

# The Mission of Adversity

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[0:00] If Ass  
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Ass Ass All right, if you've got your Bible, go to Acts 27.

Acts 27. While you're turning there, I found out who the Baptists are in the room. Some of y'all had no idea what to do about a fourth song.

I heard the murmurs and the whispering. Are we doing a fourth song? We only do three songs. So I'm keeping you on your toes, all right?

Some of you Catholics and Baptists that are so used to tradition, throwing you a little curveball. And by the way, you needed it because you were cold during announcements, but now you're ready, amen?

All right, let's get after it. Well, we've been in a series now. Well, really since ever, the Lord ascended on high. The Book of Acts, I think this is the 25th sermon in the Book of Acts, but I know this is gonna make you sad.

[1:35] It's about to come to a close. Next week, Lord willing, is the plan to wrap up this series in the Book of Acts, and then we will start getting ready for Easter and have a different series post-Easter.

So tonight we're in Acts 27, and then we'll finish it up, Lord willing, next week as we look at the last chapter in the Book of Acts. And so I trust this has been an encouraging series for you and constantly being reminded of how every single day matters, every opportunity, all of your life is to be lived on mission for the Lord Jesus.

And so tonight we have the opportunity to look at the mission from a different angle, a different lens. So let's pick it up here in Acts 27 and beginning at verse 13. If you're able to stand, please do so.

This is just our way of honoring the reading of God's Word. Luke is writing this, he's recording this, of Paul's missionary journey. And in Acts 27, verse 13, it says, Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore.

But soon a tempestuous wind called a northeaster struck down from the land. And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along.

[ 2 : 58 ]      Running under the lee of the small island of Caudia, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship.

Then fearing that they would run aground in Sartus, they lowered the gear and thus were driven along. Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo.

And on the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

This is God's Word. Let's pray together and ask God to speak to us tonight from His Word. So Lord, we pray in these next few moments that You would open our eyes to see a part of the mission we don't often want to think about.

I pray that You would help us focus in on the fact that we are to be witnesses in every season of life that we're in. In the good times and the bad times and the difficulties and in the triumphs, in all of these seasons, we are to be witnesses for You.

[ 4 : 19 ] And so Lord, I pray that You would use me, that You would speak through me in these moments, and that You would talk to Your people, and that You would feed us, and You would speak to us. And I pray this in Jesus' name.

And God's people said, Amen. You can be seated. You can be seated. Bonnie, Charlie, Francis, Ivan, Gene.

Bonnie, Charlie, Francis, Ivan, Gene. Those are five names Florida will never forget.

It started back in August the 12th, 2004. That's when Bonnie arrived. She struck the Florida panhandle, moving northeast as a tropical storm.

She had about 45 mile per hour winds, leaving behind minimal damage, but she did create an F2 tornado that left significant destruction in northeast Jacksonville.

[ 5 : 23 ] But it was actually what happened next that had not occurred in 98 years. 12 hours later came Charlie.

Charlie wasn't as friendly as Bonnie. When he arrived in Charlotte County, he was a Category 4 hurricane. For 30 hours, for 30 hours, he kept growing in strength, reaching 150 mile per hour winds, and producing catastrophic damage from coast to coast.

It was the strongest hurricane to hit since Andrew in 1992. And as if that wasn't enough to experience Bonnie, and right after that, Charlie, three weeks later, came Francis.

The local newspaper said this, quote, if Hurricane Charlie was a one-round heavyweight knockout, Francis was a 15-round middleweight fight.

Was a 15-round middleweight fight. Here we go. Francis made landfall as a Category 2 hurricane, but it wasn't the damaging winds that made Francis such a destructive hurricane.

[ 6 : 41 ] It was the eight-foot high storm surge, along with the ongoing heavy rains that created widespread flooding. Now, at this point, they've been through three in just three weeks.

And you would think enough would be enough, but it wasn't. Eleven days later came Ivan. Ivan arrived as a Category 3 hurricane.

What he didn't have in power, he had in size. Ivan was the size of the state of Texas. And for 22 days, he hung around, 10 of which as a Category 3 hurricane, with 120-mile-per-hour winds, and 10-15-foot-high storm surge.

