

“The Stormy Path to Rome” | Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt | 15th Sunday after Pentecost (9/5/2021)

From Acts 27 & 28

27:13 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 ... **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.” ...

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 ...

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.

28:14 ... And so we came to Rome. **15** And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage ...

30 He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, **31** proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Introduction After *not* apologizing for the long scripture reading, Tim reminded us of the “storms” we have been through over the past 5 months: the resurgence of COVID; rocket attacks in Israel; hurricane Ida; the fall of Kabul; even the disintegration of the Big XII. Acts is a story to set our expectations that life is one storm after another. Three points:

The Beginning:

Sin can be a “storm” in our lives that takes over and controls us, but the focus here is on the Holy Spirit – beginning with the “storm” at Pentecost. He is the one controlling all things even as we experience chaos and the loss of all things. Note Paul’s call in v.24 & 25 to “take heart” and “take food” (eucharistic reference).

The Place: Rome!

His “stormy path” began when he announced his intention to go to Rome and proclaim the truth that Jesus is LORD (and Caesar is not) bringing opposition from those whose financial or political power was threatened. Note that the shipwreck cost everyone on board everything; this should be our expectation as we challenge violence and idols of various kinds in our world.

Assurance:

Paul reminds us that this “must happen” because we “must” stand before Caesar. As Tim says, we will all have our day in Rome. The Holy Spirit is the greater “storm” that removes the distractions that bar our way to Rome. And note that the Church shows up as soon as Paul arrives.

Discuss:

- 1.) What are we hanging onto that prevents us from proclaiming the truth to the Caesars of this world?
- 2.) How does this passage shed light on how we view the political process? Or the “culture wars”?
- 3.) How can our church be a comfort to those who have lost everything as a result of standing against the false gods of our time?

Conclusion/Application

Consider the “storms” that threaten your comfort in this life. And consider Paul’s encouragement to “take heart” and “take food”. From whence does your help come? [Psalm 121]