

## Surviving the Storms of Life

### Acts 27:17-44

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-3-2010

## Introduction

I think most of you are convinced that there are many evidences that a major *economic* storm is brewing in America. Not all are convinced of this, but I am definitely convinced that we will be facing tough times in the future. It would be bad enough without health care and global warming agenda, but with those two programs and a few other Congressional programs in the wings, I think the signs of economic disaster are obvious. I don't see how even our resilient economy can endure the debt, the added taxes, the added layers of government control, and the anti-business implications of Al Gore's Global Warming agendas. And even some of the liberals are getting nervous. Several headlines have predicted that this will be the "Perfect Storm." From the movie you know that the Perfect Storm was not nice. It killed everyone. I'm not sure that it will be a perfect storm. In fact, I kind of doubt it will be that severe at all. But it would certainly be wise to start preparing yourself for some tough times. It's almost guaranteed that some kind of storm is coming.

And today I want to look at surviving the storms of life. That's not the only storm that some people will face. Some storms are of our own making, and others are not. There can be storms that tear apart families – storms of divorce, job loss, kids on drugs, and chronic illness. There can be storms that afflict businesses. But probably most of us have never faced a storm quite as bad as what Paul went through here. And I hope to bring you some practical encouragement through this passage. God has hugely encouraged my heart as I have meditated deeply on these verses.

## I. We have a duty to warn people of perceived dangers (v. 10)

Because we haven't been in the book of Acts for a while, let me give a brief review of what had happened in this brewing typhoon in the Mediterranean. Verse 10 shows Paul warning the crew, the centurion, and anyone who would listen, that it wasn't a smart move to be sailing in October. He wasn't prophesying here, but was making an informed observation based upon numerous trips, storms, and even shipwrecks that he had experienced. "...saying, **'Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our**

© Copyright 2010 by Phillip G. Kayser. Permission is granted to all readers to download, print, and distribute on paper or electronically any Sermons, provided that each reprint bear this copyright notice, current address, and telephone number, and provided that all such reproductions are distributed to the public without charge. They may not be sold or issued in book form, CD-ROM form, or microfiche without prior permission.

Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

**lives.”** It turns out that no life was lost. And again, this was not a prophecy; it was a wisdom perception. But Paul was giving a warning to people who were taking needless risk.

And I believe that we have a duty to warn people of perceived dangers as well. Of course, not everyone will listen. Some people have heard “wolf” cried so many times that they no longer pay attention to warnings. But this passage lists some other reasons why people ignore very legitimate warnings.

## **II. Why most people will ignore these warnings (vv. 9-13)**

### ***A. Time pressure (v. 9)***

The first reason is time pressure. Verse 9 says, “**Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over...**” etc. It was getting late, and they wanted to move on. People who are very goal oriented are so driven to get to their goal, that they will often take needless risks. I see it with crazy drivers on the road. I see it with investors who treat the stock market like a roulette table. Time pressures will make people do crazy things.

### ***B. Thinking they know better (v. 11)***

Thinking they knew better was another reason. Verse 11: “**Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul.**” Most people think disaster won’t happen to them. Sure, other ships have been shipwrecked during this time of season, but I think we can make it. Sure other people have gotten VD, but I’m not going to worry about it just this once. Sure statistics show that seatbelts save lives, but I don’t want anyone telling me what to do. There are any number of examples you could give of people who thought they knew better, and ended up with a perfect storm of health, disease, or other conditions on their hands.

### ***C. Inconvenience (v. 12)***

Inconvenience is an even bigger reason. Verse 12 speaks of Phoenix being a much more convenient spot to be in. And I believe that many Americans keep adding crazy debt simply because of convenience, or because cutting things out of their lives will be hugely *inconvenient*. Little does this crew realize that they will be facing far worse inconvenience by taking the risk than they would have by staying in Fair Havens.

***D. People don't like to be in the minority (v. 12b)***

Verse 12 gives two other reasons why people don't listen to warnings about the arrival of perfect storms. First, even if they worry a bit that the warnings are true, if the majority of people aren't listening, they feel safe somehow; or at least they feel uncomfortable standing against the majority. And verse 12 speaks of the majority disagreeing with Paul's warnings. We can certainly apply that in America, can't we?