Like a psycho ex-girlfriend, or boyfriend for that matter, that will not go away. Get this, Ivan travels back out into the Atlantic, only to be pushed back in by the pressure system, and making landfall in Broward County.

Enough! Amen? Except four days later, comes Jean. She arrives as a Category 3 hurricane, with sustained winds of 120 miles per hour.

- [ 8 : 02 ] The problem with Jean is that she traveled the exact same path as Francis three weeks earlier, bringing even more devastation to what was already severely damaged.
- Get this in your brain's faith, family. Five storms, four of which were hurricanes, three of which were Category 3, or higher hurricanes, in six weeks.
- Five storms, in six weeks. And when the storms passed, what remained was \$40 billion worth of damage, over 100 dead, power outages for weeks, flooding like you couldn't imagine, and years and years of repair.
- Again, five storms, in six weeks. I have never been so grateful to live in Minnesota.
- Amen? Like, aren't you so glad you live in Minnesota? Five storms in six weeks. Are you kidding me? Like, think about this, faith family. Have you ever gone through a time in your life where it was one storm after another?
- [ 9 : 17 ] It was one thing after another, and maybe for you, it was just like tropical storms. For you, it was you woke up late, your kid was sick, you missed an important meeting at work, your boss was angry, and someone rear-ended you on the highway, and it was only 10 a.m.
- It was one of those days, or one of those weeks. Or maybe it was hurricanes the size of Texas. The painful and ugly divorce. You don't see your kids as much as you want to.
- You're being treated for a disease that the doctors don't really understand. The church that you put so much time into ripped your heart out. Literally, the day that you lost the company's biggest account, your mom calls and informs you that your father has passed.
- Have you ever felt like this? Five storms in six weeks. And you look up to the heavens with Christian swear words and a few others, be honest, and you inform God that if you so much as see one drop of rain any time in the next 10 years, you're out.
- You've had enough of this. If it's one more medical bill, if it's one more phone call, if it's one more criticism, if it's one more boss won't get off my back, I'm done.
- [ 10 : 33 ] Anybody relate to this? Anybody gone through seasons like this? Anybody know what it's like to have the blood-sucking leech of adversity just continue to hold its grip?
- There are seasons when we feel like the rain's never going to stop. There are seasons when we feel like it is just one more storm after the next. And if there is anybody in biblical history that can relate to you, it is our dear brother, the Apostle Paul.
- Amen? I mean, let's just remember in Acts 20, he leaves Ephesus and he's going to go to Jerusalem for just a little while to drop off some funds for the Jerusalem church.
- And then he's going to go on to Rome. But that is not how it happens. In Acts 21, he gets to Jerusalem, but he gets arrested and he will stand multiple trials and ultimately be sent to Caesarea.
- He will finally be able to set sail for Rome. And when he finally sets sail for Rome, he almost drowns in the Mediterranean as he endures a hurricane-like storm.
- [ 11 : 41 ] And oh, by the way, he hasn't eaten in 14 days. He's almost killed by a group of soldiers. He's forced to jump overboard. And when he finally gets to land, he gets bitten by a snake.
- I'm done! Luke has the audacity in Acts 28, verse 16 to say, and when we arrived at Rome, and I want to say, when you casually arrived at Rome?
- Are you kidding me? Like, I would arrive at Rome and say, where do I send the resignation letter? The Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit? Enough! I've been through enough and I'm not going to go through anything else.
- I mean, prison, okay. Not eating for two weeks. Well, I could use a little weight. But snakes? I'm done! Like, this is an actual picture of me when I get around snakes, all right?

Like, no thank you! Hey, I'm out! Like, anybody with me on that? Like, there's a reason why the serpent is a cursed animal, all right? I mean, I'm out at this point.

[ 12 : 45 ] And yet, the Apostle Paul continues storm after storm in the mission of Christ.

Let's break it down. First of all, the first thing I want you to see is this, and that's Paul went through adversity. Paul went through adversity. And you say, well, thanks, Captain Obvious. I mean, did they teach you that in seminary?

I mean, that's so obvious from the text. And if you've been with us the last few weeks, you know Paul has gone through so much adversity. But I point it out because I don't think that this can be emphasized enough because we have, and by we I mean us, we have a real misunderstanding as Christians when it comes to suffering.

