

## Weather the Storms of Life

### Introduction:

- I. Adversity comes in many forms and fashions. These perplexing predicaments seem to come at the most inconvenient times. The frustrating thing is that adversity does not need an invitation to invade our lives. One moment life appears to be quiet and peaceful, and then the next moment we find ourselves caught in the middle of a storm. For some life is just one storm after another. You wake up in a storm, go to work in a storm and come home to a storm. But if you are a child of God, the good news is with the help of God, the love of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you can weather the storms of life.
  
- II. In Acts 27 we find Paul on a ship caught in a violent storm. I must pause to point out that it was a situation that was very avoidable. Paul was on his way to Rome to stand before the judgment seat of Caesar. The ship he was on made its way from Caesarea to the island of Crete, landing at a small harbor on the southern coast of the island called Fair Havens. Because sailing in the Mediterranean Sea at this time of year was very dangerous, Paul advised the centurion that they stay where they were (**Acts 27:9-15**). Why were they in this situation? It was because they refused sound advice and took an ill-advised journey into dangerous territory. But we can all relate to that, can't we? Many of the storms of life are caused when we set sail on a precarious course, ignoring the sound advice of those who know better. How many times has a parent told a child not to, but the child does so anyway and finds himself in a storm? How many times have people been advised not to go to a certain place or consort with certain people, and yet have ignored that advice only to get caught in a storm? Like the storm that Paul's ship was caught in, many of the storms of life are self-induced and could be avoided with a little sound judgment.

But regardless of the reason why, Paul now finds himself caught in a storm. And this is not just any storm, but one that is so severe that ultimately everyone on the ship gives up hope of survival (**vers. 18-20**). But Paul is a faithful child of God! Thus, in the midst of the storm, Paul gets a message of hope from his Father (**vers. 21-26**).

- III. From this text, I want to share with you four anchors that can help us weather the storms of life. We all have moments where we feel like we're in the midst of a storm, don't we? Perhaps there's a storm brewing over your life right now. Maybe it's a stormy marriage. Maybe you're married to someone who argues, fusses and fights with you all the time or maybe YOU'RE the one precipitating the arguing, fussing and the fighting. But

regardless of who is at fault, some days you feel like nothing will ever change and that your marriage is a shipwreck and there is no hope.

Or maybe there's another type of storm brewing in your house. Maybe it's a stormy relationship with a child who rebels against your authority all the time. After months of dealing with this, you're not sure if there anything more you can say or do. You feel like there is no hope.

Maybe your storm is job related, finance related or health related. Or maybe you feel battered and storm-tossed and you have no idea why you feel that way. You can't put a finger on it. All you know is that you feel desperate and discouraged and it seems that there is no hope.

Well listen to me: when Paul was in the midst of a storm, God told him not to fear. Why? He didn't have to fear because God was going to help him survive. And if you are a child of God, I want you to know that your heavenly Father will help you too. I don't care what the storm is or how severe it may be. It might be the perfect storm, but God can help you. God can anchor your life. So then, let's look at four anchors that can help us weather the storms of life.

## **Lessons:**

### **I. The Presence of God.**

*"For there stood by me this night the angel of God..." (ver. 23).*

In a world full of adversity, this is good news. God stands by His children. God, ladies and gentlemen, is always near. I am reminded of the preacher who questioned a boy about the presence of God. The preacher said to him, *"Son, I will give you an apple if you can tell me where God is".* The boy looked at the preacher, and said, *"Preacher, I will give you a whole barrel of apples if you can tell me where God isn't."*

Listen to me: the calmness of Paul in this life-threatening and stress-filled ordeal is a glaring testimony to the power of God's presence. The presence of God served as an anchor for Paul, keeping him steady in an unsteady environment. Those with Paul were in a state of panic, but Paul was in a state of peace. Those with Paul were concerned, but Paul was confident. Why? Because he knew that God was standing by. Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, when God is standing by, there is no need to be concerned when the circumstances of life turn dreary. When God is standing by there is no need to panic when your situation becomes precarious. And as God's children there is one thing we can be sure about—God is standing by (**Duet. 31:7-8**).

*Isa 41:10*

*Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God...*

*Isa 43:2*

*When thou pass through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walk through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

*Ps 23:4*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

Listen: through His Word God tells us that no matter what kind of trouble tries to trounce us; no matter what kind of trial tries to take us out, we don't have anything to worry about because He is going to be with us. God says things might get hot from time to time, but you won't burn up. Things might get a little deep once in a while, but I won't let you drown. I'm going to be standing by. That's what God tells us through his Word. And it was this "standing by" that served as an anchor for Paul in the midst of the storm. Yes, there will be storms, but through it all, God will be present with us. Let that truth serve as an anchor for your soul.

## **II. Our Relationship to God.**

*"...whose I am and whom I serve" (ver. 23).*

There are two things that Paul remembered during this storm.

### **A. He belonged to God.**

This is true with all of us who are Christians. We are God's possession (**1 Pet. 2:9**).

The Greek word translated *peculiar* literally points to something that has been acquired. This comes out in some of the later translations of this verse. For example, the NKJV says that we are God's "*own special people*." The NASB says that we are "*God's own possession*." And the NIV says that we are "*a people belonging to God*." That's what we are, ladies and gentlemen. We are a people belonging to God. It is one of the great truths of the gospel of Christ because it points to the watchful eye of God. One thing we can be sure about during a storm is that God is watching out for us. Why? He watches out for us because we belong to Him (*e.g. of how I treat my car as compared to a rented car – Isa 43:1*).

