

Sailing Stormy Seas

Acts 27

Pastor John Miller

In Acts 27, I want to back up one verse, as I so often do, into Acts 26:32. “Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man,” referring to Paul, “might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.” Remember Paul was in chains, and he’s going to be in chains for another couple of years. Paul has appealed to Caesar. He stood before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. Finally, realizing he’s getting this run-a-round, basically what every Roman citizen had the right to do, Paul said, “I appeal unto Caesar.” Festus said, “You appeal to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go.” That’s where we find ourselves beginning in Acts 27.

Acts 27 is the famous shipwreck and storm at sea of Paul the Apostle. It’s interesting, many years ago I was invited to go on a “Footsteps to the Apostle” tour to be one of the teachers. A group of churches took about 150 people on this tour, and when we were on the part of the tour where we’re in a big ship on the Mediterranean going to these Greek islands, it was my job to teach Acts 27. I’ll never forget that we were out in the middle of the Mediterranean. We gathered there in this big room to meet, and we hit a storm. I’m not kidding you. We hit this huge storm, and the boat was heaving and moving around. We all had to put our life jackets on. I’m preaching this chapter with a life jacket on; we’re all hanging on for dear life. I had to sit down on a stool, hang on the pulpit, and we’re rocking. It was just like a living illustration of this chapter. It was the coolest thing I think I’d ever done—to teach this chapter in the same place Paul was as we faced that storm.

This is the most descriptive of the ancient sea travel in all of ancient literature. It’s on par with Jonah 1 when it talks about the storm when Jonah was out at sea. It’s interesting that it also has application to us in a kind of an allegorical way. I believe this is an historic event, and I would in no way try to diminish that and try to allegorize the text. I believe this is an actual historic event with principles that we can draw from, but there are also lessons we can learn on how to face the storms in life.

A lot of scholars question why Paul recorded it, and we really don’t know. We’re only kind of guessing, but some feel that he just wanted to show Paul the hero and kind of endear Paul to his reading audience. I don’t know. Some feel that he was actually trying to point out that the gospel was shifting in its focus from Jerusalem finally to Rome. The book of Acts takes us beginning in Jerusalem and ends in the city of Rome, so Jerusalem to Rome is a good theme of the book of Acts.

I want to outline this chapter for you. Beginning in the first eight verses, we have the start of Paul’s voyage (verse 1). It says, “And when it was determined that we,” now, stop right there and make it clear, you’re going to see it especially in these first eight verses, that whenever you have what is called the “we” sections of Acts, it is a clear indication that Dr. Luke is traveling with Paul. All through this “we” and “us” and “we” and “us,” it’s clear that Luke is with Paul on this travel. There are three sections of “we’s” in the book of Acts when Luke was with Paul—the

first is Acts 16, the second is Acts 20, and tonight we have Acts 27. He says, “that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners,” so there was a whole group of other prisoners that were going to be transported from Caesarea all the way to Rome, “unto one name Julius, a centurion of Augustus’ band.” What they did was took Paul, who was in chains, and turned him over to a Roman centurion.

A Roman centurion was kind of a captain over about 100 Roman soldiers. There are several times in the New Testament when you run into these centurions. It’s interesting, every time a Roman centurion is mentioned in the Bible, he’s mentioned in a good light. It seems that they did a good job in picking their military leaders to be good men who were honest and obeyed the law. We have the story when Jesus healed the centurion’s servant. He came to Jesus (remember in the gospels) and Jesus said, “Okay, I’ll go to your home and I’ll pray for your servant.” The centurion said, “No need for You to come to my home, for I’m a man under authority, and I know how to obey orders. I’m also a man in authority. I know how to give orders. Jesus, if you just speak the word, my servant will be healed.” Jesus actually said, “Among all those in Israel, I’ve never seen such great faith.” Here we have, again, this centurion in this good light, and he had this great and marvelous faith. There’s also the centurion when Jesus was crucified on the cross and He dismissed His spirit. The centurion standing there said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God,” again, a centurion in a good light. Then we found in Acts 10, Cornelius the centurion, and he was a man who sought after God, heard the gospel, believed in Jesus, and was saved—and his whole household. All throughout the Scriptures and other places besides we see references to centurions.