Here's what I mean. Most of us have been programmed to think this way. Notice it on the screen. The more I serve, the less I'll suffer. You've thought that way before.

Even if you know it's not true, you're thinking, wait a minute, I've put in my time. I'm serving the Lord. Why am I going through all of this? And yet the Apostle Paul is serving the Lord faithfully and yet going through storm after storm after storm, both literally and metaphorically.

[ 14 : 02 ] I mean, it really makes one stop and wonder, is this how God treats His children? I mean, this is not how we would treat our children. We do, as parents, we do everything we can to avoid pain in the life of our children.

This is what we do with our kids. We put helmets on them. We wrap them in bubble wrap and bathe them in hand sanitizer. And yet God seems to be moving His children into anything but safety.

And I think this reminds us of two very, very important implications. And here's the first. Notice it on the screen. Is that suffering is not a sign that you lack God's favor. And that's almost always the way we think about it.

It's, what did I do wrong that God is mad at me about? Why am I going through five storms in six weeks? Like, clearly, I must be doing something wrong.

But the Apostle Paul here is not unfaithful at all. In fact, he's right where God wants him to be in the midst of the storm. And this, of course, was the knock on the Apostle Paul is that those that would question his apostleship would always say things like this.

[ 15 : 12 ] You know, bad things are always happening to the guy. How can someone have the favor of God and keep facing storms? That's the argument.

And this text, along with the books of Acts, forces us to say, you know what? Suffering may actually be the sign of God's favor. Oh, that's not a sermon you wanted to come here tonight.

Right? Please, Lord, can we not apply this one? Right? Suffering may actually be the sign of God's favor. This is exactly where God wants his apostle to be. Listen, listen, listen.

If God wants to save sailors in a storm, he's going to put his apostle right in the middle of it as well. Here's a second implication from this.

And that is, in God's mission, calm seas are no guarantee. Anybody want to testify to that? In God's mission, calm seas are no guarantee. I've had the privilege to plan and lead a lot of mission trips over my years in ministry.

[ 16 : 11 ] And it never fails if a, and I get it to some degree, but if a teenager was going to go on the trip, the number one, and I mean the number one question the parent would ask is not how much it costs, not how long you're going to be gone.

The number one question every time is, will it be safe? And I just wanted to cringe. Because that's a question, but it's not the first question.

And I understand why, as a parent, you'd ask that. It really should be further down the list, and here's why. Since when has being on mission for Jesus ever been about being safe?

And when has safety been a prerequisite as to whether or not you will be on mission? You know, I'm only going to do this if it's safe.

What part of carrying a cross seems safe to you? God is moving His people not into safety, but into service in some of the most difficult environments you could be in.

[ 17 : 24 ] And so we need to rethink the mission of Christ. There are no guarantees of calm seas when it comes to being on mission for the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not suggesting the best way to evangelize is go stand in the middle of Cedar Avenue, okay, and just intentionally not be safe.

I'm simply saying God is going to call you to people and to places that will not be easy. And if safety is your number one concern, you'll never be on the ship of where God wants you to be.

Amen? So suffering is not a sign that you lack God's favor. And in God's mission, calm seas are no guarantee. Isaac Watts wrote, must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease while others fight to win the prize and sail the bloody seas?

We need to think differently about the role of adversity in the admission of Christ. Now there's a reason, a sovereign reason why Paul is in this storm.

Pick it up in chapter 27, verse 21. 27-21. 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 have not sailed from Crete and incurred this injury and loss.

[ 18 : 42 ] 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 God to whom I belong and to 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.

I love those verses because here's what's happening. Paul is witnessing in his adversity. Paul sees this storm as an opportunity to testify to God.

What about your storm? What about your adversity? Do you see it as an opportunity to testify and bear witness to God?

Paul says, Listen, I belong to God. I serve God. God is going to get us through this. And there is hope even in this storm. Luke tells us that there's 276 people on this ship.

[ 19 : 53 ] So far as I can count, there are three Christians, which means this. Three up against 276 means Christianity is on full display in this storm.

We're going to find out how the Christians respond differently to this storm than everybody else. And Paul sees this as an opportunity to witness.

