

Talk – Acts 27:1-28:13 – Confidence in the Storm

Bible Reading/s

- KDN to introduce reading (displaying the Map of the Journey)
- Read Acts 27:1-28:16

Central Truth

Have faith in God – take courage, draw confidence, know God’s comfort.

Purpose

In this sermon, I want my hearers to be comforted that even in the midst of chaos, burden, doubt, crisis – God has those of faith covered in grace. So... courage, confidence, comfort.

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Outline

A stormy passage (27:1-44)

Paul warned... (27:10)

Julius (Centurion)

Disregard

Paul said...

'Keep up your courage...for I have faith in God' (27:21-25)

Regard

Paul said and urged...(27:31-38)

Soldiers

Esteem

Shipwreck! (27:39-44)

A warm welcome - yet with a bite (28:1-10)

Islanders

Publius (Chief Official)

Rome! (28:1-16)

Paul thanked... (28:15)

The brothers

C _____

C _____

C _____

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CHECK TIME

Talk

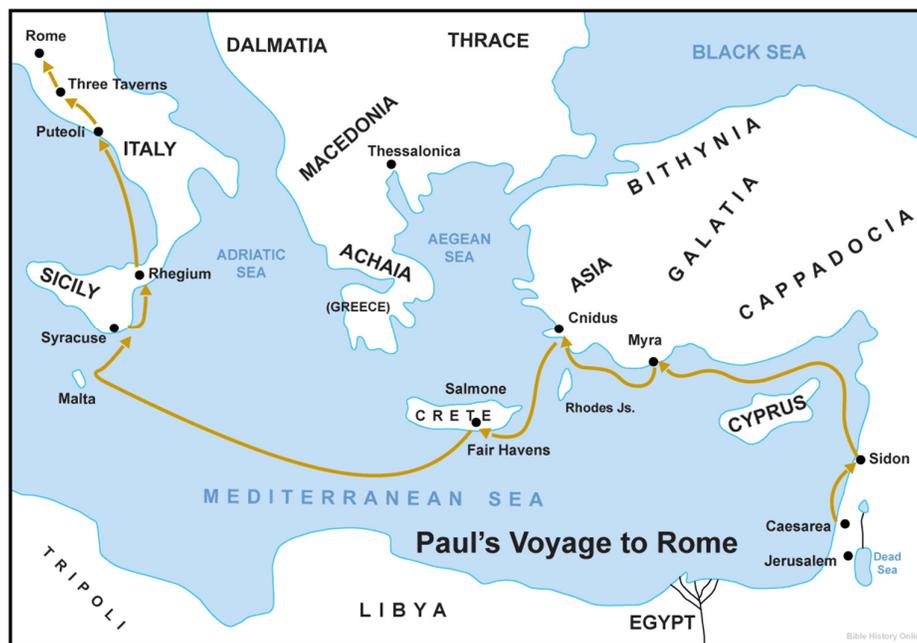
Before the Bible Reading

Good morning friends.

For the last few weeks we have been moving through the last section of the *Acts of the Apostles*, which details the opposition that the Apostle Paul experienced as he tried to defend the proclamation of the gospel. After five hearings, Paul is sent to Rome so that he might be tried before Caesar. We are going to read the account of the journey.

To orient us, I have a map [PPT] – and as we read this account, you may find it helpful to trace his route. We start in Caesarea.

[Someone to READ: Acts 27:1-28:16]



Prayer

Lord and Father,

Your ways are often surprising. And here in your word we find a man, your servant, who has experienced a lot of suffering. Help us to understand you better so that we might understand how to faithfully live in the face of some of the unexplained things that happen to each of us.

And strengthen our faith. AMEN.

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It is Well with my Soul

Horatio Gates Spafford was a lawyer and property developer in Chicago and a man who, from all reports, was well-known for both his Christian conviction and active Christian service. He was married to Anna and they had five children – a boy and four girls.

In 1870, when just four years old, his son Horatio Jr died suddenly of scarlet fever. A year later a massive fire swept through downtown Chicago, devastating the city, leaving around 100,000 homeless and destroying many properties owned by Horatio.

Two years later (now 1873) the Spafford's decided to take a holiday in England. Delayed because of business, Horatio sent his wife and daughters aged 11 to 2 ahead – and whilst crossing the Atlantic ocean by steamship, their vessel was struck by another vessel and sank within minutes. All four daughters perished and remarkably Anna Spafford survived, found unconscious, floating on a plank of wood.

Taken to land, she immediately sent a telegram to her husband saying 'Saved alone...'

Horatio, had lost so much in such a short time...