This centurion, we have his name in verse 1, was Julius. It says that he was of the Augustus’ band, which is the name of the group of soldiers that he was overseeing. “And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.” Now, they start their trip from Caesarea. (Not quite yet, I’m going to call for our last map in our study of the book of Acts. We had the first, second, third missionary journeys of Paul, and tonight’s the last map; that is, Paul’s trip to Rome. This is the last journey that we’re going to take with Paul, and we’ll look at that map in just a moment.) I want you to notice in verse 2 that they take off from Caesarea and go north (I’ll show it to you on the map) but there’s another mentioned individual that’s traveling with Paul and Luke. His name is Aristarchus, and he was from Macedonia. He was from the city of Thessalonica, and he was with us—a reference to Luke as well.

It’s interesting that Aristarchus was with Paul when he was in the riot in the city of Ephesus. The Bible says, “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” Here, he’s in a riot and then he’s in a shipwreck. When you have friends that are with you in those times of need, those are the ones that you really have the bond with, right? So, there was no doubt, a real bond with Paul and this man named Aristarchus as he traveled with Paul and Luke.

A little footnote that’s kind of interesting, and Bible students like to debate this. Paul was a Roman prisoner and normally, a Roman prisoner on a ship...and there were no Roman prison ships, there were no passenger ships. They didn’t have any Princess Cruisers or Disney

Cruises of the Mediterranean. They would actually have to hire a commercial vessel that would be transporting grains or other goods, and they would put their prisoners on it and ship them to Rome. But Paul is a prisoner who wouldn't normally be allowed to have any companions or anyone traveling with him, so there's a couple of theories. The first theory is that the centurion (and we'll see it through the story) could tell that Paul was a good man and a Roman citizen. He showed him favor and allowed Luke and Aristarchus to travel with him. Another theory (and I think it's kind of interesting) is...and this is pretty popular amongst some real student Bible scholars, that is, that Luke and Aristarchus actually went on as Paul's slaves which gave them the ability to travel with Paul and minister to his needs. If that's the case, what an awesome thing that is, and I think about that. Whenever you're going through a storm, it's a blessing to have friends to be able to encourage you, right? Don't live the Christian life alone. You need friends. You need people to pray with and to be encouraged. You need to find somebody that loves the Lord with all their heart, and you need to attach yourself to them, be mentored and encouraged by them, and encourage them. There needs to be that feedback and interaction.

I look back over my life when I was a young Christian and realize that what kept me going along the way was not just God and His grace but God brought people into my life. God has always brought really key people into my life at just the right time to encourage, help, and to strengthen me, so don't be a lone-ranger Christian. "It's kind of me and Tonto, you know, that's all there is. It's just me and the Holy Spirit." No, you need the body of Christ. You need others to be encouraged. Get involved in a small group. Get involved in a prayer group. Get involved in a Bible study where you can interact and get to meet other people. The first thing I note about the storms of life is that God gives us the gift of friendship to be able to help us to endure and handle the hardships and the storms that come our way.

Verse 3, "And the next day we touched at Sidon," which is about 60-80 miles north of Caesarea, so they're leaving Caesarea. They're going up the coast. In just a moment, we'll look at the map, "And Julius," that is, the centurion, "courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself." That phrase, "refresh himself," in the Greek literally means to obtain care. Some feel that it means that what he did was went off the ship and was able to gather supplies and things he needed, meet with Christians, fellowship with them, and be encouraged. Or, it might be as well, if Luke went along with Paul as his slave, that he went along as his personal physician, and it's possible that Paul could've been sick and went for medical care and attention. But the term there could actually be translated, and it is in some versions, to obtain care.

In verse 4 it says, "And when we," again, Luke with them, "had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. 6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria," which is Egypt, "sailing into Italy; and he put us therein." In other words, they changed vessels. Evidently, leaving Caesarea going up the coast, they were in a smaller ship, and it was a good size ship. Then, they found a larger ship that would go across the Mediterranean, all the way to Italy, and up into Rome. They transferred them to this ship that was actually bringing grain or corn from Alexandria, which is northern Egypt, "sailing into Italy;

and he put us therein.”

