

Acts 27 Living From Bad to Worse

11/20/16

And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. ² And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. ³ The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for. ⁴ And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. ⁵ And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. ⁶ There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. ⁷ We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. ⁸ Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

⁹ Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, ¹⁰ saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." ¹¹ But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. ¹² And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

¹³ 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. ¹⁴ But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. ¹⁵ And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. ¹⁶ Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. ¹⁷ After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along. ¹⁸ Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. ¹⁹ And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. ²⁰ 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.

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 not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. ²² Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³ For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, ²⁴ 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.' ²⁵ So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. ²⁶ But we must run aground on some island."

²⁷ When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. ²⁸ So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. ²⁹ And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. ³⁰ And 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, ³¹ Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." ³² Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.

³³ As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. 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." ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.)³⁸ And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

³⁹ Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. ⁴⁰ So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. ⁴¹ But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. ⁴² The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. ⁴³ But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept

them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, 44 and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

(Pastor prays)

The title of my message this morning is “Living From Bad to Worse” because that’s what it feels like Paul (in the text) is doing, and sometimes it feels like what we are doing.

Acts 27 opens with the Apostle Paul as a prisoner. He’s not in charge of anyone or anything. His missionary efforts have dried up. The world has moved on. Two years in jail. He still has two friends with him: Luke and Aristarchus, who is mentioned in V. 2. (Thank God for solid Christian friendships).

This whole chapter is about a shipwreck. We’ve read other storm stories, especially in the Gospels, where Jesus is in the boat and calms the storm. Or where He walks on the water and then calms the storm. Not this time. In this storm, everything, including the ship, is lost.

Being in prison was bad. Being in a hurricane at sea with no hope is worse. And when I got to v. 20 in this chapter, I thought of some of you. V. 20 has a real sense of being disoriented. Let’s just read v. 20 and start there. *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.*

That’s a terrible condition to be in. To have no clue where you are, to have nowhere to turn, to have no hope of being saved, to have no joy about the future and no real way out. And in the middle of this disaster, there was one man on the boat who maintained hope when it had gone out of all the others. That was a man named Paul. I want to follow him as he followed Christ. I want what he had so I can live life like he did. And I want you to have it as well. I’m going to speak in first person today. It was pretty convicting. Here’s what I believe.

When the Storm is At It’s Worse, I Want to Be At My Best

There are a few things I’ll need. From the text. . .

I need Personal Fellowship With the Lord

Lets get into the story v. 20-23: *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.*

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 not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. ²² Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³ For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship,

"This very night God spoke to me." This is not the first time this has happened. Back in Chapter 18 the Lord said to Paul, *"Do not be afraid, I am with you."* Or in Chapter 23 when Paul was first put in prison, V. 11 says, *"The Lord stood by him and said, take courage just as you testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify in Rome."*

Now he is on a sinking ship and the Lord once again visits and tells him: Do not be afraid. The Lord is speaking to Paul. This is before the Bible was finished and God's word came through direct revelation. God revealed himself directly. Now God has given us a direct revelation in a book – His Word.

He speaks to us through His word and that's how we have real fellowship with God. The Bible shows us the holiness of God, sinfulness of man, the need for Christ, and our obligation to believe. In this world I live in and you live in, I need personal fellowship with the living God. Don't let it be that on the day of judgment your Bible will stand up and curse you because you never open it.

Yes, I need fellowship and connectedness. A place to belong. All of this is true but at the bottom of that, I need fellowship with the living God so that I can give to others. On that sinking ship, there was only one man providing hope. He had been with Jesus. I want to be that man. When the storm is at its worst, I want to be at my best. I need personal fellowship with the Lord.

I Need a Deeper Awareness of Who I Am

Most of us struggle to get a good grasp on self-awareness. As Paul addresses the half-starved soaking wet passengers on the ill-fated ship, listen to how he describes himself. If you are not careful, you miss it. It's in v. 23. Let's start in v. 22 so we have context. *²² Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³ For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship,*

There is an inward awareness and an outward awareness. Let's start with the inward awareness. Inwardly, Paul understood himself as someone who belongs to God, God's personal possession.

Belonging to God. What does it mean to belong to God as a Christian? We belong to him like a sheep belongs to the shepherd. In John 10:14-15, *I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.* If we belong to God as a sheep does the shepherd, it means He died to purchase us. He purchased us. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

Not only (are we) purchased, we belong to God as a child belongs to a loving mother or father. Remember what Paul said in Romans about being adopted by God? Romans 8:15: *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

He purchased us, adopted us, and at the cross, He rescues us. Colossians 1:13-14: *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Like the good shepherd, He's laid down his life for us. Like a gracious father, He has adopted us. Like a kind liberator, He purchased us. Like a selfless hero, He rescues us. That's who I am in Christ. I have a shepherd who guides me, a father who adopted me, an abolitionist who purchased me and set me free, a hero who saved me.

All of that is found at the cross of Christ so that *who* I am is not wrapped up in *how* I perform. Who I am is completely determined by the one to whom I *belong*. Do you see that and sense that and feel that? De you believe that? That's Paul's identity inwardly.

How did he see his outward life? V. 23 again, *For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, (serve)* Our outwardness – when we belong to God in Christ, we worship and serve and love so differently. Here's what I mean. We are objective-oriented. God is process-oriented.

We want to get to Rome or to a career or to success. God is more interested in how you get there. We want a great house. God wants a Godly home. We want money. God wants generosity. We want leisure. God desires serving. We push for success. God desires faithfulness; and when we understand ourselves as belonging to Him, our goals and pursuits in life are crucified and transformed at the cross of Jesus so that when the storm is at its worst, you can be at your best.

It starts with personal fellowship with the Lord, having an awareness of who you are in Christ and having an identity that is found only at the cross of Jesus.

(Pastor prays)