

Acts 27

In Acts 27 we have recorded for us Paul's journey to Rome. He was going as a prisoner. Paul recognized that there would be a great deal of danger in making this journey and warned the people to delay the voyage and not go. But the people refused to listen. So they set sail and hadn't been gone very long before they found themselves in the middle of a terrible storm. This story illustrates for us what the voyage of life is often like. There are times we are in the middle of a storm and Paul's experience will hopefully help us better weather those storms of life.

LET'S BEGIN BY CONSIDERING SOME REASONS THAT LEAD TO THE CRISIS. There are at least **three reasons** that precipitated the storm. **No. 1. We listen to the wrong people.** (*Acts 27:9*) *Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, (10) And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. (11) Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.*

Notice the situation. They had sailed to a little port on the island of Crete called The Fair Havens. For some reason they spent more time there than they should have and by the time they got ready to leave v9 says that the "**fast was now past.**" That probably refers to the Day of Atonement, and if that is correct then that puts our time into the middle of October. This now puts us into the stormy season. It was dangerous to navigate the waters of the Med. Sea because storms would come up w/o much warning.

Paul knew the dangers and in v10 he tried to warn them of the danger. The Centurion, who had custody of Paul, talked with both the master and the owner of the ship. Apparently they had a different opinion than Paul, and he listened to them. I can understand why he might take the advice of experienced mariners on this matter other than the advice of a missionary preacher. But in so doing, he listened to the wrong people. They set sail and sure enough it wasn't long until they were right in the middle of that storm.

Sometimes we get into trouble today because we take advice from the wrong people. There are all kinds of people willing to give you advice on what your values ought to be and what you ought to do and sometimes they have the wrong advice. The one who knows best about the voyage of life is God and as long as you listen to him you won't go wrong. If we would heed his instructions to **abstain from all appearance of evil** or to **flee from fornication** or to **be vigilant in our awareness of the devil** we would avoid a lot of the storms of life. But the problem is when we listen to everybody else and find ourselves in a mess and then we go to God and say "*Here it is God, straighten it out for me.*" This is one reason to study God's word so as to know how to live our lives effectively.

No 2. Another thing that precipitates a crisis is **when we follow the majority.** (*Acts 27:12*) ***And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.*** Fair Haven was not as good a place to winter so if we could get down the coast just a little ways, then we'd winter there at Phenice. It was only about 50 miles so they thought about it and the majority of them said, let's sail. We learn later that there were 276 people on board the ship. We don't know how many ruled in favor of this decision but the text says "***the more part advised to depart.***" Yet, we see that the majority got it wrong.

This is so often the case in life and we get into trouble today because we listen to the crowd and are influenced by the majority. All too often the majority is wrong. Jesus spoke to this in Matthew 7:13-14. (*Matthew 7:13*) ***Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: (14) Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*** Spiritually speaking, Jesus said the majority are on the wrong road heading in the wrong direction.

Do you know what would have happened if you had listened to the majority in the days of Noah? You would have drowned with the rest of the multitude. If you were an adult and you listened to the majority of the spies who returned and reported that we couldn't conquer the land of Canaan? You would have wandered in the wilderness eating manna until you died. When you stand before the Lord in judgment and give an account for your life, if you listen to the majority you will be part of that crowd that hear him say depart from me ye wicked into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Sometimes we hear "*Everybody's doing it.*" Everybody's not doing anything except breathing; but even if everybody was doing it that does not necessarily make it right. So don't blindly follow the majority.

No. 3. Another thing that precipitates a crisis is when we **rely on our feelings.** This is what the people in our story did. (*Acts 27:13*) ***And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.*** Things were a bit deceptive. There was a soft south wind. The sea was probably just as smooth as glass without a cloud in the sky. It looked like an ideal day for sailing. They "***supposed that they had obtained their purpose.***" Yes they knew this time of year was dangerous on the Med. Sea and that storms can arise with little warning, but today feels so right. We feel like it's going to be O.K. because look at the soft wind. Feelings aren't always right. Feelings can be deceptive.

At times you hear people say something like this. "*Yes I know what the Bible teaches but I just feel in my heart that this/that is what God would have me to do.*" Maybe you are being warned by a caring friend not to get into this/that relationship and you reply, "*But I just feel like it will all work out*

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for good.” The important thing is not how you feel about a situation but rather how God feels about what you are doing. **(Prov. 16:25) *There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.***

So the people in our episode listened to their feelings instead of the facts. They hadn't been out of port anytime before those clear skies began to cloud over and that soft gentle wind from the south turned in to a nor easterly and the calm water began to churn. Soon they were in the middle of a storm. **(Acts 27:14) *But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.***

SECOND POINT. NOTICE THE REACTIONS THAT PERPETUATE A CRISIS.

