

## The God of the Storm

Acts 27:1-25

I have been waiting for Chapter 27.

If the book of Acts was a movie, there would be a number of key points in the movie but chapter 27 would be the final climax. The best part of any movie is when the hero comes in and saves the day. It makes me wish Acts had a soundtrack.

We have certain music in our heads associated with this kind of scene, don't we?

- In the old days it was the trumpet of the cavalry, coming to save the day.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VY58inWev0E>
- In more modern times it's the Star Wars theme,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0ZQPqeJkk>
- or for the oldies here it could be this one "Hi ho Silver, away!"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZIVphczMby>

If Acts had a soundtrack, at the beginning of chapter 27, the music would start off slowly and gloomily. Maybe that music from Jaws.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvCl-gNK\\_y4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvCl-gNK_y4)

And then in the background you'd hear the wind blowing and the waves rising.

And then maybe that music from the Master and commander -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fA6ucF8-BFo> .

And then the hurricane hits in full force.

And the waves crash against the hull.

The crew is screaming, the captain is shouting orders.

The tension mounts, all hope is gone, and then...

The climax music. Here comes the hero.

- Indiana Jones music. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bTpp8PQSog>

I pretty sure there was no sound track when Luke was telling this story, but it helps this book come alive! The book of Acts of the Apostles is not just some dry history book, this is a reality drama. Storms and shipwrecks, lives hanging in the balance.

But this story is not just a historic drama about how God dealt with a bunch of guys on a ship 2,000 years ago. This is also how God deals with us right now, today! I have called this sermon the God of the storm!

Let me start with a light-hearted story that I came across to begin this message.

Chip the parakeet never saw it coming. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage. The next he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over.

The problems began when Chip's owner decided to clean Chip's cage with a

vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang, and she turned to pick it up. She'd barely said "hello" when "ssssloopp!" Chip got sucked in.

The bird owner gasped, put down the phone, turned off the vacuum, and opened the bag. There was Chip -- still alive, but stunned.

Since the bird was covered with dust and grime, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom, turned on the tap, and held Chip under the running water. Then, realizing that Chippie was soaked and shivering, she did what any compassionate bird owner would do . . . she reached for the hair dryer and blasted the pet with hot air.

Chip never knew what hit him. A few days after the trauma, the reporter who'd initially written about the event contacted Chip's owner to see how the bird was recovering. "Well," she replied, "Chippie doesn't sing much anymore -- he just sits and stares."

Life does that to you every now and then, when you feel as though you have been sucked in, washed up and blown out?

Like in this passage we will read shortly, we've all been on stormy seas. Like these guys, your boat has been thrown about. You've been plunged into the eye of the storm, and if that hasn't happened yet, just wait - it's coming. It might be a family disaster. Death or disease or divorce. Maybe it's a financial storm. You've lost your job or gotten heavily in debt. Maybe your storm has come in the form of depression, whose gale force winds can rip down your sails and leave you dead in the water, feeling overwhelmed and underpowered.

We have been going through the book of Acts and we are nearing the end, it has been a fascinating journey, full of highs and lows. And today we look at chapter 27.

We begin on calm waters in verse 1. Remember Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and was being transported to Caesarea before getting on a boat to Rome.

***27** When the time came, we set sail for Italy. Paul and several other prisoners were placed in the custody of a Roman officer named Julius, a captain of the Imperial Regiment. <sup>2</sup> Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was also with us. We left on a ship whose home port was Adramyttium on the northwest coast of the province of Asia; it was scheduled to make several stops at ports along the coast of the province.*

*<sup>3</sup> The next day when we docked at Sidon, Julius was very kind to Paul and let him go ashore to visit with friends so they could provide for his needs.*

1. The first way God works in our lives in stormy times is by **putting the right people in the right places at the right time.**

With Paul he started with a man named Julius. We don't know who Julius was, but I know who put him there. Julius was a man who showed kindness to Paul when kindness was exactly what Paul needed! Not only does he save Paul's life later in the chapter, but verse 3 tells us that he allowed him to go to his friends in Sidon.

They 'just happened' to stop in Sidon and Paul 'just happened' to have Christian friends there...at 'just the time' when Paul desperately needed his friends.

Two other men were put there for Paul and they're both mentioned in verse 2. The first is Luke. You say, I don't see Luke's name. No, but the verse starts out, "We left on a ship..." Who do you suppose the "we" is? Luke has been Paul's sidekick and trusted friend for years now, and once again, God put him on this boat! To be there for Paul when Paul needed him most.

