

Acts 28:1-31

“Showing And Sharing Jesus”

“Storms,” that was the topic at hand in our time together last week, being “exceedingly tempest tossed” in life. Not literally so much as perhaps spiritually, or emotionally, even circumstantially. Now with Paul it was a literal situation, but we were looking to glean some personal application out of the seeming unfortunate situation that he found himself in, along with 275 other men on board that ship on route to Rome.

“Storms,” what’s the point, what’s their purpose, why is it that we’re subjected to them, and at times beaten upon *by* them? Because one thing for sure, they blow into all of our lives, Jesus spoke about that, welcome to this life, hard times visit us all, it rains on the just and the unjust alike. Now obviously if you’re an unbeliever the ultimate aim that God has for your life is to get you to look *to*, believe *in* and be saved *by* Jesus Christ and Unfortunately it’s not generally until we’re exceedingly tempest tossed in life that we give up all hope of our own and are willing to be open *before* and cry out *to* the Lord, that we might be saved. and Because God is way more concerned for our eternal well being, than our temporal comfort, He’ll allow those tough times to blow into our lives that we might finally come to the end of ourselves, cry out *to* Him and surrender our lives *before* Him.

As believers there are other reasons God might send us into rough waters, if you take notes you might want to jot them down. If you thought long enough you’d probably come up with more than 4, but I’m going to give you 4 reasons that God might bring you into the storm, or allow rough waters to rock your world.

There are at times #1 Storms Of Correction. You could talk to Jonah about those kinds of storms. You recall God called him to Nineveh; he headed to Tarshish, the completely opposite direction. Now he wasn’t lost, he was in rebellion; he was running from the clear-cut direction of God for his life. You know the story, a storm broke out, and he *knew* what it was all about, he told the sailors on the boat that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord! One problem, you can’t flee from the presence of the Lord, you can’t escape His presence, no matter where you go, there He is. and He has a plan for your life that He desires you walk in, and He has this way of not *forcing* us beyond our will, but bringing us to that place where *we are* willing, you know what I mean? In other words, the alternative to His will is so horrendous sometimes, (i.e. huge storms and hanging out in the belly of a fish with seaweed wrapped around your head as its stomach acids slowly bleach your skin and remove all the hair from your body as they slowly digest you,) that you find yourself willing and *wanting* to follow God’s will for your life. So sometimes when I’m in rebellion, walking after my own will rather than God’s for my life, He’ll bring about a storm of correction, to get me back on track, pursuing His path for my life again.

There are also #2 Storms Of Perfection. Jesus sent His boys into a storm on a # of occasions, perhaps you remember Him sleeping in the boat while His disciples were freaking out afraid that they were all going to die. Jesus wakes up, stands up, rebukes His disciples for their little faith, then rebukes the storm, and there's a calm. He wasn't seeking to correct them, but to perfect their faith, increase their trust in Him. You recall after He fed the 5,000 He sent them into another storm, and in the middle of the night He came walking to them on the water. He took Peter even deeper into the Storm, calling him out to walk on the water with Him, but as you know Peter "the rock" began to sink like a stone. and We often get a kick out of that, but I don't recall any of the other boys out there! But once again the Lord lifted him up, re-established his footing and rebuked his lack of faith.

In essence saying, "Haven't you figured out that you can trust Me yet?" So sometimes storms aren't for our correction, but for our perfection. We spoke a bit about this last week, they sort of gauge for us where we're at spiritually by the way we react internally. and They provide opportunity for me to get a grip on that and continue to grown in my understanding *of* the Lord, and my trust *in* the Lord. His timing is always perfect; He always comes through just when we need Him to.

#3 There are, Storms Of Protection, "What do you mean?" Noah could tell you about that particular kind of storm. Sometimes there are some things, or some people who drift into our lives that are no good *for* us, and ultimately only be detrimental *to* us in our relationship with Christ. They tempt us to compromise, and lower our standard, and we begin to drift away ourselves from that 1st love relationship. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, how did that grace appear? A big portion of that grace evidenced itself in the storm, washing away all the carnality, and sin that was closing in *around* him, threatening to *swamp* him. 40 days and nights it was breaking loose around him, sometimes God brings a storm into our lives to "blow away" those fair weather friends who are in no way helpful to you but in several ways harmful to you. To drown them out of your life, and send them on down the river that you might continue wholly devoted to Him. It wasn't a storm of correction, or even perfection, but of protection, that you might remain pure in your relationship to Him.