I cannot imagine what it would be like to experience that level of loss.

I cannot imagine the challenge that must have been to Horatio's faith in God. The challenge to believe that no matter what – God's grace was for him in all things.

A stormy passage (27:1-44)

- The account that we just heard read, details what must have been a traumatic journey for the Apostle Paul. A stormy passage on route to Rome.
- The account is so detailed, it does most of the work for us, so allow me to draw out just a few things for us.

- Notice as we moved through the story that despite the chaos that seems to be all around, **Paul stands almost like a beacon of calm and controlled hope.**
- He knows ahead of time what will happen, and so throughout we see him *speak or warn or direct* those around him.
- Chapter 27:10 - the ship had experienced some difficulty, its been blown off course, it is now late in the season, which means the coming winter is a danger factor – Paul warns '*Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be a disaster and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also*'.
- Julius the centurion, disregards the advice.

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- They set out – the Northeaster hits – for days they are blown wherever, battered – and finally – verse 20 – *‘they give up all hope of being saved’*.
- And at that Paul stands before them again and says *‘Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete, then you would have spared yourself this damage and loss, now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed’*.

- Now, how is it that Paul knows this?
- We are told, verse 23 – an angel appeared and told him.
- The angel tells Paul three things about his future:
 - a. don’t be afraid, keep up your courage
 - b. you will stand trial before Caesar (in Rome) – so in other words you will get through this.
 - c. God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.

- This is actually the fifth time in Acts that Paul receives a direct word from God and each time Paul is told something about what lies ahead. Each time the word comes in exceptional circumstances (*Conversion - Acts 9; Commission - Acts 16; In Corinth (when under duress) - Acts 18, at the Sanhedrin – Acts 23 and in the storm – Acts 27*).

- You could ask, why doesn’t God speak that way to us today? Wouldn’t it be great if the normal way that God chose to speak was directly to us – through some medium.
- To which I want to say a couple of things...
 - God does speak like that today - quite normally.
 - For example: There are so many testimonies around the world from Christians of Muslim background who speak of visions or direct words from Jesus.
 - Across the subcontinent I have heard lots of Indians from Hindu backgrounds speak about ways that Jesus spoke directly to them.
 - Yet brothers and sisters – do you realise that God does that for you as well. What we have before us in the Bible are the direct words of God.

 - God’s concern is that all might hear him and listen – yet for various reasons – how he will be heard will vary.
 - In countries where there is no opportunity to touch, let alone read a Bible (like in some Muslim countries) then it is very difficult for folk to hear his words, so why are we surprised by stories of Muslims hearing Jesus speak to them directly?
 - And in countries where there is little opportunity to see the words of God, like in many Hindu countries where there is simply no

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translation, nor affordable access to Bibles, then why are we surprised when we hear stories of Hindus who have seen Jesus appear to them?

- The fact that we each have a readable, physical, understandable, common copy of the word of God in our hands, is a wonderful privilege – because instead of it being a revelation to one soul at any one time, this is a revelation to all of us together for all time.
- Don't allow our Western individualism to take away from the wonder it is to have collective access to the special and clear words of God to us.

PAUSE

- So, Paul, armed with the certain knowledge of what is ahead says to the men he is sailing with – verse 25 *'Keep up your courage, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.'*
- I actually think, that this is the key verse in this whole account.
- *'Keep up your courage, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.'*

- This time the men give regard to Paul's words.
- And so should we...**Have faith in God – his grace is for you in all things.**

PAUSE

- Fourteen nights later! – the risk of being run aground heightens. (Can you imagine how what that level of sea sickness must have been like)
- Some Sailors make an attempt to escape from the ship
- Paul speaks again – verse 31 *'Unless these men stay with the ship, they cannot be saved'*
- If they don't stay with Paul – they will be lost.

- Remember the Old Testament story of Jonah?
 - God said to Jonah, go to the city of Nineveh and preach my Word there - Jonah instead of listening to the word of God, went to sea and went the other way – a storm came - and the only way for the men of the ship to be safe was to throw Jonah overboard. To have nothing to do with him.
- Here in Acts – we see the opposite.
 - God says to Paul, go to Rome and preach my word there – Paul, listening to the word of God, goes – a storm hits - and the only way for the men to be safe is to stay with the one who is trusting God.

