

**Acts 27: 1-26; “Take Heart, For I Believe God”, Sermon # 89 in the Series –
“Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on January 15th, 2023, in the Morning Worship Service.**

In this message I want to speak to you about how Paul believed God in regard to everything that God told him, while he was in the most uncertain and dangerous of situations. He says in verse 25 – “Take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.’ I want you to see that all of these things that happened to Paul were taking place in relation to his personally fulfilling his ministry to Christ. Therefore Paul sought to encourage himself and the other people around him by speaking of his faith in God. It was always his hope that somehow by the power of the Lord’s working, they might also trust in Christ.

There are many Christians for whom this is a very difficult thing; that is, to continue to believe God and his word, when many things are not going the way that they would like them to go. I want to show you from this passage that if you are a Christian, God is always watching over you for your good. He will always be faithful to fulfill His good purposes in your life. Yours is to trust Him and learn the life of faith. And as you trust in Him, He will prove to you that He has plans for you which are for your good. In difficult times you should continue to hold fast to His word.

From this passage I will speak to you 1st of all – About trusting God with Providentially ordering of all the details of our life. 2nd – About trusting God when other people do not listen to your advice. And 3rd – About how to help and encourage hopeless people. May the Lord give us grace to live the life of faith and to fulfill our own personal ministry.

1st of all – Let’s think about our trusting God with Providentially ordering of all the details of our life. (verses 1-3)

So Paul had appealed to Caesar in order to vindicate himself before the wicked Jews and the Roman authorities, that he was doing nothing wrong in relation to any man. He was preaching Christ. Preaching Christ is the best calling a man can ever have if you believe in the Providence of God. Here Paul had this great opportunity to preach Christ before king Agrippa his wife Bernice, and the governor Festus. And in listening to him, they didn’t believe in Christ, but they did believe in Paul’s innocence. Their not receiving Christ did not deter Paul from continuing on in the ministry. He knew what we should know, that ours is to be faithful to preach and to share Christ and to do God’s will according to His word. We leave the results of who is saved, with Him.

Agrippa and Festus did believe in Paul’s innocence, and they knew that he could have been set free had he not appealed to Caesar. But this too, was according to the Providence of God. God’s Providence is His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing of all of His creatures and all of their actions, it says in Question 11 of the Shorter Catechism. Paul’s decision to appeal to Caesar was governed by God’s purposes for his life. All the important decisions that you and I make are also governed by God’s holy and wise purpose for our life. Paul’s having appealed to Caesar would allow him to completely fulfill his ministry which the Lord Jesus had given him.

You will remember how it was, that when Paul was first apprehended by the Jews in the temple that they had nearly killed him. At that time, the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar that Paul, the man who preached salvation in Christ, was there. The people ran together and they seized Paul and they dragged him out of the temple, and they began beating him because they thought that he was destroying their religion. According to God’s providential ordering and will, a Roman commander was informed of this, and he came and rescued Paul from the mob. And this led to Paul’s being able to address them all from the barrack’s stairs.

They listened to him relate his testimony of how Christ had saved him and commissioned him to preach. But when he spoke to them of how, after he was converted to Christ, that he had returned to Jerusalem and was praying there, that Christ had spoken to him and told him to get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they would not receive his testimony concerning Christ. The mob had listened to him thus far, but when Paul related that the Lord was going to send him far away to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, they said – “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!” All of this uproar led to Paul’s being held in custody by the Roman authorities.

But in Acts 23: 11 it says – “But the following night the Lord stood by him and said – “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.” It is interesting that these are somewhat similar words to what we find in our text in Acts 27: 25 – “Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.” Paul was exercising faith in God in God’s word to him in every situation that he found himself. He would be of good cheer. This is what is called for from us as well. Even though we do not have direct revelation from God in His speaking to us in an audible voice, yet He gives us promises in His word which we must believe if we are to glorify him in our own personal life and ministry.

