

Stormy Seas and Shipwreck
Acts #28 | 27:1-28:10
April 11, 2021

Pre-Sermon Remarks

- Final two sermons in Acts, then Things That are Hard to Do round 3
 - It's Hard to Pray | Romans 8:26-30
 - It's Hard to Believe Abuse Could Happen in the Church | Matthew 7:15-20
 - It's Hard to Truly Believe That You're Loved | 1 John 3:19-24
 - It's Hard to Come to Grips With Hell | Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
 - It's Hard to Interact With People of Other Faiths | Isaiah 43:1-7
 - It's Hard to Stop a Habitual Sin | 2 Peter 2:17-22

Introduction

Ancient Jews were not a seafaring people. Fishing boats were about it.

The Waters of Chaos

- Genesis 1:2 – the Spirit over the surface of the deep
- Genesis 6-9 – the flood waters of chaos
- Exodus 14 – the death of Egypt in the waters of the Red Sea
- Samuel-Kings – Philistines came from the sea
- Jonah – the waters of chaos and the beast from the sea
- Daniel 7 – beasts from the sea (echoed in Revelation)

Michael Heiser In the ancient world the sea was a thing of dread. It was unpredictable and untamable. It was a place upon which humans couldn't live. Consequently, the sea was often used as a metaphor for chaos, destruction, and death. The power and chaotic unruliness of the sea was symbolized in both the Old Testament and a wide range of ancient Near Eastern literatures with a dragon or sea monster, variously known as Leviathan and Rahab.

Paul and the Sea

2 Corinthians 11 ²³ Are they servants of Christ? I'm talking like a madman—I'm a better one: with far more labors, many more imprisonments, far worse beatings, many times near death. ²⁴ Five times I received the forty lashes minus one from the Jews. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the open sea. ²⁶ On frequent journeys, I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, and dangers among false brothers; ²⁷ toil and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and without clothing. ²⁸ Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me: my concern for all the churches.

- **Likely** 2 Corinthians was written before his trip to Rome, so **FOUR** times?
- Here's the point: Paul was acquainted with chaos—aquatic and otherwise
- But Paul knew **Big idea: Jesus meets us with grace in the chaos of life**

Amazing Narrative

- Ocean storms was a popular story form in the Hellenistic world – Odyssey!
- This section is so compelling and well-written that skeptics think it made up
- First-person narrative, “we” this and that. There is no reason to think it made up.

Sailing to Rome

^{27:1} When it was decided that we were to sail to Italy, they handed over Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Imperial Regiment. ² When we had boarded a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, intending to sail to ports along the coast of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. ³ The next day we put in at Sidon, and Julius treated Paul kindly and allowed him to go to his friends to receive their care. ⁴ When we had put out to sea from there, we sailed along the northern coast of Cyprus because the winds were against us. ⁵ After sailing through the open sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we reached Myra in Lycia. ⁶ There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. ⁷ Sailing slowly for many days, with difficulty we arrived off Cnidus. Since the wind did not allow us to approach it, we sailed along the south side of Crete off Salmone. ⁸ With still more difficulty we sailed along the coast and came to a place called Fair Havens near the city of Lasea.

Paul's Practical Warning

⁹ By now much time had passed, and the voyage was already dangerous. Since the Day of Atonement was already over, Paul gave his advice ¹⁰ and told them, “Men, I can see that this voyage is headed toward disaster and heavy loss, not only of the cargo and the ship but also of our lives.”

- Jewish *lunar* calendar – late September or early October
- Roman writer Vegetius – the dangerous season began after 15 September, and sailing ceased for the winter from 11 November to 10 March
- Not necessarily a prophetic revelation here, but experience and practical wisdom

¹¹ But the centurion paid attention to the captain and the owner of the ship rather than to what Paul said. ¹² Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided to set sail from there, hoping somehow to reach Phoenix, a harbor on Crete facing the southwest and northwest, and to winter there. ¹³ When a gentle south wind sprang up, they thought they had achieved their purpose. They weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. ¹⁴ But before long, a fierce wind called the “northeaster” rushed down from the island. ¹⁵ Since the ship was caught and unable to head into the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. ¹⁶ After running under the shelter of a little island called Cauda, we were barely able to get control of the skiff. ¹⁷ After hoisting it up, they used ropes and tackle and girded the ship. Fearing they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the drift-anchor, and in this way they were driven along. ¹⁸ Because we were being severely battered by the storm, they began to jettison the cargo the next day.

- Remind you of Jonah?

¹⁹ On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. ²⁰ For many days neither sun nor stars appeared, and the severe storm kept raging. Finally all hope was fading that we would be saved.

- No stars = no way to know their position. *Where are we* = terror

Paul's Prophetic Warning

²¹ Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul then stood up among them and said, "You men should have followed my advice not to sail from Crete and sustain this damage and loss. ²² Now I urge you to take courage, because there will be no loss of any of your lives, but only of the ship. ²³ For last night an angel of the God I belong to and serve stood by me ²⁴ and said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul. It is necessary for you to appear before Caesar. And indeed, God has graciously given you all those who are sailing with you.' ²⁵ So take courage, men, because I believe God that it will be just the way it was told to me. ²⁶ But we have to run aground on some island."

