

Sunday, August 23, 2026

THE BENEFIT OF THE STORM

Acts 27

- When I was in my early 20's moving to a brand new town to take an unpaid youth position at a small portable church in Shelby, NC
 - When I first got there— before I had a job, I needed to find some ways to make some quick cash
 - And there were some people in the church that graciously offered to let me help them with their landscaping or construction gigs
 - But the problem was, I had never done landscaping or construction gigs before
- Now, I had grown up cutting the grass and doing chores around the house, but I had never operated any of the machinery that these people who do this for a living had
 - I get told to get up on a zero turn mower that I had never operated (In my house growing up it was either a push mower or scissors—I never even knew riding mowers existed until I got to college)— So I've never been on one before, I don't even know how to start it and I'm told to hop up on it and go stripe a yard
 - And I had to just on the fly try and figure it out—feeling completely at a loss... Just watching other guys, seeing what they're doing and just trying to mimic them the best that I can
 - On another job, we're laying tile, which again I had never done—and I get handed a piece of tile and the guy says, "Hey go cut me 5 and 3/8ths of this..."
 - "Um with what?? I go outside and I see this humungous piece of machinery with this blade sticking straight up going 1000 mph and guys just sliding their hands right past it
 - I had never seen anything like that before in my life—and also "What's a 3/8th?!"

- But I just had to figure it out as I went...and afterwards, I felt like a pro!
- I'm telling other people that have no experience in those fields what-so-ever— all about these projects, the tile we laid, the walls we case opened, what tools we used, and I feel like I'm this professional handyman now, even though in the moment I was just reacting and panicking the whole time—and the important parts of the job were really reserved for those who really knew what they were doing
- And that is what I think of whenever I read Acts chapter 27
 - Because the narrative now shifts to the perspective of the Author Luke who is writing this chapter in the 1st person
 - And if you remember, we've talked before about how Luke was a doctor, who ended up being this sort of investigative reporter, who ended up being one of the most credible

authors in history with the books of Luke and Acts

- And here in chapter 27 it looks like we can add “sailor” to his resume— because he gives us what is known to be the most detailed written account of a sea storm in ancient history
- And he gives us all of these nautical details of how they navigated and survived this storm at sea as if he was a sailor himself
- I'm sure he helped in any way that he could but I'm sure he was mostly just reacting and panicking—and the real important parts were left to the professionals
- So we left off last week, when Paul appealed his case to Caesar and talked about how even though Paul wasn't where he wanted or expected to be, God had him exactly where he was supposed to be
- And even though he was innocent, he was still a prisoner, and he was now being sent

off to Rome to have his case judged before Caesar's court

- Now, this was God's calling for him— God tells him in chapter 23 that he will testify about Jesus in Rome...he has that promise to hold on to
 - So he's not that worried about being a prisoner or who wants him dead because he knows that God is going to get him to Rome
- But not before he goes through some more difficulty—even more than he has been through already
 - But as we are going to see, that when you are following God and His call on your life, you will still experience storms—but we can see from this passage how to handle ourselves within the storms, and find purpose in them.
- ***“And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the***

Augustan Cohort named Julius. And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. 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. And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board.” -Acts 27:1-6 (ESV)

- Now, it is interesting that Luke and Aristarchus get to accompany Paul, because it was really unheard of for a prisoner to have traveling companions
 - But also, from all of the Roman official side of things, Paul was clearly an innocent man,

as Julius here knows— and isn't he treating Paul as a prisoner, but with respect

- Roman Centurions were known as the being backbone of the Roman Army
 - They were overseers of 1000 soldiers, and when 60 of them would come together that would be a Roman legion
 - And Rome had a knack for picking high capacity and high character men for the centurion positions
 - They were known for their steady personalities and were very smart and logical individuals
 - One historian pointed out that Rome was excellent in appointing their military leaders, but horrible at appointing their political leaders
- And the Bible has a history of speaking highly and favorably of Roman Centurions

