

Acts 27:1-26

God Over the Storm

Introduction: Acts is the history of the earliest Christians. We know authentic real Christianity from this original document of the life of the first Jesus followers.

We've been following Paul's journey for sometime now. He has been arrested by the Jews, and handed over to the Romans because of his preaching of Jesus and the Resurrection, and the Gospel as God's free gift of Salvation to all, both Jew and Greek.

Paul had been through various trials and when he realized that he was not going to get a fair trial, and being a Roman citizen he appealed to stand before Caesar's judgment seat. So now Paul is on his way to Rome, a prisoner of Rome, a prisoner for the sake of the Gospel.

When you think about how short some of the books of the Bible are it's fascinating to see how much time and detail are spent on certain subjects - for instance - Luke uses a whole chapter just to tell us about Paul's journey at sea.

Though Paul spent much of his Christian life traveling by sea, taking the message of the Gospel all over the Roman Empire - the Jews by and large thought of the sea as evil and treacherous, a place of chaos and destruction.

For them the sea was a metaphor of judgment - a place outside of God's presence and creative order, it was a picture of hardship or trial.

Think of the chaotic seas at creation before we see God's Spirit hovering over the face of the waters..

Think of the flood of judgment in the story of Noah.

Think of the Israelites passing through Red Sea, though they pass through safely, the whole Egyptian Army is overthrown in the sea - later the Hebrews would talk about the sea in terms of judgment and trial especially in Hebrew poetry and the Psalms

The picture is especially poignant in the story of Jonah- Jonah is cast into the sea as an act of divine judgment!

Paul's storm on the sea therefore is a way to talk about all storms - all sufferings.

1. The Paradoxes of storms -

1. In Verse 21 we read this - **“Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told..”**
2. But then in verse 31 we read - **“as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.”**
3. This is a problem or paradox for us because we are "either or" people - if God is sovereign and he has promised that nobody is going to die - who cares what people do?
4. If God is totally in charge then our choices don't matter or if what we do matters, or if we have real personal choices with consequences then God is limiting himself, he's holding back or not in control.
5. But the Bible continually shows us “both and”, everything small and great, bad and good, are controlled by God and yet our choices have consequences, we are free and responsible in what we do..we're not robots, our choices and our obedience actually really do matter
6. The scriptures show us God is 100 % in control of all that happens and we are 100% responsible for what we do...
7. Some of us want to think that we are in control, in charge of all that goes on in our lives, that is, until a storm hits our lives that is so chaotic, so threatening to all that we hold dear, that it causes us to realize - i'm not in control of my life, I can't be - there is so much

unknown - the world is wild and fierce (think about what happened in Las Vegas last week)

8. It is absolutely essential to know in trials, difficulties and troubles, in the storms of life - to know this paradox - that what you do matters and that your choices have consequences - and at the same time to know that there is a PLAN behind it all, underneath it all, God is in control.
9. Only through this knowledge can we work, work through a trial, or hardship but simultaneously know that our work, what we do, is not ultimate. We can have rest, and peace in our souls, that as we work God is working... Underneath it all God has a plan.

2. The Purpose of Storms

1. Why do we even have them; Why does God allow evil and suffering? - Goodness and Godliness

1. Think of the story of Joseph - If all the bad things hadn't happened none of the good things would have happened -
 1. all the healing that needed to happen in that dysfunctional family.
 2. The preservation of God's chosen people
 3. The saving of the whole known world from famine and hunger -
 4. Remember what Joseph said to his brothers at the end - **“you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” - Genesis 50:20**
2. Paul says in Romans 8:28 - **“all things work together for good for those who love God”** - it doesn't mean bad things are good, but that God uses the bad for his purposes, in order to do us good. From the vantage point of eternity we will be able to see how God has worked out everything in History to work for his purposes, for our blessing goodness and glorification..
 1. I have come to see Romans 8:28 -as a promise that no matter how badly I screw up my life, (because we are 100 % responsible) God will turn it, he will somehow make good of it. This allows us to have rest, and have peace because God is ultimately in control and powerful enough to turn all my foolishness, good and bad choices, even evil and sin on it's head.. and make from it a beautiful story that glorifies him.