***E. People have their hopes set on comfort (v. 12c)***

The other reason in verse 12 is desired comfort. I doubt Americans will trade in comfort for safety. They are too used to living grandly to take the kind of precautions and cuts that will enable them to weather an economic storm in America.

***F. Things aren't bad – yet (v. 13a)***

Verse 13 highlights yet another reason – things are really not that bad yet. It says, **“When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.”** At that particular moment they couldn't see any danger. The soft south wind, though an anomaly, was used to justify ignoring the warnings. And we see that all over America. If you haven't lost your job yet, what's the big deal? Things aren't that bad yet. The Feds have fixed things before; surely they will fix it again. It's a soft wind that they are trusting.

***G. They are blinded by desire (v. 13b)***

Verse 13 also mentions desire. Too many people are so blinded by their desires that they can't see clearly. How many pregnancies occur precisely because a teen is blinded by desire. Desire keeps us from thinking objectively. By the way, it's one of the reasons why I advocate a totally supervised courtship. It's not lack of trust in people. It's trusting what God's Word says about all human nature.

***H. They think they will be careful (v. 13c)***

And then finally, they think they will be careful. In verse 13 they plan to sail very close to the shore so as not to be swept out to sea. But subsequent events show that even this care was not enough to avoid the storm. It caught them *where there was no way to go back*.

And it is my fear that too many Christians in America will keep sailing forward straight into the disaster without taking the corrective actions

needed. In part I think it is because the church needs discipline. God says that judgment begins at the house of God, and it may very well be that before the church is brought to the end of its humanistic rope, it will have to suffer greatly. I pray that that is not the case, but I fear that it is.

### **III. How God brings people to the end of their rope (vv. 14-20)**

#### *A. Perfect storms (v. 14)*

Nevertheless, even *that* suffering is a blessing from God. God knows how to bring people to the end of their rope where they finally have to look to Him. And that brings us to the main passage we are going to be looking at today – dealing with the storm itself. There will be righteous Paul’s today who will suffer right along with the rest of the ship. And I first want to show how God creatively brings people to a place where they are willing to admit that they are wrong, to repent, and to take corrective action. We aren’t there yet in America. In fact, if anything, America is as arrogant as ever, and is headed 75 miles an hour down the highway into the storm. And so, this is actually a good time to be preaching on this passage.

Let’s begin at verse 14, which says, “**But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.**” It came suddenly, without warning, and it came shortly after everyone had been predicting a nice ride. Of course, all sailors knew that one of the rules of the road is that any travel on the Mediterranean after October 5 was extremely dangerous. And so there is a sense in which they deserved the storm that they were facing. Economists of today know full well how dangerous our present administration’s policies are; yet they have the audacity to say that because we have fair winds now, we will continue to have fair winds – that the economy is recovering. But a storm is coming sooner or later. It is coming. God’s laws of economics guarantee it.

#### *B. Bringing them to a sense of helplessness (v 15)*

Verse 15 says, “**So when the ship was caught and could not head into the wind, we let her drive.**” This typhoon was so strong that they were completely caught in its grip. They were now at the storm’s mercy as it started to blow them out to sea. I have a feeling that the centurion had a sinking feeling in his heart, wishing he had paid more attention to Paul, but it was now too late.

Americans are not in the storm yet. For the most part they don't have the sinking feeling of helplessness. There is still a great deal of trust in Messiah state. But if you look at countries that have gone through economic hyperinflationary storms – countries like Angola, Argentina, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Chile, and Zimbabwe, you will see all the telltale signs of disaster coming into our own country. In those hyper-inflationary countries, the citizens came to a place where they no longer trusted the ship of state. These feelings of utter helplessness make the citizens begin to regret trusting a Messianic state. You don't have a whole lot of trust in the state in Zimbabwe, Peru, or those other countries. So it won't be all bad when things begin to fall apart around our ears.

