

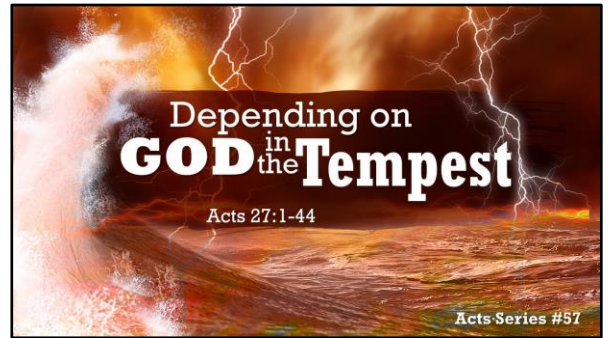
ACTSFACTS

C@G Supplementary Study Notes for ACTS

Message #57

“DEPENDING ON GOD IN THE TEMPEST”

(Acts 27:1-44)



OVERVIEW:

Acts 27 ushers in a climactic demonstration of God’s providence and sovereignty. Throughout this chapter and the next, Paul faces very arduous situations. Yet, as the narrative unfolds, readers quite clearly see that Paul is right where God wants him. Thus, Acts 27 presents a picture of God’s hand providentially orchestrating human decisions and natural events to accomplish His perfect will.

After a long two-year wait, with trials under Governors Felix and Festus and an appearance before King Herod Agrippa II, Paul is at last going to Rome. Arrangements are made and Paul joins a number of other prisoners (who are being escorted under armed guard) who are going to Rome, or one of the ports on the way. Festus hands Paul over to the Roman centurion, Julius, giving him a report about Paul to take to Rome.

Paul is not alone on this trip. Luke joins him (verse 2 – “we”). This is one of the four “we” sections in Acts where Luke inserts himself into the narrative. This is an important point, as this means that the record of the voyage is one of first-hand observation and experience, not just second-hand information. There is another companion for Paul on this voyage, too – Aristarchus. He had accompanied Paul on previous journeys (see Philemon 24 and Colossians 4:10).

THE VOYAGE (1-12)

The first leg of this long sea journey was fairly straightforward, just 70 miles north to Sidon. Here Paul was allowed to meet with the local believers. Paul would have encouraged them in their faith, as was his custom. But they were also an encouragement to Paul, and provided him with some basic items for the long journey ahead.

Leaving Sidon, they then made their way, very slowly to the port of Myra, on the Mediterranean coast of modern Turkey. It was here that they changed ships, as a larger vessel was needed for the rest of the journey to Rome.

And it was from here that things got a lot worse for all those aboard.

After sailing 350 miles in unpleasant and difficult conditions, they arrived at Fair Havens. From there, they ill-advisedly decided to continue on.

The best seasons for navigating the Mediterranean are spring and summer...and it was now autumn, going into winter (mid-October of 60AD). Paul, who was an experienced traveller, warned Julius and others that it would be disastrous, and probably life-threatening, to continue. However, Julius did not take Paul’s warning as credible and they set sail once again.

Have you ever tried to warn people about something and been ignored? What happened?



This journey must have frustrated Paul. How do you cope when progress (in church? At work?) is slower than you want? Why is patience so essential in the Christian life?

The decision to sail on is likely made for commercial reasons (grain sales). Have you ever made an unwise decision based on commercial or financial reasons?

THE STORM (13-26)

They left Fair Havens with a favourable, light wind. But conditions soon turned really bad. They encountered a storm of hurricane proportions and intensity...and it did not let up.

Look at what happens in verses 14-15, and how the sailors respond. How do the travellers feel by the end of verse 20?

Everyone was in despair, believing that they were surely going to die in this fierce storm. Out of 276 people on board, only one was not afraid. Paul. In verse 21 he stands up to address the scared, soaked crowd.

Firstly, he reminds them that they did not take his advice previously. Probably, this is an encouragement for them to pay attention to him now, because he was proven to be right before.

Then Paul tells them to “be of good courage” in verse 22.

He amazed them with the prediction/assurance that not one of them would perish in this storm. Not one.

Why did Paul have such assurance that they would all survive this terrible storm? (see 23-26)



How do you think Paul’s confidence in God might have affected everyone else on board? How would it have affected you?

In times of crisis, do you depend on God, or yourself?

In this declaration to the crowd of saturated sailors, soldiers and prisoners, we see two important points.....

- **“the God to whom I belong”** speaks of the INNER LIFE. Paul has committed his life to God through Christ.

- **“and whom I serve”** speaks of the OUTER LIFE. Paul has dedicated his life to serving God who saved him.

It is good to note that the “service” flows out of the “belonging”.

We are saved to serve. We are not saved by our acts of service.

THE SHIPWRECK (27-44)

After surviving two weeks of this terrible storm, the stricken vessel approached land during the night (27). Just before dawn, Paul encouraged everyone to have something to eat for they were all very weak and exhausted. Then the ship ran aground and everyone took to the water....with all 276 individuals getting to shore!

Once more, God had providentially looked after Paul (and a shipload of others)!

Think of situations and circumstances in your life in which you clearly saw (or can now see, looking back) the Lord’s providence.

How can the reality of God’s providence change the way you handle present & future trials in your life?

What will it mean for your life today to live truly believing that God’s promises are true?

Finally, what kind of care and respect did Paul receive from Julius the centurion (vv.3, 43)?

What does this relationship with Julius tell you about the apostle Paul?