- Standard ocean stories – warning of doom, but here is a message of hope!
- Think about how scared these people were—more open to God's leading?

²⁷ When the fourteenth night came, we were drifting in the Adriatic Sea,

- More "broad" than our definition today, likely/possible they were still south of Italy and about midnight the sailors thought they were approaching land. ²⁸ They took soundings and found it to be a hundred twenty feet deep; when they had sailed a little farther and sounded again, they found it to be ninety feet deep. ²⁹ Then, fearing we might run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight to come. ³⁰ Some sailors tried to escape from the ship; they had let down the skiff into the sea, pretending that they were going to put 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 the ropes holding the skiff and let it drop away.

The Final Stage

³³ When it was about daylight, Paul urged them all to take food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been waiting and going without food, having eaten nothing. ³⁴ So I urge you to take some food. For this is for your survival, since none of you will lose a hair from your head." ³⁵ After he said these things and had taken some bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all of them, and after he broke it, he began to eat.

- Remember, Paul is a "prisoner" – so much favor and grace of God!
- Opportunities to share the gospel! "Hair from your head" is biblical (Samuel/Kings, Jesus)

³⁶ They all were encouraged and took food themselves. ³⁷ In all there were 276 of us on the ship. ³⁸ When they had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing the grain overboard into the sea. ³⁹ When daylight came, they did not recognize the land but sighted a bay with a beach. They planned to run the ship ashore if they could. ⁴⁰ After cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and headed for the beach. ⁴¹ But they struck a sandbar and ran the ship aground. The bow jammed fast and remained immovable, while the stern began to break up by the pounding of the waves.

- Suez Canal boat? I guess this wasn't quite that big

⁴² The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners so that no one could swim away and escape. ⁴³ But the centurion kept them from carrying out their plan because he wanted to save Paul, and so he ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. ⁴⁴ The rest were to follow, some on planks and some on debris from the ship. In this way, everyone safely reached the shore.

The Island of Malta

^{28:1} Once safely ashore, we then learned that the island was called Malta. ² The local people showed us extraordinary kindness.

- “Local people” = barbarian. Greek was not their first language, more backwoods. They lit a fire and took us all in, since it was raining and cold. ³ As Paul gathered a bundle of brushwood and put it on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. ⁴ When the local people saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “This man, no doubt, is a murderer. Even though he has escaped the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.”

- Kind people, but superstitious
- Could you imagine being Paul in this situation? If me, *what gives God??*

⁵ But he shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no harm. ⁶ They expected that he would begin to swell up or suddenly drop dead. After they waited a long time and saw nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

- Nothing here about him preaching, or telling them “no.” But we’ve seen this before.

⁷ Now in the area around that place was an estate belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us hospitably for three days. ⁸ Publius’s father was in bed suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went to him, and praying and laying his hands on him, he healed him. ⁹ After this, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. ¹⁰ So they heaped many honors on us, and when we sailed, they gave us what we needed.

- Ministry continues on, but...this is not the destination. On to Rome...

Draw Out the Principles | Theology

1. Chaos is to be expected | prison, change ships, long storm, chaos due to storm, snakebite
 - a. We live in a society that has been shaped by the enlightenment | expectation!
 - b. The world, even prior to sin, had wildness
 - i. Genesis 1:2 Waters *before* creation
 - ii. Genesis 1:28 Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and **subdue** it.
 - c. Mankind failed in our duty to subdue chaos. Sin multiplies and amplifies it.
 - d. So we need to adjust our expectations. But we also need somebody to subdue it.
2. Chaos is conquered by Jesus
 - a. **Job 9** ⁸ He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.
 - i. **Matthew 14** ²⁷ ...“Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”
 - b. **Daniel 7**
 - i. Four beasts from the sea – wicked, boastful, grotesque, terrifying
 - ii. Ancient of days took his seat – power and authority, *let’s kill the beasts*
 - iii. All of a sudden – the lead beast is destroyed, the others are being defeated
 - iv. ¹³ ...suddenly one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him. ¹⁴ He was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting

dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.

- v. Jesus' death on the cross is the defeat of the forces of chaos
3. In Jesus, chaos becomes cleansing
- a. Imagery of water = chaos, but also cleansing
 - i. Red Sea – people of Israel experienced chaos, but then freedom!
 - ii. Jonah – judgment for his rebellion, but then change
 - iii. Baptism – image of cleansing waters
 - b. Jesus intends to use the chaos in our lives to cleanse us | parenting, storms

Give Practical Guidance | Application

1. Adjust your expectations – what's the worst that could happen...death?
2. Let him turn chaos into cleansing – in those moments, remind yourself
3. Look for missional opportunities
4. Pray for Jesus' return – Revelation 21, Jesus defeats the dragon, "the sea was no more"

Benediction

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.