### ***C. Showing them that their frantic precautions won't work (vv. 16-19)***

#### **1. Trying to find leeward shelter at Clauda (v. 16)**

But unfortunately, things sometimes have to get worse before people get to that position. Often, when people are in the throws of a perfect storm, there are still those who are desperate enough to grasp for straws that they will grasp for anything. This was how Hitler came into power. The hyperinflationary economy of the Weimar Republic was absolutely out of control. My Grandpa lived through that, and the stories he told make your hair stand on end. You had to take wheelbarrows of money just to get a few groceries. And people wouldn't bother robbing you of the money, because it would be devalued even more within the hour. They would rob you of the few groceries that you had bought. It was terrible. And it made citizens give Hitler the right to disregard the constitution in the interests of national safety. So the stage of helplessness that we are talking about here is not always a precursor to repentance. Sometimes people just give even greater power to tyrants in those kinds of circumstances.

And in this passage we have one frantic effort thrown after another one in a dazed effort to try stay alive. Verse 16 shows them desperately trying to find shelter – “**And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda...**” This quick action secured them a few minutes to be able to achieve the next two frantic efforts to save their lives. And sometimes ungodly actions today will gain people some time, but it will never do away with the storm. As surely as the laws of meteorology work, so too the laws of economics work in a nation no matter how many emergency actions are taken.

## 2. Securing a life boat (v. 16)

The next quick action they took is in the second phrase in verse 16 - **“we secured the skiff with difficulty.”** This was to be their lifeboat. It had become so waterlogged from dragging behind the ship that it was very difficult to lift it in. But it gave them some sense of security. In one sense it is ridiculous. How will they survive in a dinghy, if they can’t survive in a ship?

## 3. Tying down the ship boards (v. 17)

Verse 16 goes on - **“When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship...”** The storm was so violent that it was threatening to tear the boards of the ship apart, so this was an ancient means of tightening everything up. They could see that they were quickly being blown out into the deep waves and they had to do something to keep the ship together. These cables were winched together to hold everything tight.

## 4. Storm sail to avoid Syrtis Sands (v. 17)

But the next phrase shows that despite their best efforts, they were being driven away from land and out into open water. It says, **“and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven.”** Obviously some time has transpired because the Syrtis Sands are a long ways away from Clauda. It was dangerous to have any sails flying, but it was even more dangerous to shipwreck on the Syrtis Sands like so many hundreds of ships before them had done. So they probably struck a tiny storm sail that gave a little bit of direction without capsizing the ship.

## 5. Throwing stuff overboard (v. 18)

Verse 18 - **“And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.”** We aren’t told what they threw overboard, but it was no doubt a great deal of their cargo because the next phrase says:

## 6. Throwing emergency tackle overboard (v. 19)

**“On the third day we threw the ship’s tackle overboard with our own hands.”** Many commentators believe that since the prisoners themselves were working on this, it must have been heavier than the crew could manage. This means that they probably threw overboard the ship’s mainyard, a huge spar, probably as long as the ship and any other heavy tackle. Since all of this was emergency gear, to throw it overboard indicates extreme measures to save their ship. You don’t usually get rid of this

emergency tackle. And frequently nations have had to resort to extreme measures to survive. Sometimes the measures are pointless and ridiculous, sometimes they are unethical, but it makes politicians and citizens feel like something is being done to stay afloat.

***D. Leaving them in the dark (v. 20)***

Verse 20 says that for many days they were in the dark. That in itself is depressing. Back in those days they didn't have GPS. They used the stars to guide them. And when day after day was completely overcast and dark, they had no way of knowing what direction they were going. Ignorance of what to do can be a scary thing. Ignorance of where you are can be a scary thing.

***E. Taking away human hope (v. 20b)***

**“Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.”**

I see all of this as the hand of God at work in bringing a boat to be ready to hear Paul's message. When all else fails, Christians need to be ready to stand in the gap and to give the message that is needed. So far America has not been willing to listen to the Bible's radical solutions. They aren't interested in Biblical Blueprints. But when every other option runs dry, Christians had better be prepared to stand in the gap and to give that message.