Let me give you three quick things that he does here that I think witnesses in a beautiful way. The first thing is this. He cares for people that don't care for him. He cares for people that don't care for him in the text that we just read.

He had warned them not to take the trip and they ignored him anyways. And then even after they ignore him, what I would do is say, Told you so. Told you so.

Told you so. But that's not what he says. Ultimately, he encourages them. We're going to be okay. We're going to get through this. In other words, these were people that didn't want anything to do with Paul. In fact, had rejected Paul and yet he continues to encourage them and love his enemies.

[ 21 : 00 ] I paused because that's hard to say. It's really, really hard to say and really hard to do. But Paul, in the midst of the storm, even though he's been rejected by these people, cares for them and encourages them.

Can I ask you a painful question? Do you let pride get in the way of your witness? Jesus, you know you're right. But rather than boasting in the fact that you're right, you serve the other person.

That's what Paul does here. He could have easily made this about himself, but he continues to make it about others. Which leads me to the second thing, and that is that Paul was concerned about the lives of other people.

At one point in this storm, the sailors are trying to escape. And look at what Paul does in verse 30 of chapter 27. And the sailors were seeking to escape the ship and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under the pretense of laying out the anchors from the bow.

And Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, unless these men stay on the ship, you cannot be saved. And the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ships of the boat and let it go.

[ 22 : 11 ] So again, Paul is concerned about their lives. He's willing, and by the way, later on, they're going to hate him for it. They're actually going to want to kill him for it. And yet, Paul doesn't matter.

He cares about their life and wants to serve them in the midst of the storm. He sees this as his mission. And the third thing, this is crazy.

Paul remains calm in his adversity. He remains calm in his adversity. Look what happens in chapter 28. Chapter 28. This I'm just going to preach, but not apply. Okay?

It's really, really hard. Okay? You'll see why in just a minute. Look at verse 1. It says, After we were brought safely through, so this is after the storm, we learned of the island of Malta.

There was a native people that showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all because it had begun to rain and was cold. Time out for just a moment. We'll come back to this. One of the things that I've learned, though, and this speaks to our ministry to one another is that oftentimes in the storm, God sends from unlikely people some unusual kindness.

[ 23 : 20 ] I mean, even when we've been through difficulties here at Faith Family, I mean, there'll be voicemails or an email or a conversation that just encourages and breathes life and is out of the ordinary, out of the nowhere kindness of God.

You know what? Even when you're in the midst of the storm, God will bring people in your life to encourage you to keep going, to be kind to you. And that's exactly what happens here.

Paul has gone through this storm and he experiences some unusual kindness. Let this just be a side note and then I'm going to keep going. Everybody right here. If you know someone tonight who's going through a storm, would you show them some unusual kindness?

Would you step out in some way and do something that just blesses them, encourages them? Would you take that ministry to serve them in their storm?

Now let's get back to the Apostle Paul and the part that I think is absolutely crazy. When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, this is verse 3, and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand.

[ 24 : 29 ] When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, no doubt this man's a murderer. Though he's escaped from death, justice has not been allowed him to live. He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

Here's the idea. The idea here is Paul had the ability to shake off his adversity. Now I've got to be honest with you, if that's a snake, I ain't doing it. All right? I ain't shaking off the adversity.

I'm going to be a sissy for a few minutes, okay? Just don't deal with snakes. But Paul here, you know, when this happens, they think he's cursed because they have the same mentality.

If something bad has happened to you, somebody must be against you or the gods must be upset with you. But Paul shakes it off and they're amazed. They can't believe he's responding that way.

Now, obviously, the practical application is not going to be that you're going to go get bit by a snake and just shake that off into the fire. The lesson here is simply this.

[ 25 : 35 ] Are you listening to me? Adversity will bite you. Adversity and suffering will bite you. And will it hurt? Oh, there's no doubt about it it will hurt.

But here's the point. How we react to that adversity is a part of our witness for Jesus. How we react to that adversity is a part of our witness for Jesus.

Now, do not misunderstand what I'm saying. That does not mean that we are not real about our pain. I mean, that's our culture here at Faith Family. We want you to be real. Don't come into this place hiding stuff or fake or whatever.

Be real about your hurt. Be raw about what you're going through. Be honest about your struggle. But you can do all that and not lose sight of the mission or the glory of God.