Verse 7, “And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; 8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea,” which is about 80 miles to the west.

Now, if you can throw the map up on the screen for just a moment. We go from Caesarea (over here on the bottom right-hand corner) and sail north up to Sidon. This is where Paul was given leave to possibly get some attention or help or some medical treatment. Then, they sailed north up above Cyprus. This is Asia. They had the protection of Asia. Instead of sailing straight across the Mediterranean, they sailed up and hung along the coast. Sailing in those days was very treacherous. Today, you might be all excited, “We’re going on a cruise. It’s going to be awesome!” In those days, it was a very primitive ship, and they would run into storms. They had very primitive means of navigation, and it was a very dangerous and difficult thing to do. They went to Myra and sailed around the coast and north of Rhodes. Then, they sailed south to the island of Crete and came to this little port called Fair Havens. They’re going to leave from Fair Havens because they find out it’s not a good place to spend the winter. I’m getting ahead of myself in the text, but then they set sail here. This is where they hit the storm. They’re blown south, afraid they’re going to hit the northern coast of Africa, but they’ve blown all the way across to Malta, where they’re shipwrecked, then to Syracuse, Rheglum, Puteoli, Three Taverns, and all the way up at the top left-hand corner they arrive in Rome. This is the journey of Paul.

Basically, verses 1-8 is the start of their journey. They come to Crete, go through this little port on the far east end of Crete named Salmone, and come around to (verse 8) Fair Havens. We’re going to discover that in Fair Havens it’s getting late in the year. It’s around October-November. Any sailing across the Mediterranean this late in the year was very, very dangerous, but the sailors are going to say, “We shouldn’t stay in Fair Havens because it’s not a very nice place for us to hang out.”

Notice in verses 9-12 we have them staying in this port called Fair Havens. “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,” and here it is, verse 12, “And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised,” they took a vote and most of them said that they should “depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice,” or actually Phoenix, “and there to winter,” which was another port on the south side of the island of Crete, so they would sail a short distance. They wanted to go to Phenice, “and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.”

Now, I realize as you’re reading this you’re saying, “Man, this is like a history lesson. This is like

really boring,” but hang onto your hats. Once you get into the storm, it gets pretty cool. Now, they’re in this little port called Fair Havens, and it says in verse 9 that “much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past,” and so “Paul admonished them.”

What is the fast? It’s a reference to the day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. It’s this Jewish feast and fast. It would take place around October 5 or the first of October. Anytime after the mid of October, and especially into November, you don’t want to sail on that sea. When I was in that storm on the Mediterranean, it was the end of September; and we ran into a huge storm on the sea at that time. So, it’s getting late. It’s the time of year when they would actually find a port and would put up for the whole winter, and they wouldn’t sail again until springtime. The vessel is very primitive. It’s about 180 feet long, about 50 feet wide, and about 40 feet deep. It was a good-sized boat. There’s actually 276 people on this boat (we’re going to see that later on), so it’s a good-sized boat but very, very primitive sailing.

Here’s what happens. Paul speaks up, and you’re going to see a progression where Paul kind of takes over—he starts as the prisoner and ends as the captain. He starts as the prisoner and ends up running the show because the Spirit of God was in him. It was an amazing thing. He says, “Sirs, I perceive,” now we don’t know how, whether it was intuition or his traveling experience (Paul had traveled over 3,500 miles by sea in his missionary journeys). He wasn’t a sailor, but he was a seasoned traveler. Paul actually says to them, maybe the Lord gave it directly to Paul, “If we take off for Rome, that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.” You might say, “Paul, where is your faith? Don’t you trust God? Don’t you believe God can take care of you?” Yes, he trusts God, but you should also use some wisdom.

Sometimes Christians do the stupidest things. You know, there’s a verse of Scripture for that. The Bible says, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” If you do something stupid, God might just let you crash and burn. Did you know that? Sometimes we do stupid things and say, “Okay, Lord, cover me as I do this dumb thing.” I can almost hear the Lord saying, “No. You’re on your own on this one.”