The last person God put in Paul's life, at least here, was a man called Aristarchus. Luke was probably listed on the ship's log as Paul's personal physician, and it was a good chance Aristarchus was Paul's personal slave! We might have trouble with that concept now, but it was common in this time.

So when the seas get stormy, look around for the people God places in your life. He's put them there because he loves you! Like it or not, we need each other! And God will not abandon us or leave us alone. The storms of life aren't meant to be weathered alone. And we're foolish if we try. God will put people in our lives at the right time and at the right place who will be with us through the storm.

2. Next we see another way God deals with storms.  
**He often warns us away from Storms.**

Look at verse 7.

<sup>7</sup>We had several days of slow sailing, and after great difficulty we finally neared Cnidus. But the wind was against us, so we sailed across to Crete and along the sheltered coast of the island, past the cape of Salmone. <sup>8</sup>We struggled along the coast with great difficulty and finally arrived at Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. <sup>9</sup>We had lost a lot of time. The weather was becoming dangerous for sea travel because it was so late in the fall, and Paul spoke to the ship's officers about it.

<sup>10</sup>“Men,” he said, “I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on—shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well.”

The writer of proverbs said,

“The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.” Prov 12:15

I thank God for the people in my life who have warned me! I haven't always listened, and many times I've been the fool, but I hope as time has past, maturity has kicked in and I've learned to listen to the advice of Godly people.

God often puts warners, the old school Biblical word is "admonishers", in our life. And when God does that, the best thing you can do is listen to them!

When we are young the last people we want to listen to is our parents, but now that I am at the other end of youth, I can see God put them there! He put them there as warners! How do you think they know that if you hang out with the wrong people you'll get in trouble? It's not some great parental book or website that tells them that. They know from experience!

Paul, the maker of tents/come preacher, was giving advice to sailors about sailing so the crew decided to ignore Paul's advice.

Look at verse 11:

<sup>11</sup> But the officer in charge of the prisoners listened more to the ship's captain and the owner than to Paul. <sup>12</sup> And since Fair Havens was an exposed harbour—a poor place to spend the winter—most of the crew wanted to go on to Phoenix, farther up the coast of Crete, and spend the winter there. Phoenix was a good harbour with only a southwest and northwest exposure.

<sup>13</sup> When a light wind began blowing from the south, the sailors thought they could make it. So they pulled up anchor and sailed close to the shore of Crete.

Two mistakes the centurion made here.

- First, in verse 11, he followed the advice of the experts rather than God's spokesman.
- And second, in verse 12, he followed majority rule. (but isn't that what Baptists do!!!)

Let me stir the pot a bit - Do you know how dangerous following the majority is?

- 12 men went into the land of Canaan to spy it out. Ten came back and said, "There are giants in the land! We look like grasshoppers to them! There's no way we can beat them!"  
But Joshua and Caleb had a different report. When they looked at the land, instead of giant warriors, they saw a mighty God who could do anything!
- Look back over the history of the Israelites and take a look at all the disasters that took place because the majority ruled.

Over and over, we find the prophets, ostracized and alone, hated by the very people they were sent to speak to.

Why? Because the majority wasn't willing to listen to God's message!

What does that tell us about the leadership of God's people today?

The Baptist system isn't perfect but I am glad that we don't have the dictatorial style of leadership.

But let's not swing the leadership pendulum too far, let's not forget that leaders are meant to lead! We shouldn't always lead by taking a poll of the followers and then doing what the majority wants! That's not leading, that's following! The shepherd doesn't take a survey of the sheep to find out what pasture they want to go to. He leads them to good pastures.

Obviously our ideal is for us as individuals and corporately to be led by the Spirit, to listen for God's direction, sometimes God speaks through the individual and other times a group of his followers.

Now, that was sort of a side-road. Let's get back on the ship where a storm is brewing.

Take a look at Verse 14:

<sup>14</sup> But the weather changed abruptly, and a wind of typhoon strength (called a "northeaster") burst across the island and blew us out to sea. <sup>15</sup> The sailors couldn't turn the ship into the wind, so they gave up and let it run before the gale.

Now skip to verse 18:

<sup>18</sup> The next day, as gale-force winds continued to batter the ship, the crew began throwing the cargo overboard. <sup>19</sup> The following day they even took some of the ship's gear and threw it overboard.