- In Matthew chapter 8 we see a Centurion who cares enough about his servant to go out of his way to ask Jesus to heal him
 - When Jesus agrees to go with him, he says, “No, you don’t have to do that. I know what it’s like to be in authority, and I know what it’s like to take orders—you can just say it, and I know that he’ll be healed”
 - And Jesus says that he had not seen a greater faith in all of Israel
- In Matthew 27, we see another Centurion who was at the cross while Jesus was being crucified—and he notices how the sky goes completely dark as He hangs there and the earthquake that ensued once Jesus gave up His spirit—and the Centurion declared out loud—“Surely this was the Son of God”
- Then in Acts 10—we see Cornelius, another Roman Centurion who loved God and was a good and generous man, and God sends Peter to him to share the Gospel and we see

the first great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles happen in his house

- And here we see another good, high character Centurion, in Julius, treating Paul kindly

- He makes sure that Paul is cared for, which could possibly be why Dr. Luke was allowed to travel with him, to tend to any medical conditions that he may have
- So when they begin their journey they were on a small coasting vessel that was not built for sailing in large open waters, **MAP 1** so they would just hug the coast and make their way around.
 - They were already starting to have some trouble with the wind but they manage to make it through some open waters and got to Myra
 - Knowing that the ship they were on was not going to make it to Rome, the Centurion finds them a bigger more sturdy ship to hop on

- What this was an **Alexandrian Grain Ship**

- Rome got most of it's wheat and bread supply from Egypt so grain vessels were regularly sent out of Alexandria and this was probably going to be the last big shipment of the season
- These ships were 180 feet long —50 feet wide—and 44 feet deep.
- It could fit a couple of hundred people, as well as cargo as we'll see
- It has no rudder, just 2 oars, 1 mast or mainsail, and 1 square foresail—these boats were designed to sail with the wind, not against them
- They were very sturdy, but not fast, and not equipped to handle strong and dangerous winds.
- Which is exactly what they would encounter:
“We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we

sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea. 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 of our lives.” But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.”
-Acts 27:7-12 (ESV)

- **MAP 2:** So they were only trying to get to get to Phoenix—just 30 or 40 miles

- It's not like they were trying to journey for days and days—so it made sense that the Centurion would agree to just go a little bit further and get to a place that would be better suited for them to spend the winter
- Also, pointing out that “The Fast” or “The Day of Atonement” was over—this puts this being Mid October, and it was very dangerous to travel by sea in the late fall and winter of this region
- So the season is just starting to change, so they think that they still have a little time before it gets too bad
- Paul tries to warn them—but if you were in the Centurion's shoes, would you listen to the experienced sailors or the imprisoned preacherman??
- Then the right wind seems to come by to get them going—so they rush to take advantage
- ***“Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their***

purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land.”

Acts 27:13-14 (ESV)

- So a Northeaster, was a Gale Storm, which essentially was this storm caused by the meeting of opposite air currents that would send these 50-60 mph winds whipping off of island mountains from the north-east
 - So instead of making it west 30-40 miles, they end up getting pushed by this storm 20-25 miles south
- ***“And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they***

were driven along. Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the 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

27:15-20 (ESV)

- So now, **MAP 3**, the wind is just taking them—and they don't know where they are or where they are going
 - They navigate by the sun and the stars at this time, and you can't see the them in a storm
 - They're afraid that they are going to get close to the shores of northern Africa that could damage the boat so they tie cables around the wood to reinforce it
 - Then as they begin to take on water into the boat they need to start tossing cargo and the

ship's tackle (which was the ship's bed's, tables, and furniture) overboard

- They needed to lighten the ship, because the more weight on the ship the lower it would sit in the water—the lower in the water they were, the easier it would be for the storm to blow water into the boat—so they needed to lighten the ship so the ship would sit higher on the sea and thus take on less water
- But this storm went on for DAYS...and Luke says, that they lost hope.
- 3 times, in these 13 verses we read the phrase, “with difficulty”
- And if you look at this whole scene—They have a direction, they face opposition, they get blown off course, they have to start letting go of some things that used to be important to them, and they're just trying to stay afloat!
 - And that is exactly what life can and will look like sometimes