Paul, being a very practical man and from past experience, said, “It’s not a good idea. It’s dangerous.” Paul, you remember, had been in three other storms at sea. He’d been shipwrecked three times, so Paul was a very experienced traveler and said, “This is not a good thing.” “Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship,” well, naturally he’s going to go with the sailor, with the ship captain, and he thought, “You’re just a preacher, a Jew. You don’t know what you’re talking about,” so he didn’t listen to Paul’s advice. “And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence,” in other words, the sailors are saying, “Look, there’s no bars here. There’s no pool halls. There’s no nice hotels. This is not a good place to hang out. Let’s go a little farther down the island of Crete, and there we’ll find a better port where we can winter.” You know, it’s interesting that the majority advised to depart. It’s interesting that we see here the clear statement that the majority isn’t always right. Sometimes we get the idea, “Let’s take a vote,”

you know. Well, majority isn't always right. He's following the crowd, and it's not really the right way to go.

Now, "...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." I just showed it all to you on the map. They're on the island of Crete, and they set off...can I have the map just again real quick? You see the island of Crete? You got Fair Havens there. Well, they don't show that other port, but they actually left Fair Havens and were going to go to another port which would be just to the left of Fair Havens on that south side of the island of Crete. They were only going to go about 40 miles. They weren't going to leave the island of Crete. They were just going to set sail around the back side of the island of Crete. Another little footnote, this later time in the year the wind would be prominently from the west. It would be a headwind to try to get up to Rome or Italy, so it would be very difficult this time of the year.

We have the setting, the beginning, and then we have the stopping. Now, we have the storm, verses 13-26. "And when the south wind blew softly," so they had taken a vote, "Yeah, let's try it. Let's risk it. Let's do this little 40-mile jaunt down the coast and find a better place that has nicer hotels and better restaurants. We can hang out there for the winter," so they took off. It seems as though they had favorable circumstances. First, they disregarded the man of God. They disregarded him sharing the word from the Lord, I believe it was, they had a majority rule, and the circumstances were favorable. Everything in the natural seemed to be, "Let's go for it." "...supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete. 14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon." That word "tempestuous" we get the word typhoon from; so there was a real storm brewing, and it came against them. It starts off a nice little south wind and everything looks favorable, so they hoist the sail and they're cruising. No doubt, the centurion is kind of looking with a sneer at Paul like, "See, you were wrong. You don't know anything. You might be a preacher, but you don't know much," and he believed the captain. They're cruising along, but all of a sudden this typhoon comes along.

This kind of storm had a name. It's called Euroclydon which actually means a northeaster. "And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive," in other words, they get hit by this storm and basically are at the mercy of the storm and let the wind drive them. It's going to be interesting, and you note on the map, that though they were kind of being driven by the storm, God actually drove them the direction that they were supposed to go. You know, I think it's kind of like that. God lets us get into a storm and in trouble but uses it to kind of direct us where He wants us to go; that God, in the end, will bring him to that place. When Jesus went with His disciples out onto the sea and they encountered a storm, the Bible tells us that he calmed the storm and they were at the place or the land where they were supposed to go—they went through the storm and landed safely on the other side. So, when you're following the Lord and you hit a storm, be assured that the Lord is in control and He is guiding and directing. Even the storms that come into our lives are under the control and the care of God's providential love and control.

It says in verse 16, "And running under a certain island which is called Claudia, we had much work to come by the boat: 17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship," they actually ran ropes or cables under the belly of the ship fearful that the ship was going to break up and fall to pieces, "and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven." These "quicksands" mentioned in verse 17 are a reference to northern Africa. We won't go to the map again, but when you cross the Mediterranean, to the south is Egypt, which is northern Africa. That northern coast there you have Libya today, where there are these sandbars, and it's been the death of many ships. If you sail too far down, you can hit those sandbars. We're hearing a lot in the news right now about refugees which are going from Libya and Africa north, across the Mediterranean, to Malta and Sicily, and into Italy, and the whole issue just the last few days in the news about that; but that's the area they were afraid the winds were going to drive them too far south into the coast of northern Africa.