That's my point. And so we want to be a people that like, ow, that hurts. That's hard. That rips my life in two. This is really, really, really painful.

[ 26 : 43 ] But I will use this for the mission of Christ. And I will use this for the glory of God. That's what we're talking about. The ability to be real about your adversity and your suffering at the same time to remain focused so that others look at you and say, I've never seen anybody go through that and respond with that kind of peace.

And that kind of honesty and authenticity, where is your hope found? And therein, my friend, gives you the opportunity to be what you have seen throughout the book of Acts, a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's how Paul handled it here. Here's the point, and it'll preach. Notice it on the screen. In the storm, Paul didn't get selfish, which is what I want to do in my storms.

Instead, he remained a servant. In the storm, he didn't get selfish. And it became all about him and all about his suffering and all about what he doesn't have or whatever, how other people are getting a different treatment.

It becomes an opportunity. How can I continue to be a witness for the Lord Jesus and to be a servant of Christ even on this ship? By the way, does that remind you of anybody?

[ 28 : 06 ] You know, somebody who cared for people that didn't care about him? Someone that was more concerned about the lives of others than his own?

Someone who remained focused in the midst of his suffering? See, Paul is simply walking in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus, realizing that suffering is a part of the mission.

Notice this on the screen, Faith Family. Well, you may not be called to mission overseas, but you will be called to mission through stormy seas. You may not be called to mission overseas, but you will be called to mission through stormy seas.

In other words, adversity is not a distraction from the mission. Adversity is the mission. It is the mission. Do you remember Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, verse 13, where he says, you're the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how will its saltiness be restored?

You're the light of the world. A city on a hill can't be hidden. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

[ 29 : 18 ] You know that passage. In fact, we create that little children's song, this little light of mine, right? I'm going to let it shine. It becomes so cute and so kid-like.

But let me remind you of the verses that come right before how you are salt and how you are light. It's Matthew 5, 11 and 12.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven.

How are you salt and how are you light in suffering? Because where is light needed the most?

Answer, say it out loud, darkness. It's needed in darkness. What people need in the storm-tossed world is to know that Jesus gives hope in the storm.

[ 30 : 20 ] And who better to express the witness of that hope than the Christian who's battling cancer? Than the Christian who's been unfairly treated?

Than the Christian that's been hurt by someone else? The one who's walked through the storm and knows that Jesus is enough is the one that can witness to others in the storm as well.

Paul took this opportunity in the storm to witness for the Lord Jesus. But witness was not the only thing that Paul did. Look at verse 33 in chapter 27.

This is our last point. Verse 33. As the day was about dawn, Paul urged them to take some food, saying, Today is the 14th day that you've continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing.

Therefore I urge you to take some food, for it will give you strength. For not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you. And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat.

[ 31 : 29 ] And then all were encouraged and ate some of the food themselves. The second last thing here is that Paul worshipped through his adversity. He worshipped in the middle of this storm.

Verse 35. Did you notice the language there? It sounds a lot like communion. He took it and broke it and gave thanks. So whether this was actually an act of communion or whether it was just enjoying a meal, either way, what's clear from the text is that Paul instructs them to give thanks to God in the middle of the storm, which is unbelievably remarkable.

And we tend to think that the only way the Apostle Paul could do this is if he's some type of Superman. He can just go through the storm and nothing ever bothers him. But of course, we know that's not the case.

We've seen Paul discouraged like in Acts 18. I don't think it's because Paul is Superman. I think it's because Paul has learned some things about God that enables him to worship in the storm.

Not just witness in the storm, but worship in the storm. Let me give you three things. The first is in verse 23. Verse 23. For this very night there stood before me an angel of God to whom I belong and whom I worship.

[ 32 : 46 ] 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. Here's the first thing. I think Paul learned to trust in the Word of God.

God here gives Paul a direct word. You are going to stand before Caesar. You are going to make it to Rome. And everybody that's with you is going to make it as well.



God is, or Paul is given a specific word from God and he, are you ready? Believes it. He believes it. And because he believes it, in the midst of the storm he can give thanks.

And you say, Well, I wish God would give me a word. My dear friend, he has. A big one. Full of all kinds of words.