And just as God worked with that ship to bring them to the end of their rope, God works with nations to bring nations to stop depending upon their own resources. It is interesting that God has used some of the hyperinflation in other countries to lead many people to despair of socialism and to begin to take seriously God's claims. May He do so in our own nation. There have been times when Christians have been able to stand in the gap, but there have probably been just as many times when Christians were part of the problem. People are most ready to hear about God's hope when they have lost all hope.

## **IV. Making the most of your perfect storm**

***A. Call to repentance where necessary (v. 21)***

So how do we work *with* God in making the most of the storms that we find ourselves in? God is clearly at work in America. We don't want to fight against Him. We want to get on board with what He is doing, like Paul

did here. So under Roman numeral IV, I want to look at some steps for making the most out of our perfect storms.

I would say, the first thing we should do is call people to repentance and back to the Lord. That might mean calling ourselves to repentance first. Kathy and I have had to repent of at least one bad economic decision that we have made, and take steps to survive the storm despite that bad decision. But America needs to not only know solutions, it needs to know what it has done wrong. Otherwise it is going to keep clinging to the wrong thing.

Verse 21 was a rebuke. It was a reminder of what they had done wrong. It may seem like a petty “I told you so,” but it was not. Paul realizes that there are no real solutions until people repent of their failures. Otherwise the solution is simply a Band-Aid, and once the storm subsides, people will resort to their old bad actions that led to the storm in the first place.

Look at verse 21: **“But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, ‘Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.’”** This is what Ron Paul has been saying to America – “You should have listened to my advice before.” And there are many, many people who are now taking his economic message seriously. Paul has credibility to speak because he had been willing to warn before the disaster happened. And in the same way, if we are to be credible in calling people to repentance during after the perfect storm, we had better start speaking and acting like we believe judgment is coming. This was not Paul’s first call to change direction. He had started to do so all the way back in verse 10 when his message was not popular. We need to be willing to do the same.

### ***B. Bear verbal witness to God (vv. 21-26)***

In fact, his whole speech in verses 21-26 is a call to bear verbal witness to God in our disasters. That’s point B. These people were pagans who didn’t believe in Paul’s God, but that didn’t stop Paul from talking about God. In this speech he speaks about God, about God’s angel, the reality of miracles, God’s control of history, his guarantee of the future, and then down in verse 35 he prays over the food out loud in the presence of everyone. He is not ashamed to bear verbal witness to God. He is open about his Christianity in public affairs just as Daniel was in the Old Testament. This is essential.

You see, when life is out of control and nothing seems to be working, people are much more open to hear about a God who is in control. We



should not hesitate about speaking God's Word into the lives of those on the ship of America before, during, and after the disaster. God is preparing people to be ready for the Gospel and ready for the blueprints of His Word. Once they are brought to a state of hopelessness, they may have the humility (God willing) to listen to that word.

***C. Put off fear and bank on the promises of God (vv. 22-25)***

The third thing that I see Paul doing to make the most of this storm was to put off fear and to bank on the promises of God. It's clear that Paul had times of fear as well. Let's read verses 22-26.

**Acts 27:22 And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.**

**Acts 27:23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,**

**Acts 27:24 saying, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you."**

**Acts 27:25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.**

**Acts 27:26 However, we must run aground on a certain island."**

The angel would not have told Paul, "**Do not be afraid**" if Paul had not had some fear. Most of us succumb to fear during our own times of storm. And it is something that we daily need to put off. When we live by fear we cannot live by faith. Don't allow yourself to be gripped by fear. Heed the admonition of this angel – "**Do not be afraid.**" Unfortunately, some of the warnings about disaster in America are not designed to instill faith in God. They are designed to make people panic and fear and not live by faith.

Now it is true that God has not given us these specific promises of rescue, but He has given us all the promises we need to be able to walk by faith. He's given us blueprints. The problem is that many people just want to be bailed out – they don't want to follow the blueprints. But God has given us blueprints, and promises. We can pray promises like 3 John 2 – "**that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.**"

***D. Remember whom you serve and to whom you belong (v. 23)***

Related to this is the need to constantly remember and remind ourselves whom we serve and to whom we belong. Verse 23 speaks of "**the God to whom I belong and whom I serve.**" What a powerful testimony to the fact that Paul was merely a steward of his life. As a steward he knew that his life did not belong to him; it belonged to God. And when storms come

into our lives we need to continually remind ourselves that God is sovereign, we need to submit to His chastenings, and continue to serve Him faithfully to the best of our ability. Our goal is to be faithful; it is not simply to hold onto our stuff. Just the inward acknowledgement of this fact helps us to have courage. I love this chapter. It is so practical.