Finally #4 There are Storms Of Direction, they're not for you at all, but for others around you, that God would have you minister to that had it not been for that circumstance, that storm, you'd have never found yourself where you're at right where God needed you to be that you might minister to another on His behalf. That's where Paul finds himself presently; God had a little detour form him on his way to Rome. There was a little island called "Malta" that God wanted to bring the gospel to, so they were blown off course to the tune of 5-600 miles so that Paul might establish a ministry in Malta. You see God had everything break loose; literally, the ship broke loose, busted up, what did that mean? That they weren't going anywhere for a while, and Paul found himself in position to minister to these people that he'd have otherwise never met.

So when you're sitting around thinking, "I can't *believe* I got fired," or "Why in the world did she/he dump me like that?" Or whatever, don't be blown away, God's just redirecting your course, changing your direction, so that you might be in a position to minister in some way or to someone (or perhaps group of people) that had you continued on your current course, you'd have never gotten there, or met them as the case may be. Storms of correction, of perfection, of protection, and of direction.

As we enter in to ch 28, the ship has turned to shrapnel, it's just all busted up and everyone on board has just swam for their lives, or floated on chunks of the boat up on to the beach.

Vs1-6

Now you recall from vs 20 of ch 27 that having not seen the sun or stars for many days, that they were lost. So it wasn't until they all washed up on shore that they were told where they were, which was an island called Malta. and In vs 2 it speaks of the unusual kindness of the "natives," perhaps your bible says, "Barbarians" natives would be a better translation. Because it's not saying that they were uncivilized savage kind of people, all it means is that they didn't speak Greek. Any people who didn't speak Greek were called "Barbarians" so that when we read in Col of putting on Christ, "...where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all." Col 3:11 We understand that he's not saying, "If you're civilized, or savages, none of that matters" which is true, it doesn't matter; Christ loves us and gave Himself for us regardless. But he's simply saying, regardless of what culture, background, or ethnic group you belong to, all of that's erased in Christ, we are simply one in Him.

So when you read of Barbarians here (if your translation has it that way) it's a simple statement of the fact that they didn't speak Greek. and As these people come washing up on shore, (remember it's a pretty hideous storm out there) it's cold, mid-October, it's raining, there's 276 people standing around, disoriented, some sea sick, shivering, some in chains. and These people run out there and start this huge bon-fire to try and get these guys warmed up and dried out.

In vs 3 we see once again the servants heart of Paul the apostle. You have to remember he's in essence ascended to the position of the big man on campus, *he* told them they shouldn't go, *he* told them that they were going to run aground on an island, *he* told them that they should eat so that the might have strength, and *he's* the one who assured them of their survival by the grace and promise of God for *his* sake. Now he could've easily said, "I think I've done my share, why don't you have these prisoners go get some sticks?" But rather than taking advantage of the situation to *be* served, Paul seizes the opportunity to serve *others*.

You guys, this is the mind of Christ at work in his life in a practical way, remember what he wrote to the Philippians? *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,”* Phil 2:3-5

The mind that looks out, not for the things of himself, but for the things, the best interests of others. That’s how the mind of Christ will surface in your life as well, when you find yourself not worried about yourself, but looking out for the well being of others, that’s the mind of Christ at work in you, working out through you. Because that’s not the natural thing to do, the natural thing is to look out for #1, and if I can help others along the way, I might. But the mind of Christ sets self aside, and places others as the priority. That’s what Paul is doing here, setting his own needs aside, and serving others.

“Everyone’s cold/wet and miserable, it’s raining, I’m going to go gather some sticks to throw on the fire.” and What happens, he’s just serving, humbling himself, exalting others, he goes to throw some sticks on the fire and out of the bundle lashes out a viper, one of those, “You’re a dead man” kind of a snake. and It doesn’t just bite him; it fastens itself *to* him, venom just surging *into* him. You know, it was cold, the snake was all lethargic in the midst of a bundle of sticks, but the fire got him going. You’ve heard the expression, “When it rains, it pours!” Paul’s just getting hit on every side here, survive the shipwreck to be bitten by a poisonous snake...

But this is the way your enemy works, you’re just being faithful to God, serving others, but listen, that won’t keep you from trials, sometimes it’s what brings the enemy out against you. But notice Paul didn’t let it get to him; he wasn’t all, “God why is this happening to me! I can’t take it anymore, can’t you see I’m trying to serve You?” He didn’t say, “If you guys were helping out, and doing what you should be doing, this wouldn’t have happened to me, but because I’m carrying your weight, look what’s happened!” He just took a nonchalant attitude towards it, probably shook it off, looked at everyone and said, “Welcome to the ministry.” We have an enemy you guys, and whether it be by storm, or by the bite of the serpent, he wants to destroy your life.

