the doctrine they have delivered, and you as strict a one, how you have improved under it. Will it be sufficient then, think you, to allege, that you went to hear them only out of curiosity, to pass away an idle hour, to admire the oratory, or ridicule the simplicity of the preacher? No; God will then let you know, that you ought to have come out of better principles; that every sermon has been put down to your account, and that you must then be justly punished for not improving by them". George Whitfield

III. Offer Hope: Our Sufferings Offer Us The Ability to Speak Real Hope Into Deep Despair. Acts 27:13-26

"Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison cargo. And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 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." Acts 27:18-20

"Yet, now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 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.' So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told." Acts 27:22-25

Faith is having a solid God-given hope in God's sovereign purpose when we cannot see a way through the storm. We know that God is at work for our salvation.

"They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword... And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." Hebrews 11:37-40

"But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; ..." 1 Peter 3:14-15

As believers, we have a certain hope for a glorious outcome for us in every trial. Our hope is what we can share to those without it.

IV. Endure: Persevere for The Joy of Seeing Souls Saved. Acts 27:13-26

"And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying anchors out the bow, Paul said to the Centurion and the soldiers, 'Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.' Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ships boat and let it go." Acts 27:30-32

Key Message: You must be in the boat to be saved. Jesus is the boat.

Peter knows this personally.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few that is eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...” 1 Peter 3:18-22

Parallel between this scene and Jesus before his crucifixion:

- Not a hair is to perish.

“As the day was about to dawn, Paul urged them to take some food, saying ‘Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the hand of any of you.’” Acts 27:33-34

“You will be delivered up even by parents and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But not a hair of your head will perish.” Luke 22:16-18

- Took bread. Gave thanks. Gave it to them.

"And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.” Acts 27:35-38

“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you do this in remembrance of me.’” Luke 22:19

- Because of the one, the many are saved:

"The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan." Acts 27:42-43

“For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” Romans 5:19

Group Study Questions — *Sailing Into Storms* (Acts 27:1–44)

- 1. The sermon begins with the claim that “the stormy seasons of our lives are providentially planned places of fruitful service and witness.”**
How does Acts 27 challenge the way we normally view hardship? Can you think of a storm in your life where God used suffering for witness or growth?
- 2. In what ways did Paul establish trust with unbelievers during the voyage (Acts 27:1–12)?**
Why do hardship, integrity, and endurance often create credibility with those who do not yet believe?
- 3. Joseph, Paul, and Silas all gained influence in difficult circumstances.**
What do these examples teach us about how God can use faithfulness in adverse places to open doors for gospel witness?
- 4. Paul spoke truth even when no one initially listened (Acts 27:9–11).**
Why is faithfulness in speaking truth important even when people reject or ignore it? Have you experienced a time when speaking truth was costly or was ignored?
- 5. The sermon says, “Speaking the truth when no one listens is a holy calling.”**
How do Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Hebrews 3 shape our understanding of warning, exhortation, and loving confrontation within the church and toward unbelievers?
- 6. When all hope was abandoned, Paul offered hope rooted in God’s promises (Acts 27:18–26).**
How is biblical hope different from optimism or wishful thinking? How can suffering deepen the credibility of our witness about hope?
- 7. Paul’s confidence rested in God’s sovereign purpose: “I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.”**
What does it look like to trust God’s purposes when you cannot see a way through the storm?
- 8. The image “You must be in the boat to be saved. Jesus is the boat” is a striking gospel metaphor.**
How does the ship/ark imagery connect to Christ’s salvation? What does this teach us about perseverance and the necessity of remaining in Christ?
- 9. The parallels between Paul in the storm and Jesus before the cross are powerful (not a hair perishes, breaking bread, one saving many).**
How do these echoes deepen your understanding of Christ’s presence and saving work in Acts 27?
- 10. The sermon ends with enduring “for the joy of seeing souls saved.”**
How can keeping an eternal perspective—seeing storms as opportunities for the salvation and strengthening of others—change how we endure present trials?

Optional Closing/Application Question

- Where might God be calling you this week to **build trust, speak truth, offer hope, or endure** in a hard place for the sake of Christ?