

Acts 27:1-44

“Believing God”

As a Christian that’s what it all ultimately boils down to, “Believing God,” that’s why we’re called, “Believers.” Because we *believe* God, Jesus said, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* John 3:16-17 He said, *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* John 3:18 and Again, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”* John 11:25-26 We read in Acts 10:43 that, *“To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”* Of course the book of Heb tells us, *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”* Heb 11:6

Over and over again throughout the scriptures we see an overwhelming emphasis placed on the fact that our relationship to God is hinged upon and predicated by belief, *“For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”* Rom 4:3 Even as it pertains to the salvation that God has so graciously provided for us in the person of His Son, as we read there in John and in so many other places throughout the Word of God, it’s impossible to obtain apart from belief, trusting *on* Him, placing our faith *in* Him. God has given us so many great and precious promises in His Word, through the person of His Son, none of which will we walk in, or see established in our lives apart from *belief, believing* Him for them. and I find that when things are going smooth we find it relatively easy to believe God, for His goodness, His provision, His protection and all the rest.

But it’s when the storms are blowing hard *against* us, and beating down hard *upon* us that we begin to struggle, or vacillate as to whether or not God is *really* for us, and not against us, that He has thoughts of *peace* and not *evil* against us, to give us a future, and a hope. Yet that’s when the reality of who we are, and where we’re at in our walk with God, really comes to the surface. It’s been said that Christians are like Tea bags, you don’t *really* know what they’re made of until they’re placed in hot water, and that’s true. If when you’re placed in hot water, you find yourself struggling to believe God, vacillating in your relationship *with* God, then that’s where you’re at in your maturity level before God.

People think that rough roads make them react in certain ways, that’s not true, they don’t cause a certain emotion, or response, they only reveal that emotion, or response that was already there. When I’m going down the road and hit a bump and the tea flies out of my cup, that bump didn’t place the tea in that vessel, it only created the atmosphere for that which was already there to come flying out. and When it lands in my lap, it doesn’t form in me a particular emotional response; it only creates the atmosphere for that which is already in me, to come flying out.

Rough roads, stormy seas, they reveal a lot about us, not to God, He already knows. But they can be a healthy reminder to us, and even a meter of sorts that gauge for us our where we're at with God, do we *believe* Him, are we submitted *to* Him, or are we skeptical of His love *for* us, His desire to be there and take care *of* us.

Though He slay me, yet will I serve Him, that's what Job said, and that's where Paul is at in Acts 27. Doesn't mean you'll never be nervous, or feel afraid, Paul was overwhelmed by those emotions on a # of occasions. It's been said that the best *of* men are at best *only* men. But it's coming to that place whereby I trust God is in control so come what may, I will continue to *serve* Him, and be *submitted to* Him.

Well, ch 27 finds Paul on route to Rome. He'd appealed to Caesar because of the political pawn he'd become, never really getting a fair trial because he'd done nothing wrong and was in prison on trumped up charges to begin with. (and If you're interested in how it was he was put in prison you can either read from about ch 21 on, or get the last couple of studies we've done on tape/cd) He was granted his appeal and ch 27 begins at this point of Paul's transport from Caesarea to Rome to stand before Caesar.

Vs1-2

We notice that we're back on the 1st plural pronoun "We" again which tells us that doctor Luke is officially apart of the entourage that's going on this journey with Paul. and The assumption (which I believe is a safe one) is that he's been with Paul from the beginning of his arrest up through this point but since Paul's been incarcerated for the last 2 yrs +, he hasn't been personally with Paul. But now that Paul is being transported to Rome, he's going with him. As is Aristarchus (whom Paul would call his fellow prisoner in Col ch 4, and his fellow laborer in Philemon vs 24. and It's not that he was literally incarcerated with him, but that he willingly went *along* with him, that he might be a *comfort* to him, and give *support* to him. You might say he's just being a friend in Paul's time of need, and really this is where our true friends are discovered.

When things are going good, God is blessing, people come around, want to be apart, but when the storm breaks loose and things begin to turn lean, that's when we discover who our true friends are. That's why we use the expression, "Fair weather friends," those are the type of people who hang around you, not because of who you are *to* them, but because of what you can do *for* them. and When that resource of power, or position, or influence, perhaps popularity, or whatever dries up in their eyes, they're gone, but friends like this (though rare) are an incredible blessing from the Lord. These guys willingly subjected themselves to, and underwent the same path that Paul was on that they might be there for him, and (again) a support or encouragement *to* him. Paul was on trial for his life, and they were there for him, through thick or thin. The bible says, "*A friend loves at all times,*" Prov 17:17 They'll be there for you, and not turn their back *on* you when you need them the most.