### ***E. Trust and obey (v. 25-26)***

#### **1. Notice the promise of “no loss of life,” and that they “must” be shipwrecked (v. 26)**

Look at verses 25-26:

**Acts 27:25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.**

**Acts 27:26 However, we must run aground on a certain island.”**

Sometimes storms are simply tests of our faith and loyalty. Will we say, “I believe God”? It may be that your storms are simply a test of whether you will have faith and be obedient in the face of despair. This was literally the case when Jesus sent His disciples across the lake while He went up into a mountain to pray. He was deliberately testing their faith before He walked out onto the water to them. Would they trust Him and obey Him?

On another occasion Jesus asks them to take Him across the lake. This time *He* goes with them. On the way a storm hit them making the waves so big that it threatened to swamp their little boat. The disciples were terrified, but Jesus slept peacefully. This mystified the disciples. How could such trouble come when the Lord was in the boat with them? And how could their Lord sleep during such trouble? He rebuked their lack of faith. I’m afraid that my faith would be staggering too, just as Paul was tempted to get afraid on this ship. But the point is that God sometimes deliberately brings storms into our lives to give us an opportunity to trust Him and continue to be faithful to Him. Paul did that. He believed God would do exactly what He said He would do, and Paul was willing to trust and obey.

#### **2. Yet notice the equally certain loss of life if they didn’t hang together (v. 31)**

I want you to notice a striking contrast in this passage. Verses 22-26 give a categorical promise of no loss of life, and that they must run aground on some island. But contrast that with verse 31: **“Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, ‘Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.’”** Just because God had promised that no one would be lost did not

mean that they could be foolish or fail to act responsibly. If those sailors had left, they would just as surely as perished. How can both be true?

You see, though we believe God predestines all things, we also believe that we must be responsible if the predestined ends are to be accomplished. That is no contradiction because God ordains the means as well as the ends. But I think that Paul's statement here is a marvelous balance that we must hang onto – *never be indifferent to responsibility and human action simply because you believe in God's sovereignty. And on the flip side, never lack faith in God's sovereignty simply because you are commanded to be active.* Both components in the phrase “trust and obey” are absolutely essential. Let me repeat that statement: *Never be indifferent to responsibility and human action because you believe in God's sovereignty. And on the flip side, never lack faith in God's sovereignty simply because you are commanded to be active.* Both components in the phrase “trust and obey” are absolutely essential. And I think this passage illustrates that so well.

***F. Realize that God's provision does not do away with the reality of danger (v. 27,31)***

For example, God's promised provision did not do away with the reality of the dangers of both sea and land. In verses 27 through the end of the chapter there was a real danger of being destroyed on reefs and rocks. Security in Jesus does not do away with the need to deal with real danger. The Christian life is a constant call to balance. And I believe both the trust and the actions that Paul calls for in these verses illustrate that balance.

***G. Realize that God's provision does not do away with the need to be responsible***

**1. Took soundings (v. 28)**

In your outline I list out some of the responsibilities and actions that are prudent actions that needed to be taken. In verse 28 they take soundings and keep finding that the water is getting shallower. It would be foolish in such circumstances to say, “Don't worry about sounding your depth because we can trust in God.” But the same is true of our financial condition. It would be utter foolishness to ignore signs of economic disaster with the phrase, “We are just trusting God.” It is prudent to take soundings of your troubled waters and make the best judgments of corrective actions that you possibly can.

## 2. Dropped anchors (v. 29)

Verse 29 shows that they dropped anchor, fearing that they were about to be dashed on the rocks. And they prayed.