You have the Word of God and you have the Son of God who is the Word made flesh. You have been given a word from God.

[ 33 : 46 ] A word that you can believe that enables you to worship in the midst of the storm and give thanks to God. A second, a second is this.

Not only can we trust God's Word, we can cling to God's promises. In fact, it's actually in the storms that we often cling to the promises of God the most. Amen? Let me show you this here in the text quickly.

Chapter 27, verse 22. Here's the first promise. Yet now I urge you to take heart for there will be no loss of life among you but only of the ship.

So that's the first one. Look at now verse 24. And he said, Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar and behold, God has granted you all those that sail with you. Now verse 34.

Therefore I urge you to take some food for it will give you strength for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you. Now those were promises.

[ 34 : 44 ] Amen? No one's going to die. You're going to stand before Caesar. You're going to get there safely. Does that happen? Verse 44.

Look at verse 44. And the rest on planks or on pieces of ship and so it was that all were brought safely to land.

Was it ever any doubt? When God promises, you can take it to the bank. When God promises, it absolutely will come true.

And I think that after walking with God, Paul has learned that when God makes a promise, you can count on it. When he's arrested in Jerusalem, he's confident of this. I will still at some point in the Lord's timing, not mine, I will make it to Rome.

Alistair Begg is a pastor in Ohio. He says the following quote, Paul had the promise of God when all around him was mayhem. We know God's promises. He'll never leave us.

[ 35 : 57 ] But it feels like He's left us alone in a huge mess. Anyone, listen to this, anyone can trust the promises of God when the sun is out. The challenge is to trust the promises of God when it feels like you're all alone and the storm is raging over you.

You can trust the Word of God. You can trust the promises of God. And here's the third and final point that I think allowed Paul to worship and give thanks in the middle of the storm is you can hope in the sovereignty of God.

You can hope in the sovereignty of God. Look at verse 25 of chapter 27. So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.

Do you see what Paul is doing there? He's putting his hope that God has told me this will be and it will happen exactly as God promised it would. Why? Because He's sovereign. He is in control.

And if this is how He said it's going to be, this is how it's going to be. God is sovereign over the storm and God is sovereign over getting me to Rome.

[ 37 : 12 ] And I believe, faith family, that God is sovereign over every detail of our lives. Do you believe that? I believe that God is sovereign over every detail of our lives.

I'm going to take us down a quick little side note that I hope will be helpful and then I'll wrap the sermon up. When I talk about the sovereignty of God, people will always push back a little bit.

Well, if God is sovereign, then do my decisions matter. You ever heard that? I mean, if God is sovereign over everything, then do my decisions matter at all? This text is actually a beautiful example of how God is sovereign over the ends and the means and you make real decisions.

Let me show you what I mean. There's a tension here that I want you to feel and then we'll be done. Look back at verse 24. Lord, help me teach this. 27-24 says, 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 here's the question. Did God promise that everyone would make it safely?

[ 38 : 17 ] Yes. Did they all make it safely? Yes. God promised it. It came to pass. He was sovereign 100%.

Then why did Paul say this? Look at chapter 27, verse 31. Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.

But I thought God had already sovereignly purposed that they will be saved. How can God sovereignly promise that they will be saved? And yet Paul say, If you don't stay in the ship, you're going to die.

And the answer is, God is sovereign over the ends as well as sovereign over the means. How does God make sure that they get there safely?

By warning them, If you jump, you'll die. God has promised you're going to get there. And He's going to ensure that that happens through warnings and pleading with you to keep you on the right track.

[ 39 : 36 ] Faith family, notice it on the screen. God is either sovereign over all or He's not sovereign at all. And you say, Well, then I guess my decisions don't matter. Sure they do.

You've got to stay in the ship. If you jump, you die. And yet it's that warning that accomplishes the sovereign purposes of God.

Faith family, the Bible rejects what's known as fatalism. That is the idea that everything's determined and your decisions don't matter. And at the same time, the Bible rejects a version of human freedom that believes you control your own destiny.

Both of them are wrong. Biblical Christianity teaches that God has a determined plan and that determined plan will come to pass through the real choices of human beings.

That is how the Bible holds the sovereignty and our making decisions together. Your decisions matter. And at the same time, you don't for a moment thwart the sovereign plan of our God.