### **B. He was a servant of God.**

Did you see that in Paul's statement? Paul said, "...whose I am, and whom I serve..." Do you know why it was so easy for Paul to accept the divine message of God that said everything was going to be alright? It was because Paul was a servant of God. Serving God brings us closer to Him and builds our confidence in Him. And let me tell you something, a truly faithful servant, is not going to allow anyone or anything to cause him to be disloyal. A faithful servant is not going to stop serving because some difficult times pervade his life. Instead he is going to remain anchored to God, continuing in His Word and His ways (**2 Cor. 11:23ff**).

And so the message is, realize your relationship to God. Realize you are a servant of God and be about the business of serving Him and that will keep you anchored when the weather turns tempestuous.

### III. The Word of God.

*"Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar..." (ver. 24).*

Paul knew, ladies and gentlemen, that not one person on that ship was going to perish in this storm. Why? Was it because the storm wasn't real? No sir! This storm was very real; in fact, it was so real that ultimately the ship itself would be destroyed. There was only one reason that Paul had confidence that he and everyone else would survive this storm. It was simply because God said it. God's Word was enough for him! You see, Paul knew that God could not lie (**Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Heb. 6:17-19; Tit. 1:2**). Here is the question: Do we believe God's Word? When the sun disappears for a little while, do we believe God's Word? When the clouds of life start to formulate over our heads, and the weather turns a little chilly, do we still believe God's Word? For Paul the Word of God was an anchor because he believed it (**ver. 25**).

Do you believe God's Word when He says He will take care of you? If so, don't worry when your financial situation doesn't look so bright. Just turn to Matt. 6 and hear what God says about providing the necessities of life and believe the Word of God.

Do you believe God's Word when He says He is going to give you a home in heaven? If so, don't worry when the doctor gives you some bad news. Just turn to 2 Tim. 4 and hear what God says giving us a crown of righteousness and believe the Word of God.

Do you believe God's Word when He says vengeance belongs to Him? If so, don't strike back when someone mistreats you. Just turn to Rom. 12

and hear what God says about overcoming evil with good and believe the Word of God. You see the Word of God can serve as an anchor for us but we must first believe it.

Illustration:

A traveling man came one night to a wide, frozen river which he needed to cross to make it to his destination. The problem was he was too afraid to walk on the ice because he didn't believe it would hold him. As he contemplated his dilemma, others who knew the area well walked across the frozen ice repeatedly without fear. Finally the man got on his hands and knees and began to crawl his way across the solid ice. When he reached the middle of the frozen stream he was startled by a sound in the distance, and caught sight of a man driving a team of horses, pulling a wagon loaded with supplies; yet there he was on his hands and knees inching forward because he didn't believe the ice would hold.

The problem with us sometimes is that we don't believe the Word of God is going to hold. But I am here to tell you that it will. The Word of God will never fail (**1 Pet. 1:23-25**).

#### **IV. Trusting God's Will.**

*"Howbeit, we must be cast upon a certain island" (ver. 26).*

God's Word is a revealing of God's will and whether we understand the will of God or not, we must commit ourselves to it. It's only when we abide in the will of God that we can survive the storms of life. What we read in this story in Acts 27 may not have been the way Paul wanted God to work things out. He probably didn't want to end up on a remote island in the midst of the Mediterranean Sea. Paul could have said as God revealed this thing to him, "God, we don't have to go through all that. You're God! All you have to do is speak the word and the storm will dissipate and disappear. You have control of nature. You command the waves and the wind. Just save me right now and let's get on to Rome." Paul could have said that, but he didn't. Paul simply accepted the will of God. Paul trusted the wisdom of God and knew that God must have His reasons for wanting them to end up on that island and so he just accepted it and realized that survival depended upon doing God's will (**vers. 30-31**).

And sometimes going through the storm itself is a part of God's will. The text shows us that Paul had to continue to in the storm for while before he was saved. Verse 19 mentions the third day and it is clear from the text that Paul addressed the men sometime near that period. But then verse twenty seven refers to the fourteenth night. It is well possible that Paul continued in the storm almost two weeks after God assured him of his survival. Why did God do that? It was His will. Paul had no way of knowing why, only that it was God's will. Paul couldn't possibly know why

God waited so long to deliver him, or why God wanted him on that island, but he knew it was God's will. And do you know what happened on that island? Miracles were performed by God through Paul and people had the opportunity to witness the wonderful power of God. It is very possible, though not mentioned in the text, that many of the islanders accepted the gospel. If it wasn't for the storm and the will of God, none of that would have happened.

Sometimes the storms of life are meant to help us accomplish the will of God. Sometimes God has a purpose in sending us through a storm. It might be to make us stronger or it might be to have a positive influence on some else, but our job is simply to accept God's will. It is when we can approach the storms of life with that mentality, that the will of God can be an anchor in our life.

**Conclusion:**

So there you have it. Four anchors that can help ground us when life gets rough (presence of God, our relationship with God, the Word of God and the Will of God). God has given us the anchors. Our job is to believe God.