## 3. Cutting off bad escapes (vv. 30-32)

Verses 30-32 show that Paul insists that bad ways of handling the problem must be cut off if they are to survive. He does not allow them to passively wait for God's promise to be fulfilled. No way. Look at verses 30-32.

**Acts 27:30 And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow,**

**Acts 27:31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."**

**Acts 27:32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.**

Some people are so passive when it comes to God's sovereignty, that if they were in Paul's position, they would have simply said, "O well. God has promised that no one will lose his life. That settles it. I don't need to move a finger." But that is hyper Calvinism, and Paul has no part of hyper Calvinism. Nor did Calvin. Calvin was a Paulinist; he was Biblicist. He believed that it is just as imperative to believe that our actions are essential and significant as it is to believe and trust in God's total sovereignty. This is why when hyper Calvinists told William Carey that if God wanted the heathen saved he didn't need missionaries to preach to them, William Carey ignored them. He knew that Romans not only spoke of God's predestination; it also asked the question, "**How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher. And how shall they preach unless they are sent?**"

## 4. Eating (v. 33-34)

Why did Paul have everyone eat in verses 33-34? There may have been other reasons, but two stand out in my mind: First, Paul says, "**This is for your survival.**" If they didn't eat they would have been too weak to swim to shore. He tells them to eat because, "This is for your survival." It's another example of human responsibility.

Second, Paul wanted them to eat, "**since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.**" There is God's divine sovereignty; His guarantee. In other words, you can eat as an expression that you believe God's word. Sometimes our actions show whether we really believe or not. If God told

you, “I will save you from this burning house,” you wouldn’t sit in the flames waiting for God to miraculously save you. You would run! Why? Because God says the house is on fire and you need to be saved from the fire! If you didn’t run no one would take you seriously when you said that you believed the house was on fire. But you would run trusting God to deliver you from the falling beams, and the exploding flames. You would do what you could.

I think most people would understand that in the case of a burning house, but they misapply God’s sovereign promises in so many other areas of life. They refuse to get insurance, or refuse to save up an emergency fund, or refuse to get out of debt, all the while rationalizing that they are trusting God. Well, they only trust half of God’s statement. We need the same balance that Paul shows in this chapter – trust and obey; trust and be responsible.

#### **5. Lightening the load (v. 38)**

And there were other actions of responsibility that they took. In verse 38 they throw out even more wheat into the ocean to make the ship more buoyant and to overcome some of the problems of leakage that had no doubt already started happening.

#### **6. Attempting to land (v. 39-40)**

In verses 39-40 they try to land the ship. They aren’t successful in getting in as close as they would have liked, but they tried.

#### **7. They still had to swim (vv. 43-44)**

And then verses 43-44 shows that they still had to swim. I hope by now you are convinced that taking corrective actions for any of our problems is not a failure to trust in God’s sovereignty. God is sovereign in opening and closing the womb, but that does not mean that we cannot do surgeries to correct problematic fallopian tubes. Certainly God can do a miracle of healing just like Jesus did a miracle when He said, “Peace, be still” and calmed the storm one time. But more often than not, God does not do the miracle. He *prosper the work of our hands* just as He did in this chapter. That’s why we pray in Psalm 90, “**Establish the work of our hands.**”

Certainly God can provide miraculously for us during an economic downturn, but I believe this passage indicates that we ought to do everything that is in our power to keep our own ships from sinking. This might mean

downsizing. It might mean adding some emergency savings, or investing in tools and other tradable goods. It might mean getting out of debt. Some precautions will be possible for some of you and may be impossible for others. But if you do everything that you are humanly capable of doing while trusting God, then you don't need to worry about a Paul having to warn you in verse 31 that if you don't do such and such you will not survive. You have already taken what corrective actions you can, and you can trust God to come through on His promises.

Certainly God could do a miracle and calm the storm in America by converting every congressman and senator. He did that in Nineveh. I sometimes pray that He would do that today. I don't ever doubt that God *could* do that. But I think ordinarily we need to be working hard at getting the rascals out of office. These men are actively destroying our economy and running roughshod over our constitution, and it behooves us to contribute to good candidates who will run against them. We need to be involved in politics. I simply don't believe a person when he says he is trusting God if he is not doing something to make a difference on his ship. That's not trust; it is disobedience. This is a fantastic passage of correction for those who are passive.