[ 40 : 40 ] And Paul knew that. Paul knew that. Paul knew more than anybody, God's going to get us to Rome. And he had had no problem saying, if you jump out of this ship, you're dead.

He knew that God was sovereign over the ends as well as the means. And there are so many biblical examples I could give you of this. I'll give you two and then I'm done.

Genesis 50. What does Joseph say to his brothers? You meant this for evil. You made a real decision and that real decision was motivated by what?

Evil and jealousy. But guess what? There was another decision over and above that and that was God's decision and he meant it for good. To bring about the salvation of Israel.

Let me give you an even bigger one than Joseph. The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was delivered up according to the definite plan of God.

[ 41 : 40 ] Acts chapter 2 and Acts chapter 4. And yet a crowd is screaming, crucify him. Why? Because they want him dead. They're not robots saying, I really want him to be alive, but something's just making me say, crucify him, crucify him.

No, they're making a decision. They want him dead. And all of it is happening according to the definite plan of God. And let me tell you why that's good news.

Because every moment of your storm is happening underneath the sovereign love and care of your heavenly Father. And you may not understand the raindrops.

And you may not understand the lightning. But you must understand this. Your God is in full control.

Cling and trust the word of God. Cling to the promise of God and hope in the sovereignty of God. How was Paul able to worship in the storm?

[ 42 : 45 ] Because of those things. When God said it, he knew it was true. When God promised it, he knew it would come to pass. And he knew that when God promises, no one can change his sovereign plan.

So in the storm, he is able to witness and he's able to worship. Faith family, some of you here today feel like you've gone through five storms in six weeks.

Like that feels like you're weak. That feels like your year so far. And you just feel like enough. The blood, thirsty leech of suffering won't let go.

And what's important for you to realize is this. Notice it on the screen, Faith family. Adversity is not a distraction from the mission. It is the mission.

Your suffering is not a diversion from the mission. It is the mission. That even in the storms, we can witness and worship.

[ 43 : 49 ] And where in the world would I come up with such a crazy idea like that? I don't know. Maybe the gospel. You see, it wasn't just Paul that experienced endless storms.

It was God's own son that faced prison, trials, persecutions, and even the bite of a serpent.

And for three hours one Friday, darkness covered the earth and Jesus endured the ultimate storm. And that is the storm of the Father's wrath for our sins.

I guess God treats His children a lot different than we would treat ours. He does. That's because His purpose is far greater than ours.

A purpose that would be seen three days later when the storm would pass and Jesus would arrive at the final destination. And He would do so, Faith family, with a message for every single one of you.

[ 44 : 54 ] Listen to me. Every single one of you here tonight on board the ship of adversity. Every single one of you here tonight that has lost your hope. Every single one of you that wants to cut the ropes and quit.

Every one of you that has been bitten over and over and over again by the snake of suffering. Here's the message to you. Jesus says, I am with you in the storm.

I will not leave you in the storm. And I promise you, you will arrive at home.

And God's people said, Amen. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, thank You for passages like this that help us, I hope, understand life more biblically.

We tend to think of the storms of life as separate from our mission. But Lord, they are a part of the mission. How in the world is the world going to know that there's hope in suffering if we do not express hope in suffering?

[ 46 : 06 ] And I know that's really hard to do. I know there's people in this room that have suffered enormous. They have experienced all kinds of massive storms.

And Lord, I pray that we would see that in those storms is an opportunity to witness to the fact that You are good and there is hope and there is a love that's far deeper and greater than any storm in this life.

And that we can worship You and that we can give thanks in our tears, in our broken lives, in our being laid out on the floor in raw brokenness and yet still say, God, You are worthy of praise.

I give thanks to You for who You are. Because we are a people who are followers of the One who faced the ultimate storm and came out on the other side with the hope of the gospel.

And so I don't know if your people tonight need this message today, but I know we will need this message someday. Because storms are a part of this world.

[ 47 : 23 ] And sometimes it's five and six weeks and it just feels like it's never going to end. Help us see that this is a part of our mission in the world to show people the reason of our hope in the Lord Jesus.

And I pray this in His name and God's people said, Amen. Amen. Amen.