This word “other” in vs 1 in reference to “other prisoners” means “others of a different kind” which is to say that they weren’t prisoners like Paul was a prisoner. They were prisoners who’d been tried, found guilty and were more than likely on their way to be tossed in the gladiators arena in Rome, but Paul wasn’t in that category, things were different for him.

But I have no doubt that Paul sought to take advantage of the situation in sharing the gospel with these prisoners condemned to death. Because there’s something about being confronted with the reality of your own mortality that wakes you up, and makes you aware of your insufficiency before God. and You become much more open to the things of the Lord, what it means to be right *with* the Lord than perhaps you previously would’ve been. and So we see even in this the mercy of God in bringing Paul on board with these prisoners that they might hear how they can be forgiven and receive everlasting life through faith in Jesus Christ It’s like the thief on the cross beside Jesus, God in His mercy brought Christ right to him in that way, and in that moment, that he might be forgiven of his sin. Talk about God meeting you where you’re at, it doesn’t matter where you’ve been or what you’ve done, God loves you and wants to forgive you, and He’ll receive you, if you receive His Son, if you’ll just believe God for the forgiveness of your sin by simply trusting in Jesus and His finished work upon the cross on your behalf.

Vs3-13

Though it’s pretty cool to see how Luke logged such a meticulous record of their journey, what I want you to glean out of this portion is really how *not* to discern the will of God. Though it’s a common trap that we’ve all fallen into be it at one time or perhaps several times in our lives. Luke tells us how the winds were already blowing contrary to them, making sailing difficult, they had to sail under the shelter of Cypress, then under the shelter of Crete and with much difficulty they made it to this particular port, Fair Havens. and We read in vs 9 that *much time* had been spent there, I don’t know if that means 2 weeks, or a month, but more than likely they were just waiting for a break in the winds and for conditions that were a bit more advantageous to sailing.

We read there of the “Fast” which is a reference to the Day of Atonement meaning that this was late September, early October. Now on the Mediterranean, sailing was incredibly uncertain after Mid September, and impossible after Mid November. Cargo ships just shut down completely after that point because of the unstable seas/winter storms that would whip up and all the rest. So they’re already on the threshold of uncertainty, they’ve been sailing with difficulty, they’ve spent some time there at Fair Havens and Paul finally pipes up and says, “Listen, I don’t think we should be going anywhere, it’s not looking good, and I think if we take this trip it’s going to end in disaster, possibly even the loss of our lives.

That word “Perceive” in vs 10 speaks of discerning due to sight, or understanding based upon what I’ve seen. Paul is saying, “I’ve been here before” and perhaps he’d been looking up and down the coastline, could see the rolling seas, and he was just saying, “This doesn’t look good.” You’ve got to remember Paul has logged some 3,500 miles of sea travel by now due to his various mission trips, and 2nd Cor 11 tells us that he’s already been in 3 shipwrecks. So he’s not speaking as a prophet of God here, (though it seems almost as though God gave him some sort of premonition, or forewarning at least) but he’s saying, “I’ve been there/done that, seen these situations before, listen, we shouldn’t go!”

But what happened? The centurion was more persuaded by the ship’s master, than God’s man, and we can understand that, he doesn’t know Paul, but this guy’s life is bound up in sailing, he knows what’s safe.

Ok, 5 determining factors that weighed in to this centurion’s decision, mark them well and avoid them. #1 “Impatience,” see it there in vs 9, “Much time had been spent,” they’d been there at Fair Havens for what they considered to be way too long already, they were behind schedule and needed to be making up some miles. I have found that almost invariably when I begin to get anxious in an unhealthy way, meaning not that I’m excited about what God is doing, but that I’m feeling pressed between a rock and hard place and need to make a decision, that it’s not the Lord leading. The bible says, “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” Phil 4:6-7 God doesn’t guide us by apprehension, but by His peace. God’s word teaches us to wait on the Lord, not to get impatient and make snap decisions. Isa 28:16 says, “*Whoever believes will not act hastily.*” Or as the Today’s English Version reads it, “Faith that is firm is also patient.” When you don’t know what you should do, do nothing, wait upon the Lord, continue to seek after the Lord, and let Him lead you in His time.