If you examine all the storms of life in light of this passage, I think you will find it gives correction to a lot of the ways that we tend to respond to storms. Too many of us are passive. Others are fearful. Others are paralyzed. Others have given up hope. But we need more Pauls who know how to trust and obey.

## **Conclusion**

### **1. Identify your hope stealers**

Let me conclude this morning by mentioning three other things in this passage that I didn't get fit into the outline. The first is simply an exercise that you might want to do on your own. There were several hope stealers in this passage for Paul and the other sailors. But I think it would be helpful for you to think about the hope stealers that you are facing right now. Perhaps it is the sinking feeling that you are running out of finances and are about to be destroyed on the reefs of bankruptcy. Write that down. If it's stealing your hope, you need to be aware of it and deal with it. Perhaps the hope stealer is the realization that your spouse will never change. The very act of writing it down may show you how silly it is to take on God's role by trying to change someone's heart. Perhaps your hope has been destroyed by your experience of repeated failure in dealing with your own besetting sin. There are any

number of hope stealers that can make us want to give up. When all hope had been stolen from the men in verse 20, Paul knew that he had to take action to try to bring back hope. If they had given up they would have sunk for sure.

**2. When you give hope it encourages, gives renewed energy, gives purpose, takes us through dark times, and helps us look beyond the present.**

And that's the second thing that I want to address in the conclusion. Fathers, this is especially an admonition to you, though every one of us can be involved in the ministry of giving hope. When you see hope stealers ravaging your families, it is very important that you try to restore hope. As can be seen from this chapter, when people begin to get a glimmer of hope, it encourages them. Verse 36 says, "**Then they were all encouraged...**" Renewed hope also gives renewed energy. These men who had given up even trying, began once again engaging in the actions of point G once Paul had given them hope. They had renewed energy. Renewing hope gives people purpose to live again. It takes them through the dark times, and it helps them to look beyond the present. Don't be a hope stealer. Instead, be a hope giver. It is critical to the health of our families.

**3. Three anchors we can hold onto are 1) God's presence – storms cannot hide God's face from you (vv. 21-23), 2) God's purpose – storms cannot change God's plans for you (v. 24), and God's promise – storms cannot ultimately destroy a child of God (vv. 25-26).**

The last thing I would like you to take home from this passage are three anchors for your soul. These are anchors of hope. The first anchor is God's presence. In verses 21-23 they are out in the middle of the sea, *lost* as far as they are concerned. Yet they aren't lost to God. God sends an angel to talk to Paul. The angel knows exactly where Paul is. He must have had GPS coordinates or something. But you are never beyond the reach of God. Though you may not be able to see God's face in the midst of the storm, God is right there with you, and you can take comfort in that. And if you don't have a constant sense of God's presence in your life, I would encourage you to get the old, old book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, by Brother Lawrence. It teaches you how to live what John Calvin called, *Coram Deo*, or before the face of God. The more you realize God's constant presence in your life, the less you will fear the storms, the more hope you

will have, and the more you will be ready to help others through their messes rather than being an emotional mess yourself.

The second anchor for your soul is God's purpose for your life. Verse 24 says, "**Do not be afraid Paul: you must be brought before Caesar.**" There was God's purpose for Paul. He must be brought before Caesar. God has a purpose for every one of your lives, and it is a good purpose. God's purpose for you cannot be thwarted by the storms of life. In fact, those storms will help you to move toward that purpose.

The third anchor for our souls is God's promises. In verses 25-26 God told Paul that not a soul would perish. Paul knew that they still had to be responsible, but God's promises brought great comfort and encouragement to him. And there are numerous promises in God's Word for our nation, for the church at large, for our families. And we need to get those promises memorized, and begin claiming them.

Now let me caution you here. These three anchors won't guarantee that you will not suffer. Paul suffered in those cold, miserable conditions. Those three anchors won't guarantee that you won't lose everything. This ship lost everything that it owned. So don't have a Pollyanna perspective that says, "I won't have any pain or any loss."