There is something worse than getting into a storm and that is doing the wrong thing when one actually comes. Let's notice what these people did that kept them in the middle of the storm. **For one thing, they began to drift. (Acts 27:15) *And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.*** They were having difficulty sailing into the wind so they lowered the sails and let the rudder go. ***“We let her drive (drift).”*** Instead of trying to steer the ship, they let her drift wherever she wanted to go.

This is the attitude of some when the storms of life come their way. They just drift along. They don't put forth any effort to improve their circumstance. They just keep on doing the same old thing. Instead of trying to make some positive improvements, they choose to just drift along and let things take their own course. If you continue to do what you have always done, you will get what you've always had. Sometimes when the storms come, we need to reevaluate and maybe make some changes in our life to make things better.

No. 2. They began to discard. (Acts 27:18) *And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; (19) *And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.** Some versions say they began to throw the freight overboard. When that didn't work, they threw the tackle (equipment) overboard. When that didn't work, later they threw the food overboard (v38). They discarded things of value that they could use to lighten the load.

Now some people do the same thing today in the face of a storm. They discard their faith and toss it overboard. When a crisis comes into their life, instead of driving them closer to the Lord it drives them farther away. Often they question God and discard the spiritual values of life. They toss overboard that which can help them get through and beyond the storm that they are in. Tossing God overboard never works.

No. 3. They begin to despair. (Acts 27:20) *And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.* They hadn't seen the light of the sun for at least 14 days which meant there were no visible stars by which to navigate. The storm kept on pounding and it looks as though it wasn't going to improve, so they simply lost hope. They gave up on the idea of being saved.

Again, we at times do the same thing. In the middle of a crisis we throw up our hands and say there is no hope. But let me remind you that no situation is hopeless with God. When we don't have the answers, He does. Jesus said on one occasion that we should pray and faint not. I wonder how many Christians in life have given up just one prayer short of victory; just one day short of getting out of the storm. But instead, they lost all hope. *(Psalms 46:1) God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (2) Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; (3) Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.* A catastrophic scene is pictured here where it seems the world is literally coming apart. The earth and mountains are shaken into the heart of the sea and the water roar and are troubled. Even in the presence of that kind of storm, we will not fear because God is our refuge and our strength and a very present help in trouble. No situation is hopeless as long as God is in it.

FINALLY, I WANT US TO CONSIDER WHAT WILL RESOLVE A CRISIS. V29 tells us the sailors recognized that they were coming up toward land and they were afraid they would run into some rocks so they cast out four anchors in the stern of the ship in an attempt to steady the ship. When the storms of life come, we too need something to stabilize us. We need some anchors that we can let down and hold on too.

The first anchor is direction. (Acts 27:21) *But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. (22) And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. (23) For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, (24) Saying, Fear not, Paul.* Paul had been in contact with God and God told him what to do. God informed him that all will survive the storm so be of good cheer. But to be saved, everybody has to stay on the ship (31). Paul received direction from God.

When the storms of your life come and you don't know what to do or where to turn, get some direction from God. In the middle of that crisis, go to the word of God and go in prayer to God for some direction.

The second anchor is dependence. (Acts 27:25) *Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.* Paul believed God. Apparently some of the crew were

not as convinced as was Paul. *(Acts 27:29) Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. (30) And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship.* They let down those four anchors and then went to the front of the ship under the pretense of letting down some more anchors. But what they were really doing was lowering the lifeboat in order to escape. Paul saw what they were doing and *said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. (32) Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off (31-32)* Not only did Paul get direction from God, he followed what God told him to do.

You will face some storms in life that you will never be able to deal with on your own and by yourself. During those times, you need God's direction/help. You need to depend on God. You need to believe God's word is true. We know what God says about worry in the future and how He will care for us, but we really are not quiet convinced. We know he has said he would never forsake us, but we have those moments of doubt and question where is He.

Finally there was the anchor of deliverance. The men on this ship hadn't eaten for a long time so Paul (v33-34) took food, gave thanks for it, and gave it to crew for strength. Soon the ship ran aground and the stern was battered by the waves and began to break into pieces. Even while they were doing what God commanded them to do, the storm didn't stop immediately. It continued until the ship was destroyed, and just because you are a child of God doesn't exempt you the storms of life. Some storms may continue all the way through your voyage. You may be in the storm until you leave this world and sail to the heavenly world beyond the storm. Ultimately there will be deliverance for the faithful and obedient. There was for all 276 members of that ship in the storm of Euroclydon. Not one of them perished. The good news is that He too will see us thru the storms of life.

Another time in the midst of another storm, Jesus disciples were afraid and cried, "*Lord don't you care that we perish?*" To which Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves and said, "*Peace be still.*" Jesus can calm the storms of your life but only if you follow his direction.

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