#2 “Practical Experience” (Vs11) The Centurion was more persuaded by the practical experience of the ship’s owner, than the exhortation and advice of Paul the apostle. and Again in the natural that’s understandable, “It’s only 40 miles to the next port, that’s less than a days journey.” But when it comes to determining the will of God, just because my experience practically seems to qualify me, that doesn’t mean it’s God’s will personally for me to do it. There are times when God will use the practical skills that He’s entrusted to us for His glory, but that alone isn’t sufficient evidence for discovering God’s will. There are just as many times that God will take us from the arena of our comfort zone, into areas we’re not altogether qualified in so that we might be dependant *upon* Him, and give all the glory *to* Him. (and You can consult 1st Cor 1:26-31 for further commentary on that). But don’t depend solely on your personal/practical experience in determining God’s direction for your life.

3 “Uncomfortable Circumstances” (Vs12), “The Harbor was not suitable to winter in.” There was nothing to do there; it was vulnerable to winter storms, just generally an unpleasant place to be in the wintertime. But down the coast in Phoenix there are movie theatres, all kinds of nice restaurants, it was just a much more comfortable environment. Believe it or not, it’s not always God’s will for us to be comfortable, comfort has a tendency to lead us into lethargy, and apathy can lead to an abandoning of God’s direction for me altogether (we spoke about that Wednesday evening). God is able to get our attention much more readily when we’re in an uncomfortable condition, so there are times that though it may look like greener pastures across the fence, God has you where you are for a reason, seek that out.

Can we incur uncomfortable circumstances because of sin in our life? You bet, but not every time we’re in a tough time is it because of sin, sometimes perhaps God is wanting to teach you something, or speak to you in some way, that otherwise you may not have an ear to hear. So rather than approaching the situation like, “Where is it easiest, or the most comfortable?” We would do well to simply say, “Lord you know what’s best for me, and I just want to be submitted to that accordingly, whether it’s an ideal surrounding according to my understanding or not, I just want Your will done Your way in my life.”

#4 “Majority Consent” (Vs 12) “The majority advised to set sail from there also.” Now it’s true, *“Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established.”* Prov 15:22 There’s safety in the multitude of counsel. But where you get that counsel is critical, if it’s not from a godly source, odds are you can toss it in the trash, I’m not saying that non-believers are unintelligent, but what I am saying is that they’re not reasoning from a spiritual stand-point. and To say that the majority rule is generally a good thing, I would take a major issue with that biblically, let’s think back to the Exodus shall we? Had majority rule won over Moses would’ve been cast out before they ever crossed the Red Sea. But look at the times majority rule did win over, 12 spies, 10 say that they’re not able to take the land, 2 (Joshua and Caleb) say let’s go for it, God is well able to give it to us. Who’s advise was consented to? The Majority, was it the right advise, cost them 40 yrs of wandering in the wilderness. What if David had conceded to majority consensus when he saw Goliath? It was the majority consensus that sold Joseph into slavery, it was the majority that shouted “Crucify Him, Crucify Him, we have no King but Caesar!” and Here the majority says, “We need to move on, we can surely make it to Phoenix.” The majority is as a general rule, in the natural setting, wrong! Because God’s ways aren’t our ways, His thoughts aren’t our thoughts, so majority consensus is no standard in and of itself for determining the will of God.

Finally #5 “Favorable Conditions” (Vs13) “The south wind blew softly,” so they supposed they’d obtained their desired condition. The answer my friend may be blowing in the wind if you’re Bob Dylan, but other than that you need to be grounded in the word of God. Don’t allow favorable circumstances to dictate your course, but rather make sure your direction is supported by the balance of the Word of God, and the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit. Because it takes little to nothing to change a circumstance, and what seemed to be smooth sailing can quickly become a ferocious storm.

If you have your direction supported by the Word of God, along with the inner conviction of the Spirit of God, wrapped up all nice and tight in the package of the peace of God, you'll be on some pretty solid footing. These other things can betray you quick. (Notice)

Vs14

Tempestuous = “tuphonikos” from which we get our word, “Typhoon” they sailed straight into a hurricane.

Vs15-17

The skiff was a little life boat they towed behind the ship that had probably filled with water and was hindering rather than helping their progress so when they caught even a little break via the shelter of an island they pulled it in and secured it to the ship.

Vs18-20

What a beautiful place to be, “We came to the realization that we could do nothing more for ourselves.” Now practically for them, this is horrendous, but principally we're able to see how God wants us all to come to this place right here in our personal lives. No longer *looking to* or *trusting in* self, and its unfortunate sometimes the exceedingly tempest-tossed turbulent times it takes to bring us to that place. But that's the place that God can begin to move because I find myself open to Him as to where before I wasn't. I didn't feel like I had a need for God, could take care of things on my own. But now that I'm in this place being with out God and with out hope in the world, helpless in and of myself to do anything about my present state, I'm tempest tossed, haven't seen the sun or stars in a long time. Translation, I have no bearings, don't know where I am, where I've been, or where I'm going, I'm lost, “God you've got my attention.” and That's a great place to be, because God can do for us, that which we could never do for ourselves, namely forgive our sin, and robe us in His righteousness.