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Shipwreck! (27:39-44)

- The ship runs aground and is lost, just as Paul had said and every single soul – all 276 make it safely to land.
- Into Chapter 28 - The islanders ‘warmly welcome with unusual kindness’

A warm welcome - yet with a bite (28:1-10)

Islanders

- This is the bit, in the horror movie, when you sit back up, open your eyes, start breathing freely again. The crisis is gone, the danger is clear. Cue the calm, celebratory music.
- And then – suddenly the last twist shocks you.
- While building a fire a snake jumps out and bites Paul on the hand.
- A cursed man just never gets a break.
- Yet Paul, still appears calm and in control, simply shakes the snake off and continues on to no ill effect.
- The islanders watch – and soon proclaim him to be a ‘god’.
- The chief official of the island welcomes him into his home and entertains him (notice that the story has very little regard now for the Roman authority figures – who previously were calling the shots - this is now all about Paul).
- The official's father is sick, Paul heals – which prompts folk from all around the island to bring their sick to Paul so they too can be healed.
- As a result, Paul is held in such esteem that when ready to sail again all their collective needs were supplied and onto Rome Paul goes.
- And as he nears his God given destination – verse 15 – *‘Paul thanked God and was encouraged’*

PAUSE

- Friends, this tale should encourage us to **have faith in God – and know that his grace is for you in all things** – even when the circumstances seem tough.

Reflection

- What we have seen over the last few weeks in Acts are many obstacles for Paul.
- They have been *human obstacles* as folk have opposed his message. Yet, despite all attempts, that human opposition didn’t seem stop to the gospel message going out.
- Today, we see *natural obstacles* – and yet in Paul we serve a servant of the Lord who increasingly stands out as a man of God.

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- Disregarded at first, but through the storms of life those watching on come to see in him something to be esteemed – his faith in God.

- Can you imagine what those with Paul must have thought witnessing all this?
- We see it had an effect of Luke because he writes about it in such detail. We see the effect on the Islanders, The island official, the prisoners, the guards, the centurion, Julius.
 - The *sceptic* must have been challenged
 - The *agnostic* must have been perplexed
 - The *believer* must have been comforted

- How is it that you come to this story today?
 - Are you the *sceptic* – this just seems to farfetched. Then ask yourself, why tell this story if it wasn't true?
 - Are you the *agnostic* – it just doesn't matter. Then ask yourself, what comforts can I draw on when suffering?
 - Are you the *believer* – this give voice to what you know about God. Take courage, draw confidence, know God's comfort – even in the storms of life.

- This is a passage that wants to comfort us – to say that even in the midst of chaos, burdens, doubts, crises – that God has those of faith covered in grace.
- That he knows what the future holds – in fact that he has secured that future through the sufferings of his Son.

- The faith that Paul has in God is all because he had come to know Jesus.
- He knew the suffering that Jesus experienced – it was Paul himself that had been dishing out the same kind of suffering upon his followers – persecuting, arresting, even approving of their stoning.
- He knew that Jesus had suffered as far as death on a cross.
- And friends, that is the same for us. We can look back at the suffering that Jesus endured as he went to the cross – so that we would not have to fear the consequences of sin and death.

- Yet there is more, Paul armed with this knowledge of what Jesus had done in the past – looked forward.
- He set his eyes and his hope on what was to come. And in suffering, to know that you will get through, and that there is something good before you, has to be an encouragement when going through suffering.
- Friends, one of the best things about faith in Jesus, especially when suffering – is to know that one day we will meet Jesus. It may happen when he returns, or it may

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happen after we have suffered and died – but we have before us a day when we will stand face to face with Jesus and live day to day eternally with him.

- That is hope.

PAUSE

- You know, over the last few weeks, the applications coming from our Bible passages have asked quite a lot of us – stand firm in faith, know your testimony, speak your testimony, defend your faith, do that boldly and if you don't know how to then get trained – all fairly challenging applications.
- In our passage today – I don't think it is really asking us to go out and do anything.
- It is simply saying: **Have faith in God – take courage, draw confidence, know God's comfort** - even in the storms of life.
- To know, it is well with your soul.

It is well with my Soul

Horatio, received his wife Anna's message 'Saved alone...'

In Acts, we see what it means to be saved, but we are not saved alone. Because of what Jesus has done, we are saved and get to experience the joy of that salvation together for all time.

Horatio and set off at once to be reunited with her.

It is said, that as he sailed over the very spot in the Atlantic Ocean where the ship carrying his family had sunk – he returned to his cabin and wrote the hymn 'It is well with my soul'

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll:
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord and Father,

Thank you for what you have done for us in Jesus. Thank you for giving us every reason to have faith in you and to take courage, draw confidence and know your comfort – even in the storms of life.

Keep our eyes fixed on what you have set before us.

In Jesus Name. AMEN.