These natives look at Paul, and see that snake hanging there and they think, “Man this guy must be a murderer or something atrocious whom though he escaped the sea, the gods aren’t allowing to live.” That word “Justice” is “De-kay” a reference to a particular goddess of justice whom they believe to be catching up to Paul in this moment, (remember he’s there in chains).

That’s the folly of snap surface judgments, they couldn’t have been more wrong, they thought, “Karma has caught up to him!” Which goes to show how faulty the logic of all that is anyway, this was the furthest thing from what he deserved and a completely wrong perspective of him by the natives.

But God had made Paul a promise, he was going to Rome, and He didn't spare him from a shipwreck, to have him die from the bite of a snake. Now there wasn't anything magical, or mystical about Paul that spared him, it was the promise of God's Word.

So Paul shakes this thing off, which is the same thing we're to do when the enemy seeks to fix himself to us, just shake him off, trust in the promise of God's Word and move on. But look at how surviving this storm, and this snake bite puts Paul in a position to minister to these people. They're just watching him, waiting on him to swell up, or suddenly fall down dead, but all this times gone by and he's just continuing on about his business as if nothing ever happened.

So they change their minds, "He must be a god!" From one extreme to the other, and you guys this is why it's so important that we strive to be God pleasers rather than man pleasers. They went from one extreme to the other, both of which were wrong, one minute he's the lowest on the societal chain of humanity, the next he's off the charts, beyond human, he's a god!

Earlier in his ministry it was just the opposite remember that? There in Lystra, they thought that he and Barnabas were gods, then they took them outside the city and stoned Paul and left him for dead. Such is the fickle nature of humanity, from "Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" To, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him," one minute you're the one who can solve all their problems, the next minute *you are* the problem.

Which is why it's so important to cry out to God for His Agape' love to be the chief characteristic of your life. Because God's love isn't based upon what we do for Him, or against Him, it's not about getting, it's all about giving. It's a love that gives out, not takes in, what I mean by that is that it's not based upon you, it's purely flowing *from* Him. It's like the sun rising in the morning, there's nothing you can do to stop it, you can pollute the skies, hide in a cave, do what you want to rebel against it, but it's coming up nonetheless. So to with God's love, rebel against it, do what you can do to try and avoid it, He's going to love you anyway. If God's love is ruling in our lives, than when people turn *to* you, or turn *on* you, you're just going to love them. It's so profoundly portrayed there in John 13 where we read, "*Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*" John 13:1 Knowing that all His disciples would turn *on* Him, deny that they even *knew* Him, seek to distance themselves as far as they could *from* Him, yet *He loved them* to the end. That's the Love of God.

Now we're not told how Paul responded, no doubt like he did in Lystra, told them that he was just a man, and that they should turn from those useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, and no doubt he shared with the the reality of Jesus Christ the need to repent of sin and give their lives to Christ. and Once again because of Paul's faithfulness to the Lord, they were all taken care of, notice.

Vs 7-10

Now Jesus said, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover”* Mark 16:15-18 and 2 of those 3 things we just seen, Paul inadvertently took up a serpent and it by no means hurt him, and he laid hands on the sick and he was healed.

Now that's no mandate to go grabbing rattlesnakes and tempting the Lord your God, He was simply saying that if you're on the mission field, until I'm finished with your life, I'm going to protect and take care of your life, and I'm going to use your life in a way that glorifies Me.

But you should know that the word for “healed” in vs 8, and the word for “healed” in vs 9 are 2 different Greek words altogether. So that with Publius' father we have a miraculous healing, Paul prayed *for* him, laid hands *on* him, and he was healed. In vs 9 it's the word, “Therapyoooh” which lends itself more obviously to the word, “Therapy.” and Knowing that Luke was a doctor, it seems that (though no doubt Paul was praying for people, laying hands on people) Luke was acting as a medical missionary there on Malta.

This storm directing them there that they might minister to the people in the name of Jesus. and I want you to notice that phrase in vs 10. It says that when we departed, “They provided such things as were necessary,” translation, they took care of our needs. They'd lost everything on that ship, but God provided for all their needs nonetheless by putting it on the people's hearts to take care of them. What does the bible say? *“Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* Matt 6:31-33 Again, *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* Phil 4:19 Listen, all 276 people benefited and were blessed thanks to Paul and Luke and no doubt Aristarchus there as well. Now we spend considerable time demonstrating how our sin impacts not just us, but people's lives around us as well, sometimes for generations. But be encouraged to know that so does your sanctification, your obedience, and subservience to God will bless the lives of everyone around you as well, they didn't just take care of Paul and Luke. They took care of the sailors, the soldiers, and the prisoners as well, because of the way Paul and Luke were ministering to them, and being a blessing to them.