Verse 18, "And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship," so they started throwing stuff overboard. Again, when you hit a storm, your values are affected. You find out, "We don't need this. We don't need that," and you start throwing things overboard. Remember when Jonah hit the storm? They threw the prophet overboard! I've gotten on airplanes where people say, "Oh, Pastor Miller, I'm so glad you're on this flight. I feel better now that a minister is on the flight." I thought, Well, how do you know I'm not a Jonah? We might hit a storm and go down into the Pacific Ocean. Jonah was in the belly of the ship, and they had to bring him up. Paul is standing on top of the ship, and he takes a leadership role. It's an interesting contrast, too, between the first chapter of the book of Jonah and Jonah, and this chapter in the book of Acts. So, it says, "we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; 19 And the third day we," again, Luke writing, "cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship," they started throwing over parts of the ship and things, the chairs, benches, beds, anything to lighten the ship. "And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. 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 would navigate by the stars, and, by the way, this whole storm episode is going to last for at least 14 days. Can you imagine that? For about 11 days they didn't eat because they're in the midst of the storm, so this is quite an ordeal. They're throwing things overboard. They think the ship is going to break up, and they're all freaking out—all hope had finally come. The seasoned sailors had basically given up hope that they were going to survive this. It's often been said that man's extremity is God's opportunity. How true that is. When we reach the end of our resources, when we can see no hope, "I don't know how I'm going to work this out. I don't know what's going to happen or what God's going to do," that's when we can look up to God and we can trust Him. When you're in a situation that's hopeless, remember that God is the God of all hope; and there's no hopeless situation when it comes to God. Amen?

Verse 21, "But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said," I love this, "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss." Don't you love it when somebody says that in the midst of a situation like that? "I told you so!" This is like a classic, "I told you so." I don't think that Paul was trying to

rub it in. He was trying to get their attention. He says, "Listen, I told you. You should've listened to me and not gained this harm and loss."

Verse 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." Now, I've always kind of chuckled at that. You may not see humor, but I do. This is kind of like that sanctified humor that God has given to me because Paul's like...can you imagine, you're on a ship out in the middle of the Mediterranean in a storm and Paul says, "Don't worry. We're only going to lose the ship." "Oh, yeah. Well, what do you think we're going to do?" It's like being on an airplane, "Don't worry. The plane's just going to blow up," you know. It's like, "Well, what're we going to do?" Paul's trying to reassure and comfort them. "...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; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. 25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. 26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island." Basically, Paul's saying, "Look, we're going to crash and be shipwrecked," and "the ship's going to be destroyed, but no one is going to die." As I said, man's extremity is God's opportunity.

I was in a storm on the Mediterranean, and the first and only time that had a friend, years' ago (I'm not a fisherman), who talked me into going on his boat out of California. We went up to the Channel Islands. The thing was, he was going to fish and I'm going to surf—I'm surfing off the boat, and he's fishing off the boat. We get up there and we're camping out off the coast of the Channel Islands. It's beautiful and we're barbecuing. Everything is cool. We go to bed that night and a storm hit—man, did a storm ever hit! We spent the whole night just being knocked and banged around and jostled. It was about a 25-foot boat, and we didn't get a wink of sleep all night, just knocked around in this storm. Whenever, again, I read this story, I can identify with what Paul must've been going through as you're kind of stretched to the limit. I can't imagine trying to endure that for 14 days, but they came to the end of themselves.

Sometimes that's the best place to be. I believe that God often actually brings us to a place where there's no hope so that we have to look up, so that we have to depend upon Him, so that we have to cry out to Him. Many times God allows storms to come into our lives. Maybe you've been diagnosed with cancer. Maybe you've lost a job. Maybe you're going through some time of difficulty in your life and God allows it to come because He wants you to be dependent on Him. He wants you to look to Him, trust Him, and cry out to Him.