Go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the age. Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you.” He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.” (Deuteronomy 31: 8) Things had been very difficult for Paul all through this situation, ever since he went to the temple to try to show the Jews his love for God’s law and for their salvation. They were going to be just as difficult in this next stage in the fulfilling of his ministry. But he would be of good cheer. Dear Christian, will you be of good cheer? When you want to do God’s will at every point, and when you want to fulfill the personal ministry that you have, will you remember to believe in His word to you?

According to the gift that God has given to you and the purpose that he has for your life in particular, will you not remember to believe God? He will preserve you and He will guide You. Remember that He is ordering all things together for your good, even through the circumstances that you are going through. Things may look so very bleak, and even humanly speaking, bad. But God will be with you. Be of good cheer. He will bring you encouragements along the way. So, in Acts 27: 1 it says – “And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one name Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.” “So entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia.” “Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica was with us.”

How very wonderful it was, that through all this episode that Paul was about to go through on this ship, that God would so ordering it that he should have both Luke and Aristarchus go with him. These brethren no doubt believed that this was what God should have them to do personally, to support Paul in his ministry at this stage. They desired to encourage and strengthen him as their brother in Christ. They desired to be with him, to help him and encourage him in any way that they could, to fulfill his ministry.

I wonder if you think about this, my brethren? God has called some men to be apostles and prophets, and some to be pastor teachers. Their ministry is for Christ’s kingdom and for the furtherance of it. Will you pray about what your part is to help your pastor in his ministry? If God has called him to the ministry, God also has particular things that He wants to accomplish through his ministry; in relation the word that he preaches, and the witness that he bears, and the community that he is trying to reach for Christ. Will you not pray about how you can help him in

this regard, and stand with him in the difficulties that the Lord leads him into and through? This is what the church, the body of Christ in this local church, is called to do.

What is the purpose of this? To show how much we love Christ, and how much we love each other. Together we show forth the glory of Christ and His great salvation, and we preach and share the gospel to as many people as the Lord would have us to be able to reach. He will providentially order all the circumstances in regard to this. And He will be looking to see whether we really believe His word, and whether we are making the most of our opportunities to do what we can to promote the truth of Christ and His kingdom and glory, to this community. So we see here in verse 2 that they entered a ship of Adramyttium, and they put out to sea, and the next day, they landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care.

This was another providential ordering of God meant to encourage Paul that he was on the right track. Friendship between the brethren of Christ is a very needful thing to the fulfillment of ministry. Paul received the love and care of these friends who encouraged him in what he was doing. And no doubt they prayed together and talked together about many spiritual and practical things of how the gospel of Christ could go forward even in these awkward and difficult situations. This was another token for good. And it confirmed to Paul that He was doing right in going forward to whatever the Lord would have for him in the future in terms of dangers in preaching the gospel. We too, my brethren, ought to trust in God's providential ordering of all the details of our lives.

2nd – I will speak to you about trusting God when other people do not listen to your advice. (verses 4-19)

It says in verse 5 that they sailed from there, and they came to Myra, a city of Lycia, and the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put them on board it. They sailed slowly for many days, from that place, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus. The wind did not permit them to proceed. Passing Crete with difficulty, it says in verse 8, they came to a place called Fair Haven, near the city of Lasea. In verse 9 it says – “Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, (that is, the Fast of the Jews for the Day of Atonement) Paul advised them, saying, ‘Men I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives.’”

This statement of Paul's in verse 9, is called his advice to them. In the King James it says that he admonished them. The word in this case means to warn or to reprove with mildness. It means to instruct concerning a mistake which might be made in judgment. Paul was advising the centurion and the helmsman and the owner of the ship, that they ought not to undertake the sea voyage at this point in the year. Winter was coming on, which would produce blustery winds and waves. Paul gave this advice based upon his own understanding and experience of the weather at this point in the year. But also it was because, as an apostle, he was receiving direct revelation from God. He knew the motion of the Spirit to his mind, that God was directing him to give them this advice for their own sakes as well as his.