- I'm not telling you anything that you don't already know but:

- **LIFE WILL BE FULL OF DIFFICULTY**

- I've heard it said, in life you are either in a storm, coming out of a storm, or about to go into a storm.
- And it is no less true of a Christian
- The Bible says that the rain falls on both the just and the unjust
- But so many try to push a theology that says that once you come to God, your storms will be over!
 - *“It'll all be smooth sailing from here! You'll get all the things you want, the salary you want, the family you want, and perfect health—if you just have enough faith...”*
 - Really? You wanna tell the apostle Paul that? He told the Corinthians that since he's come to Christ, he's received 39 lashes on 5 different occasions, he had been beaten by Roman rods 3 times, he's been in and out of

prison more times that he can count—and this is about to be his 3rd shipwreck to date that he's been involved in

- No, coming to faith in Christ does not excuse you from difficulty and hardship
 - It comes with the territory—we've talked about this at length already how Jesus told us to expect trouble and hardship
 - But it can still be extremely frustrating
- Even Luke is honest that he is among those who abandoned hope
 - I mean, he's there in faith, confident that God is going to get the Gospel to Rome through Paul and he's excited to be a part of it!
 - They're doing Kingdom work, doing all of the right things, going about things the right way—and what do they get??
 - Lost at sea in a seemingly never ending storm—nowhere near where they're supposed to be! Where God promised them that they would be!
- Luke could be thinking about the stories that he recorded of the witnesses that were there when Jesus walked on water and calmed the storm just by speaking to it
 - He could be thinking, or praying, "Why don't you do that now, Jesus! Could use a little of that power here!"
 - But yet, God allows the storm to continue
- And the main difference between it storming on the just and the unjust— it that the just have a promise in the midst of the storm
 - The promise of His presence, His sustaining hand—the promise that the suffering of this present time is not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed to us
- But in the here and now, we have the promise that we've quoted a few times here recently, that God will work all things together—for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose

- He doesn't say that all things are good—He says He works them together into a good result
- But the caveat is, that promise is for those who are called by God, and love Him enough to follow His calling
- And even following God will involve difficulty
- But God has a knack for taking what is intended for evil, and using it to accomplish the exact opposite of what evil intended
 - Think of Joseph who told his brothers that even though they intended evil by trying to separate him from his family, God actually used him to bring his family together
 - Satan tried to destroy Job's testimony with suffering, but all he accomplished was a book being preserved in history to help people keep their testimony in spite of suffering
 - They intended evil by putting Jesus on the cross and taking His life, but God used that

to raise Him from the dead and give eternal life

- Even here in Acts the Jewish leaders intended evil by arresting Paul so they could kill him and stop him from spreading the Gospel—but instead, because they arrested him, he's now on a boat to go share the Gospel in Rome
- And Paul has that promise to sustain Him in the storm
- ***“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. 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. But we must run aground on some island.” -Acts 27:21-26 (ESV)

- Run aground essentially means shipwreck
- So Paul says, “I’ve had a vision! Take heart! No one’s going to die! But where are gonna shipwreck somewhere. Where? I don’t know— but it’s gonna be somewhere, so— be ready for that!”

- DIFFICULTY IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TRUST GOD

- I heard it said that Paul had 3 anchors that he was letting down to carry him through the storm.
- The first anchor was **The Anchor of Ownership**
 - In verse 23 he says, “*The God to Whom I belong*”
 - He knew who he belonged to

- He belonged to God—not the authorities, not those who look up to him, not those who taught him or helped him or guided him
- He wasn’t owned by the opinions of others or the difficulties of this world
- He belonged to God

- *I remember when I was younger before I would leave for school my mom would tell me, “Remember who you are and Who’s you are”*

- *I was to remember who I belonged to, and let that remind me of who I really was*
- You see, you do not belong to your struggles, your inabilities, your sufferings, your mistakes, your past, your temptations, or any other human being on this planet
- If you have put your faith and trust in Jesus, *you belong to God*