"But after a long abstinence Paul stood forth," and now, Paul, as I said, the prisoner becomes Paul the leader. In verse 37, we find out as I mentioned that there were 276 people on this ship and Paul, in chains, actually takes command. Whenever you hit a storm, and here's another principle, storms reveal what we're made of. We hear the idea that storms can make you or break you; and it's true that they can make or break you, but more than make you they can also manifest what is in you. That's one of the reasons why God allows storms in our lives, so that we can see what we're made of, so that our faith can be tested and tried so that it can grow stronger. If you've got something in a coffee cup and you jostle or hit it, whatever spills out was

in the cup. When you're going through a storm, whatever comes out is what's in you. Storms have a way of manifesting what we're made of and also bringing leadership to the surface.

All these sailors, even the Roman centurion, are all freaking out. They've given up hope. They don't know what they're going to do, but the man of God—with the Spirit of God and the promises of God—takes leadership. He steps forth, so God raises up Paul to become the leader on this vessel.

Here's the question we want to ask: How do we stand in the storms of life? How do we face the storms? How do we deal with the opposition that comes to us when we're facing a storm in life? Let me give you five anchors that Paul had that we can have as well to help us stay strong when we're facing these storms of life. First of all, Paul says in verse 22, "...be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God." Here's the first anchor that you have when you're going through a time of a storm, the presence of the Lord. God is with me. "For there stood by me this night the angel of God." You know, Jesus said it like this. He said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." Do you believe that? You're not alone! He is with you. Wherever you go, God is with you. Jesus actually said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." I don't know what you're facing. I don't know what you're dealing with, but you don't go there alone. God goes with you. You have His presence with you. What a blessing that is! We need to understand that. Wherever we go, the Lord is with us. He'll never leave us or forsake us. We have the presence of the Lord.

Notice also, secondly, we have the anchor of belonging to God. We are His property, "...whose I am, and whom I serve." Notice that statement, "whose I am." First, the Lord stood by me; I have His presence. Secondly, I belong to God; I am His property. Again, this may seem simple, but it's not simplistic. It is simply profound! I heard the story of some younger Christians that were talking to this elder saint. They knew that he was a great man of God and had endured storms of life. They asked him, "What do you do when you're going through hard times and difficulties? How do you cope with them? How do you handle them?" This older man who walked with God for many years said, "Whenever I'm going through a storm in life, I just look up to the Lord and say, 'Lord, Your property is in danger.'" He's referring to himself. Do you know that when you're a Christian, the Bible says, "...ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." I want you to think like that. When things are going wrong in your life or coming against you, remember that you are His child. You are His object of affection.

Do you know there's a whole slew of different ways that we belong to God, but let me mention a couple. First of all, we are the bride of Christ as the Church. You know, when you're passing through a hard time, you are His precious bride. He's not going to neglect you; He's not going to forsake you. He's going to take care of you. Secondly, we as believers are also His children. You know that, right? He's our Abba. He's our Father in heaven. If you're a father here today, you know how protective you are of your children. If someone were to come against them or attack or do harm to them, how you would protect and give yourself for and watch over them.

You think any less of our Father who is in heaven, that He doesn't love you and care about you, and He isn't watching over you? So, we go through this thing meaning, "Where's God?" God's right there with us, and God is watching over us. He loves us. We're His bride! We're His child! We're also the sheep of His pasture, and He's the Good Shepherd—He gives His life for the sheep. So, first we have His presence. That's an anchor for our soul when you're passing through the storm. Second, you are His property. You belong to Him. Thirdly, you are serving Him; that is, if you're serving Him.

Notice at the end of verse 23, "...whose I am, and whom I serve," I love that! One of the reasons why I love that so much, (I've shared it with you, and I don't want to go into detail) but I've talked before about years ago I was in Los Angeles getting ready to get on an airplane to take off on a flight to Australia. We stopped at a restaurant. We came out of the restaurant and were abducted in the parking lot at gunpoint. We were forced into our car with guns held to our heads, and they robbed us. I thought they were just going to jump out of the car and let us go. Instead, they said, "Start the car," and they drove around with guns held to us. I'll never, ever, ever, ever forget sensing God's presence with us in that vehicle. I was with the assistant pastor and another man from our church that had driven—three of us in the vehicle—and two guys with guns abducted us. I've never felt the presence of God...I mean, I felt God's presence more powerfully there than I have in a church service, that He was with me. But there was also this great awareness and consciousness that I was a King's kid, that I belonged to God.