1. In the end, all sin and even human rebellion ultimately unintentionally ends up serving the perfectly wise purposes of God. All evil will backfire in the end.
2. The most prime example of this is when all the demonic realm, Satan, Evil, and Death did their worst to Jesus at the cross, God used it to deal with Sin once and for all and to defeat the Satan, Death and Sin. - God turned the worst thing in history into the best thing in history.
3. “As he did on the cross, so he does in every arena of our lives - he does his most sublime works not apart from the depths of worldly depravity, but by working in and through those depths to lift up his own glory in his holy and unconditional love for us” - Greg Forster, *The Gospel and Work*

1. Goodness is one of God’s main purposes in all storms. If you are going through a storm, as it were, a trial or suffering, it is because like Job, Joseph and Jesus - God is writing your story and in the end we will see how it was all for our good and his glory. Hold on.

2. **Godliness or Sanctification** - Storms strip us of all false hope - they cause us to cling to what is unshakeable - In scripture they are pictured as refining fires and cleansing floods - that’s because trials have this way of cleansing us of the insignificant - of burning away the dross - getting us to cling to God, to his kingdom, to our hope in him - getting us to love him and trust him above all else.
3. “only love of the immutable can bring tranquility” - only God’s Love is like that - it will never change. You can’t lose it, the flood of trials can’t drown it, the storms cannot blow it away - What is godliness really? It is to become more and more dependent on God - To trust in God and in God alone. Storms in our life produce godliness.

3. The Presence in the storms

1. When giving his speech to the crew Paul, “**An angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood by me**” -
2. Trials can cause us to think either we are being punished by God for our sins, bad choices and foolishness, or can cause us to think that he doesn’t care all that much about us - these despairing thoughts

have the power to destroy you when you are in the midst of a trial or storm -

3. As Peterson says, “The only serious mistake we can make when illness comes, when anxiety threatens, when conflict disturbs our relationships with others is to conclude that God has gotten bored looking after us and has shifted his attention to a more exciting christian, or that God has become disgusted with our meandering obedience and decided to let us fend for ourselves for a while, or that God has gotten too busy fulfilling prophecy in the middle east to take time to sort out the complicated mess we have gotten ourselves into.” -Peterson, A Long Obedience in the same Direction
 1. He is describing another way in which we see trials as us paying for our sin, or as evidence that God doesn't really care about us..
4. But here Paul speaks with possessive terms in covenant language - “the God to whom I belong.” God said to the people of Israel, “You shall be MY people, and I will be YOUR God” (Jer 30:22) - this is deep committed, covenant language - assurance of God's care and love for his people.
5. **How does Paul know that He belongs to God, and that God loves him, that Paul isn't paying for his sins through these trials? How do we know that? Matthew 12 - The True and Greater Jonah**
 1. **“Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” -Matt 12:38-40**
 2. Remember in the story of Jonah - Jonah had disobeyed God and tried to flee his presence and the responsibility of preaching to Nineveh and God caused an incredible storm to arise - everyone thought they were going to die - then there comes the moment when Jonah tells the sailors that this is all his fault and the only way to calm the storm is to throw him into the sea - the place of judgment - and when they do immediately the water calms.

3. You see Jesus is the true and greater than Jonah who, was not running from God, but came to do God's will perfectly, unlike you and I. See we in fact do deserve God's judgment - we have all run from our responsibility, we have all tried to control our own lives, to be the masters of our own lives and we deserve God's rejection and judgment - Yet Jesus dove into the sea of God's judgment for us - so we could have peace with God he bore on the cross what everyone of us deserves, so we can know whatever is happening in our lives, whatever trial we might be going through it is not because God does not love us or because God doesn't care about our good - quite the contrary in fact.
4. Only Christianity claims, and has at it's heart, that God has been with us in our suffering... A death of a child? Poverty? Betrayal? Rejection? Injustice? Loss of friends? So has God. Truly he is with us in all of our suffering - he is the God over the storm.
 1. **He is with us in all of our storms!**
 2. **We are responsible for what we do, yet God has a Master Plan underneath it all**
 3. **His plan in trials is to do us good, and to make us more like him.**
5. When through the deep waters I call you to go The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow For I will be with you, your troubles to bless And sanctify to you, your deepest distress.
6. When through fiery trials your pathways shall lie; My grace all sufficient shall be your supply; The flame shall not hurt you; I only design your dross to consume and your gold to refine.
7. The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose I will not, I will not desert to its foes That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake I'll never, no never, no never forsake.