We should always be thinking of the welfare of other people around us, as Christians. We should not think to ourselves – Well, whatever is going to be is going to be. Knowing and understanding the Providence of God is not like this. Believing in God's providence is not like believing in blind fate. It is rather understanding, that although it is God who brings all kinds of different weather to accomplish His purposes among men. And that He nevertheless expects us to be wise in what we do, in relation to all different kinds of weather; the weather that He has Providentially ordered. Paul was advising them not to sail, even though he certainly wanted to go

to Rome. God had shown him that their going ahead on this voyage would end with the disaster of shipwreck, and much loss. They would lose not only their cargo and the ship, but also their own lives.

What should we do, as Christians, when we are forced to be in situations where we know that it is not good to press on ahead with our goal of going somewhere and doing something for the Lord, and others who are in authority in that situation will not listen to us? Well, if we are forced to go, compelled to go, we should understand that the Lord will be with us even so. The majority, it says in verse 12, advised to set sail. Majority opinions on what God will do with the weather are not always good. But God was going to overrule this disaster for good for Paul, and actually for all who were with him, because it would be a great opportunity for Paul to witness to them.

Verse 12 says that because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest and winter there. “And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.” “But not long after a tempestuous head wind arose called Euroclydon.” “So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive.” In verse 18 it says – “And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.” “On the third day we threw the ship’s tackle overboard with our own hands.”

Sometimes in our experience, people in authority over us will not listen to the sound advice that we will give to them. What should we do? We should trust God that He will be working His good will for us even through we are going through the most fearful of circumstances. Can you do this, dear Christian? Will you believe God? Unless you are being asked to engage in something which is morally wrong, you should understand that you should trust that God will be providentially leading you, in relation to all the difficulties of life. He has ordained them all. He is sovereign, even so, over all the sins and mistakes which people make, even though their sins and mistakes do not in any way proceed from Him. Yet in relation to them all, He will be preserving you unto His heavenly kingdom and be guiding you through this life.

3rd – I want to speak to you about how to help and encourage hopeless people.

Verse 20 says – “Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.” Let us remember, dear brethren, that God controls every aspect of the weather that we experience. The person who will not believe in God will ultimately be a very hopeless person. Verse 21 – “But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, ‘Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.’” But I want you to see that Paul wasn’t simply saying this to triumph over their mistakes in judgment. He truly loved them as he knew that Christ would want him to love them.

He says in verse 22 – “And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.” “For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.’” “Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.” “However, we must run aground on a certain island.” Wow! Did the Lord ever watch over Paul here. I want you to see the certainty of what God would do here. He says – Don’t be afraid, Paul, you must be brought before Caesar.

This was God’s purpose and so it would be accomplished. Paul would make it to Rome. He would be brought before Caesar. He would get to further testify of Christ and fulfill his ministry. But I want you to see just how very gracious God was to him and to all the men who were with him

on this ship. God has granted you all those who sail with you. All that we have in this life is something which has been granted to us by God. But often God will bless even ungodly and wicked men because of one of His saints, so that he will be able to fulfill his ministry, and they be able to hear the gospel. It doesn't say here that Paul preached Christ to them, but he did preach faith to them, and he did tell them to take heart; that he believed God that it would be just as it was told to him. Certainly, if the apostle could tell these men to take heart, even so we ought to be able to at desire to tell sinners of how because of one Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, they can all be brought safely to heaven.

They had lost all hope of being saved physically and being brought to dry land safely. But Paul's word of encouragement to them was that they ought to take heart; that he believed God's word to him just as it was told him. We should do the same thing brethren when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances and there are unbelieving people watching us. Even in their unbelief and even though they think that they have no hope, it will be our privilege to serve Christ by our telling them that we ourselves believe God. Perhaps, they too will believe.