Vs19-26

“I hate to say, ‘I told you so’ but... you should've listened to me in the 1st place and we wouldn't be here.” But what happened through that is that all of the sudden Paul becomes a viable advisor, and one to take heed to (see what God's doing here), now that they're helpless and Paul has shown himself credible, he's got their attention. and In essence he takes charge of the situation and this meager prisoner is the one in control, and taking charge of the situation.

How does he capitalize on *that*? By encouraging them to look to and trust in the Lord Whom he serves. No doubt he'd been prayerful, *and fearful* in the midst of all this, praying not only for his own safety but for the safety of all on board. and He says, “Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong, and whom I serve stood by me, saying don't be afraid.” (Translation, he was afraid, and understandably so)

But the angel refocused Paul, and reassured him of God's plan for him, that he had to stand before Caesar, which meant that he was going to make it. But he also told him that God had "granted him" *all* those who sailed with him. Isn't that amazing language, God didn't see that Centurion as the one taking care of all those people, it was Paul's presence that insured their safety. God sparing the wicked for the sake of the righteous, it's that preservation power of salt that we're to be. Remember God told Ab that He'd have spared all of Sodom for the sake of 10 righteous souls. and Even then He removed Lot before He destroyed the city. But so often God spares the wicked (or non believers) around you for the sake of the righteousness of Christ *in* you. Because He's merciful, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Then we have this incredible statement that Paul made, "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me." You guys that's the bottom line, that's the essence of what it means to trust in God's Word, believing God that it will be just as it was told you in the word of God. and Time would fail us to begin to rifle off the hundreds of promises that God has issued to us in His word, the question that confronts us is do we believe God? and Paul is believing God in the worst of circumstances! Yet God has assured him of His word and Paul takes a stand of faith and believes. "We're going to run aground on a certain island, but we'll be ok."

Vs27-32

Now on a practical side, Paul knew that they'd need every person on that crew to ensure the safety of the crew, but God had made them a collective promise, there's no jumping ship. and You might underline that there in vs 31. When you've made a commitment as unto the Lord, you need to cut away all other options, or else you'll wind up taking them eventually. If skipping out on your marriage is an option, you'll eventually take it, if changing jobs though you've committed is an alternative, when the tempestuous winds are blowing, you'll jump ship. Cut the lines of those other options and stay on board, trust in the Lord and He'll see you through.

and There's holes in the analogy but even as it pertains to your relationship with Christ, don't jump ship. If you're to be saved, you have to abide in Christ. Yeah, the storms are going to come, perhaps every instinct and other sailors in this world will tell you it's time to bail, but have to abide. Jesus said, "Abide in Me." He said, *"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."* John 15:6 If you're to be saved, if I'm to make it safely to the other shore, we have to stay on board, we can't be jumping ship.

Vs33-34

This is a word of faith here, but it's only going to comfort and benefit who? Those who choose to believe it, it's true whether they believe it or not, but whether they're filled with peace, or anxiety and fear will be directly proportionate to their trust in God's Word.

Vs35-44

How many did God say would survive (vs24)? All, how many escaped safely to land? All of them, God's favor upon Paul's life translated into a blessing upon all of their lives, and I'd imagine more than a few of them were saved through this little event. Not one word that God utters will fall to the ground, they will all, every one of them, be fulfilled.

and He has said that whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. He said if any man be in Christ he's a new creation, old things pass away, behold all things are made new. He's said, If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness, do you believe God? I pray that you do.

Prayer Points: God Help us to believe You, that it will be just as it's been told to us. That You've gone to prepare a place for us, and that You'll come again to receive us to Yourself that where You are, there we may be also. Help us to abide in You, not to bail out or jump ship during stormy seasons in our lives, but to trust in You, wait upon You, being subservient to You. Help us not to lean on our own understanding in seeking Your will, but rather that we'd be grounded in Your Word, led by Your Spirit, surrounded by Your peace.

If you don't know Jesus Christ and God is dealing with you and you'd desire to give Your heart to Christ today, than let me encourage you to do just that. Believe God, that He might account to You His righteousness in the place of your fallen-ness. You can become a brand new creation today, if you'll hear His voice, open your heart, and just invite Him in. Jesus was crucified for your transgression, and was raised for your justification, that you might stand justified, with out fault before God, in Him.