Now, that doesn't mean I couldn't get shot. That doesn't mean I couldn't be murdered—they could throw my body in the dumpster somewhere—but I had this idea that whatever happens to me, God is in control. Whatever happens to me, God knows about and God has allowed. It brought this great peace to my heart. I realized that I was in God's hands, I was in God's control, and that I was serving the Lord. I had my briefcase there with my Bible and my sermon notes. I was headed to Australia to preach at a conference over there. I thought, Lord, Your property's in danger here right now. I've got a conference to go to. You want me to teach the Bible? Lord, just deal with this situation. Take care of it. It was just so cool to be able to just rest in that.

You know, I actually believe that we are indestructible until the time comes that God's going to take us home. Sometimes we refer to, "Oh, they died an untimely death." "Oh, it was so sad that they went early." They didn't go early, they went right on time. God has the time and He knows that time—not a day before and not a day after. The Bible says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Have you ever noticed that it says that it's appointed? That God actually has an appointment? You say, "Do you think He can tell me when it is?" No, but until that appointed time, you're indestructible. You're His servant. You have His presence. You belong to Him. You are serving Him, doing His will, and God will keep you going as long as He's got a task for you to do.

I want you to notice the fourth anchor that he had in the midst of the storm. "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar," God said to Paul, "and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." He had the peace of God—peace in the midst of the storm. The Bible says

in Philippians 4, “And the peace of God...shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” That means He will guard or garrison and protect your minds, so we don’t need to be afraid. We have God’s peace.

This is the last and fifth anchor, verse 25. He says, “Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me,” in other words, God came to Paul in the midst of the storm and spoke to him. Now, we may not have the Lord physically show up and audibly speak to us, but we have His Word. Amen? That’s why someone once said, and I love it, “Never doubt in the dark what God has spoken in the light.” When you’re going through a dark place and can’t see what the future holds, you don’t know what God’s doing, and you don’t sense His presence? You rest by faith. You believe His Word and trust Him. Don’t ever doubt in the dark what God has spoken in the light. Paul had the Lord visit and speak to him, and we have God’s presence and God’s Spirit who speaks to us through His Word.

The story is told of Abraham Lincoln, during our nation’s darkest time, that he was a man of the Word and had by his bedside on his nightstand a Bible. They say that after he died, they found in his Bible a smudge spot on Psalm 34:4. They concluded that it was because he had his finger on that Psalm and he rubbed it so much looking at it that it was kind of smudged and smeared on his Bible. Psalm 34:4, and the Scripture says, “I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” Isn’t that great? How wonderful to know that we can talk to God, we can pray to God, we can seek the Lord, and He comes to us and He comforts us in all of our fears. Notice, again, he says, “...be of good cheer.” It opens with “be of good cheer in verse 22, and again closes verse 25 with “...be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. 26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.”

Do you know that there can be joy in the midst of the storm? There can be joy in the midst of the storm. Remember Paul and Silas in Acts 16 when they were beaten and in prison in Philippi? Their feet and hands were in stocks, and at midnight what did they do? Sulked and complained, right? Is that what the Bible says? It says they praised God. They sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them. God sent an earthquake, opened the prison doors, and the jailer was converted and even members of his household! No matter what storm you’re passing through, you can be of good cheer. Joy is the fruit of the Spirit. It’s not dependent upon outward circumstances. You can trust the Lord, have faith in God, and rest in Him.

First, we have the anchor of His presence. Second, we belong to Him. We’re His property. Third, we’re serving Him and doing His will. His work will continue as long as He has a purpose and plan for us. Fourth, we don’t need to be afraid, we have His peace. Fifth, we must rest in His Word. The Bible says that we should trust in the Lord with all our heart, not lean to our own understanding. In our all ways acknowledge Him, and He shall make our paths straight—resting in Him and then experiencing that joy. Amen?