- You are His child, and nothing in or out of this world can separate you from His love or otherwise define who you are
- You have the anchor of ownership, that Almighty God is your Father, and you belong to Him
- The second anchor Paul had was: **The Anchor of Worship**
 - He says “The God to Whom I belong and *Whom I Worship*”
 - The word for worship here can also be translated as service—This isn’t a God that he just sings and prays to—this is the God he actively serves
 - His life is a life of worship because everything that he is and everything that he does is in service to Him
 - This word for *worship* is used in the same context as Joshua did in the Hebrew when he said, “Choose this day whom you will

serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”

- When you have the confidence that all you are and all that you do is in worship and service to the King, you can have the anchor of worship that can carry you through the storm
- And finally the 3rd anchor is: **The Anchor of Trust**
 - He says, “*I have faith in God, that it will be exactly as it has been told to me.*”
 - Difficulty is an opportunity to trust God
- And you never know how your faith and trust in God in the midst of difficulty will impact others
 - How much did Luke need to hear that from Paul? As he is abandoning hope and laying around sulking—Paul stood up!
 - Paul reiterated the vision and truth that they already knew!

- He reiterated his belief and trust in God—and that could have reinvigorated the faith and trust of God in Luke
 - And not just Luke, but everyone will be impacted—but they still had responsibility
- ***“When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms (120ft). A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms (90ft) . And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. 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 out anchors from 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 ship's boat and let it go.” -Acts 27:27-32 (ESV)

- Paul essentially said, “If these sailors abandon us, they’re the only ones that can really man the ship—so we’ll all die unless they stay”
- Now you could think, “Wait a minute...Paul you just said that the Lord said that no one would die. That God promised! So which is it? Are we going to be saved by the promise of God? Or the working of man?”
 - This is what so many people struggle with—especially the overly educated.
 - We wrestle with the sovereignty of God vs the Free will of man.
 - And we love to take one or two extremes
 - It’s either God is in control of everything, so our choices don’t matter
 - Or it’s our choices are everything as if God can’t work without them

- So is it God's sovereignty? or is it our choices?
- And the most logical conclusion is that it's both!
- Dr Tim Keller puts it this way: He says its not 50/50 it's 100% God is in control, and 100% our choices matter
- God is 100% in charge, and you are 100% responsible for what you do
- If you side on either of the extremes— you will live your life either passive or panicked.
 - If it's all up to God and your choices and actions don't matter—you'll be passive. You won't live with an urgency to reach the lost or help the hurting because God just ordained it all in your mind
 - If it's all up to you and your choices—you'll live panicked because you'll be carrying all of the pressure and live in a constant fear of coming up short and not doing enough
- But living as if God is 100% in control and that I am 100% responsible— is the most practical way to live because I will live my life with a sense of responsibility to live in the best manner that I can—but at the same time, I will know that even if I mess up or fail or fall short, I don't have to panic because I can't mess up God's plan for me as long as I am following Him
- So Paul isn't passive, and he isn't panicked—he takes action, he relays the promise of God, but also tells them that they all have a part to play
- And the Centurion listens to him this time. And now he has the hearts and attention of everyone on the ship: ***“As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a***

hair is to perish from the head of any of you.” 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 27:33-38 (ESV)

- This is a very convicting and challenging part of the passage because it makes me think: Are we going to be the ones who encourage others—even when we’re going through a storm?
 - Whenever we are going through a storm, a trial, a difficulty—do we take the time to notice what other people are going through at the same time?
 - You know James says that purpose in our trials is that we become mature and complete—that’s why we can count it all joy when we go through them

- That doesn’t mean that we find them pleasant—but that we can find joy in the difficulty because we are growing through them
- And you know the best way to not grow in the midst of your trial? Just focus on yourself
- Paul says the purpose in our suffering is to learn patience, character, and better understand the hope that we have.
- And you know the best way to develop character in your life? Care for others
- People of Character— Care for people
 - Instead of sitting around waiting for someone to care for you—when you step up and care for someone else, even when you’re going through it, you will develop your character the most
 - The best way to get encouraged when you’re discouraged is to encourage someone else