3. The third thing we see is that **God uses storms.**

Did you know that storms are some of God's best tools!

And while I don't believe he causes every storm, I know that he uses every storm.

And one of the ways He uses them is to help us clear the decks!

When a storm hits and your life is thrown upside down, that's when we start thinking about what's really important. We are seeing this in the political situation in the states. And hopefully we can learn too.

Yes, God uses storms to help us clear the decks, but he also uses them to show us our powerlessness!

<sup>20</sup>The terrible storm raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last all hope was gone.

And that's when God sent the angel! Isn't God's timing amazing? He could have sent the angel anytime. He could have sent it a week before. He could have told Paul before he ever stepped on the boat, "Hey, you're going to have a shipwreck, but everyone's going to be fine."

But he didn't send it a week before. He waited...until they gave up all hope of being saved...by themselves! You see, they'd done everything they could! They'd trimmed the sails, they'd dumped the cargo, they'd cleared the decks. They did everything that was humanly possible, and it wasn't until they'd exhausted all their options and all their resources, that God said, "Alright, now I'm going to save you."

Look at verse 23:

<sup>23</sup> For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, <sup>24</sup> and he said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.'

God won't ever force himself upon you, and therefore he won't save you from the storms in your life until you give up on doing it yourself?

I must admit that frustrates me somewhat, I sometimes wish God would intervene a bit more rather than stepping back and allowing us to get to the stage of desperation. It would save a lot of heartache wouldn't it?

### **Gideon**

Although then there is the story of Gideon, God intervened there and you could argue he made matters more stressful.

Remember the story...

Camped in the valley were 135,000 Midianites.

Camped further up the valley were 32,000 of Gideon's finest soldiers.

Gideon did the numbers, a 4 to 1 ratio and either through complete foolishness or utter faith in God, decided to attack them.

They get up early in the morning, while it's still dark and they start out.

They knew the Midianites had better weapons and superior numbers and knew the terrain better than they did. But to their credit, they marched out of camp that morning, ready to die.

But before they got two steps, God intervened, God spoke to Gideon.

Do you remember what he said?

He said,

“You have too many warriors with you. If I let all of you fight the Midianites, the Israelites will boast to me that they saved themselves by their own strength.”

To Gideon’s credit, he didn’t argue.

So God went on.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore, tell the people, ‘Whoever is timid or afraid may leave this mountain and go home.’” So 22,000 of them went home, leaving only 10,000 who were willing to fight.

So instead of 4 to 1, the odds were now 13 to 1!

So he goes to the Lord and said, "Ok, we’re down to 10,000. Is that better?"

And God intervenes again, "Still too many."

This time they went down to the stream to drink and every man who put his head down instead of watching for the enemy was sent home.

That left Gideon with a whopping total of 300 men.

300 against 135,000. That’s 450 to 1

You know what the men were thinking! "This is hopeless! This is crazy! How can 300 men win a battle against 135,000?" The answer is simple? They can’t!

And then God intervenes again. As the men are sitting around the camp sharpening their swords, honing them to a razor’s edge. Each one of them thinking, "This sword has to kill 450 men in order for us to win."

Gideon walks into camp, takes away their swords...and hands them a trumpet, an empty jar...and a torch.

And Gideon said, here’s the plan.

In the middle of the night we’re all going to march into their camp and blow our trumpets." Right, and Oh, then I want you to take out your torch, which is hidden in your jar and yell as loud as you can, "Fight with your swords for the Lord and for Gideon!"

You think these guys were excited about this?

But they were brave men, and they were loyal men.

So clutching their trumpets in one hand, their jars in the other, they went.

Gideon gave the order and the sound of 300 trumpets filled the air.

300 pots smashed on the ground.

300 torches lit up the perimeter of the camp.

And 300 voices shouted, "Fight with your swords for the Lord and for Gideon!"

The Midianites burst from their tents, ran for their weapons and in panic the Midianites started killing each other! The ones who weren't doing that started running!

So what did the Israelites do? They started chasing them!

Do you know why God lets us get into impossible situations? Do you know why it's only when we give up hope in ourselves that He saves us?

He told Gideon in the 7th chapter of the book of Judges.

Let me read it to you.

"In order that Israel may not boast that her own strength has saved her."

Paul told the men about the angel, he told them they were going to be saved, and then he made the definitive statement of chapter 27.

In verse 25 he says,

<sup>25</sup> So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said.