But having these three anchors will help you to benefit from such suffering and loss. They will keep you from getting bitter. They will make your testimony be a credible testimony that may win loved ones to Christ, even as Paul led many of these people to Christ on Malta. These anchors will give you joy, confidence, courage, and peace in the face of life's bitter winds and even when clinging to the wreckage as you try to swim to shore. Life can be tough, but these anchors help us from losing hope and giving up. And they will help you to press into God's purposes for your life.

If your only goal during storms is comfort and survival, then this is not a chapter for you. But if your goal is to glorify God in the storms that you face, and to bear fruit, and be drawn closer to Him, then you will gain much help by meditating on this chapter even more deeply than we have been able to do this morning. It's a wonderful chapter during times of trouble. May the God of grace encourage you just as He encouraged the men on that ship. Amen.



# Surviving the Storms of Life

## Acts 27:17-44

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 1-3-2010

### Introduction

- I. We have a duty to warn people of perceived dangers (v. 10)
- II. Why most people will ignore these warnings (vv. 9-13)
  - A. Time pressure (v. 9)
  - B. Thinking they know better (v. 11)
  - C. Inconvenience (v. 12)
  - D. People don't like to be in the minority (v. 12b)
  - E. People have their hopes set on comfort (v. 12c)
  - F. Things aren't bad – yet (v. 13a)
  - G. They are blinded by desire (v. 13b)
  - H. They think they will be careful (v. 13c)
- III. How God brings people to the end of their rope (vv. 14-20)
  - A. Perfect storms (v. 14)
  - B. Bringing them to a sense of helplessness (v. 15)
  - C. Showing them that their frantic precautions won't work (vv. 16-19)
    1. Trying to find leeward shelter at Claudia (v. 16)
    2. Securing a life boat (v. 16)
    3. Tying down the ship boards (v. 17)
    4. Storm sail to avoid Syrtis Sands (v. 17)
    5. Throwing stuff overboard (v. 18)
    6. Throwing emergency tackle overboard (v. 19)
  - D. Leaving them in the dark (v. 20)
  - E. Taking away human hope (v. 20b)
- IV. Making the most of your perfect storm
  - A. Call to repentance where necessary (v. 21)
  - B. Bear verbal witness to God (vv. 21-26)
  - C. Put off fear and bank on the promises of God (vv. 22-25)
  - D. Remember whom you serve and to whom you belong (v. 23)
  - E. Trust and obey (v. 25-26)
    1. Notice the promise of “no loss of life,” and that they “must” be shipwrecked (v. 26)
    2. Yet notice the equally certain loss of life if they didn't hang together (v. 31)
  - F. Realize that God's provision does not do away with the reality of danger (v. 27,31)
  - G. Realize that God's provision does not do away with the need to be responsible
    1. Took soundings (v. 28)
    2. Dropped anchors (v. 29)
    3. Cutting off bad escapes (vv. 30-32)
    4. Eating (v. 33-34)
    5. Lightening the load (v. 38)
    6. Attempting to land (v. 39-40)
    7. They still had to swim (vv. 43-44)

### Some take-home applications

- How have you warned others of the storms we will face?
- Are you willing to face discomfort to survive the storm?



- What other points under II have kept you from making godly precautions?
- What are some concrete steps you have taken to survive the economic storm in America?
- If God has sovereignly put you onto the storm tossed ship (like Paul), think of the opportunities that God may be holding out before you to bear verbal witness to God.
- What are some specific ways that you have used “trust” in God's sovereignty as an excuse for irresponsibility? Take time to repent of it before the Lord.
- How have you been stealing hope from your family or congregation?
- Write down any other applications on the back.



### Conclusion

1. Identify your hope stealers
2. When you give hope it encourages, gives renewed energy, gives purpose, takes us through dark times, and helps us look beyond the present.
3. Three anchors we can hold onto are 1) God's presence – storms cannot hide God's face from you (vv. 21-23), 2) God's purpose – storms cannot change God's plans for you (v. 24), and God's promise – storms cannot ultimately destroy a child of God (vv. 25-26).