- The best way to be filled up, is to pour out for someone else
- Now, this principle is only true for the Christian
- Why is that? Because that's exactly what Jesus did for us, and we are being conformed into His image—which very well may be why you are in the storm in the first place, to help save someone else:
- ***“Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf.” -Acts 27:39-41 (ESV)***
- So now, while they are still a few hundred yards away from the shore—they hit this reef and the ship starts to break apart
- It's time to abandon ship.
 - And normally in these situations, any prisoners on board would be killed so they wouldn't have any escaped convicts—so the soldiers thought that was the plan.
- ***“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. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.” -Acts 27:39-44 (ESV)***
- Because Paul was there, because he was faithful to God's call—because he endured the storm well, all of the other prisoners were saved.

- And that's our final point for today:
- **GOD USES YOUR DIFFICULTY TO BENEFIT OTHERS**
- I was going to say that God “can” use your difficulty to benefit others—but I felt that was too weak, because that is what He does!
 - That is His purpose in your trial and your storm, to make you more like Himself as you benefit the people around you
 - Now, that does not mean that He caused the storm, that just means that He brings purpose to it that not only benefits you, but also everyone else around you.
- And when we have God's favor on our lives—it will impact the people around us
 - God told Abraham that He would bless him in order to bless others
 - In him all the nations of the world would be blessed

- In Genesis 26, his son Isaac was kicked out of his land by the king of the Philistines and everywhere he tried to take his family and his people they would face resistance just trying to find a place to live
 - But yet, every time he planted crops or dug wells the land would flourish because God's favor was with him — and it was so evident to the rest of the world that the king asked him back, apologized, and asked to make a covenant with him
- His son Jacob was so blessed by God that his father in law's land prospered so much just by his being there — so Laban conned him into staying around longer
- Then when his son Joseph was a slave or in prison—God's favor was on him in such a way that his masters house and all those in the prison with him benefited from his being there

- When you are walking in the will of God and obedience to Him its so evident how those in your life benefit from it.
 - But the flip side of it is true as well.
- I can't help but notice the stark contrast between Paul and Jonah here:
 - If you remember back in the Old Testament, Jonah in the belly of the whale—big fish whatever you wanna call it
 - But do you remember what happened right before he got swallowed by the whale?
 - He was being disobedient to God's call, he tried hopping on a ship to go away from where God wanted him to be—and that ship too got caught in a storm.
 - The scripture says: ***"For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. He said to them, 'Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that***

this great tempest has come upon you.'"

-Jonah 1:11-12 (ESV)

- Now, the sailors didn't want to do that, they tried rowing harder but eventually they had to relent and throw him overboard — and then they were safe
- Now, in Acts 27, we see Paul was being obedient to God's call—going the direction that he was supposed to go. But the way for the others to be safe in their storm was to stay with Paul
- You see:
 - *Jonah was disobedient in the storm and it was a detriment for those around him*
 - *Paul was obedient in the storm and it was for the betterment of those around him*
- Whether you are being obedient or disobedient to God's call on your life you're still going to go through some storms

- Whether you are walking with God or away from God—you're still going to go through some storms
- However, the difference in the storm is going to be how it affects you and those around you
 - The disobedient will be a detriment to those around them. When you are walking away from the Lord it will negatively affect your influence, your relationships, your spouse, your kids, your friendships, anyone who cares about you or who is in your life
- Your sin never just affects you
 - However, when you are walking with the Lord and following His call for your life—even when you go through a storm everyone around you will be better for it.
 - God will use your faith to strengthen you, to increase your influence, better your relationships, build your marriage, give your kids something to look up to, encourage your friends and lift up anyone who cares about you or who is in your life.
- Your faith never just affects you
 - God is 100% in control—God still accomplished his will through a disobedient Jonah
 - But your choices still 100% matters—and you can choose to anchor yourself in the ownership of your Heavenly Father, your worship of Him, and your Trust in Him—and who knows who could have their faith invigorated or their soul eternally saved by how God uses you in the storm.