Vs11-15

No matter where you go there's something refreshing and renewing about the company of believers. Now Appii Forum was 43 miles outside of Rome, and Three Inns was 33 miles, some were willing to go farther than others. Such is always the case, some believers are willing to go the distance as unto the Lord, some don't want to press that much, God help us to be those who press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God that's in Christ Jesus knowing that all who run a race run, but only 1 receives the prize. God help us to run in such a way as that one, who presses harder/farther than anyone else to obtain it.

This word, "Meet" in vs 15 is pretty cool, it speaks of an official kind of meeting whereby a king or someone of high importance would come to an area and the people would come out to meet him to give him an official escort into the city. They were really honoring Paul (this prisoner), which must've been a peculiar witness to the soldiers in and of itself. It's also the same word that's used in 1st Thess 4 about those who're to be raptured who will "meet" the Lord in the air. They'd read and studied his letter to the Romans for a couple years now and probably felt like they knew him already.

Vs16

Every 4-6 hours the guard would change, meanwhile they probably didn't feel like Paul was bound to them, but that they were bound to Paul as he continued to share Jesus with them as his own personal captive audience. and So when you read in Philippians, "*But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;*" Phil 1:12-13 This is what he was talking about.

These guys who were stuck to him, listening to him share the gospel non-stop, and he was leading them to Christ.

Vs17-20

I have nothing of which to accuse, I only want to be acquitted, I don't what you've heard, but this is the truth. and He tells them like he told Agrippa, "It's because of the hope of Israel I'm bound with this chain. Because I believe all the scriptures have to say about the Messiah, His redemptive death, resurrection and all the promises that are to be fulfilled towards us through Him."

Vs21-23

Don't you wish we had that message recorded? Paul expounding on the scriptures out of the Law of Moses and the Prophets, explaining them all in the light of Jesus Christ From the Seed of the woman in Gen in Gen 3, the Passover Lamb in Ex 12, the entire sacrificial system in Leviticus, the bronze serpent raised up by Moses in Num, how it all pointed *to*, and foreshadowed the coming fulfillment *in* Jesus.

The smiting of the rock by Moses, than the speaking to the Rock, and how all he had to do was ask for living waters and it would gush freely into their lives, but he ruined the type in smiting it again because Jesus, (the chief cornerstone) was only smitten once, for all. The prophecies of being born in Bethlehem, brought out of Egypt, coming to Jerusalem 483 yrs after the command by Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, but coming lowly on a donkeys colt, being sold for 30 pieces of silver, beaten and scourged, crucified, but not being allowed to see corruption, being begotten from the dead, the 1st fruits of the resurrection. It's all there, it's all in the OT and as he established the facts, he probably took each precept, each prophecy and showed to them there fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth.

How did it turn out? The same way it always does, notice

Vs24-28

Translation, it's all there for you to see, but the fact is, you don't want to see it, you don't really *want* to come to Christ and be saved. It's easier to *believe* upon Christ, than to *not* believe upon Him after an honest evaluation of the facts, but the fact is some people just don't want to believe. The don't want to see with their eyes, or hear with their ears, they don't want to understand, or have their hearts healed, they want to writhe around in their own sin and stay as far away from Jesus as they can, how sad.

Vs29-31

Tradition holds that Paul was acquitted, made it to Spain, ministered a couple more years here and there during which time he wrote 1st Timothy and Titus, was re-arrested, taken back to Rome, wrote 2nd Timothy and was beheaded at the command of Caesar Nero. Why Luke didn't record more we don't know, perhaps he wrote the whole account during this 2 yr imprisonment and when he made it to this point, he'd caught up to the present and that was all there was to write at that time. The bottom line is that the reason the book of Acts doesn't really have an ending is because we're still in it. It really won't conclude until the rapture of the church, so this just represents the beginning of record of God's taking the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the sin of the world out of Jerusalem into Judea to Samaria, and on into the uttermost parts of the world, even to Joplin MO.

The main thing is that having heard, that you not turn a deaf ear, having seen, don't turn a blind eye. Don't harden your heart, let God bring healing to your heart in the person of Jesus Christ Jesus sacrificed His life upon the cross for you, all you need to do to be forgiven of your sin is accept His work, on your behalf, place your faith *in*, and trust *upon* Him. The bible says that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Prayer Points: God help us to be found showing Jesus, and sharing Jesus wherever we may be, whatever direction life may take us, just use us for your glory. and may we do what we do to be pleasing to You, as opposed to being men pleasers. Lord I pray for anyone going through a storm right now, be it for correction, perfection, protection, or direction, in every case, You are faithful, and we praise You for that, Help us to trust in You.