



NG Study Guide: Acts 27:22-44 :: “Peace In Storms” [7.16.23]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: Storms can be a metaphor for the difficulties, struggles, crises, and challenges of life in a fallen world. How do we feel in the storms of life? At times hopeless (20), afraid (Mark 4:35), and overwhelmed (Psalm 107:23-31). Yet, God the Father has provided God the Son and Holy Spirit so his people can experience His peace in the midst of storms.

Subject: Paul’s voyage to Rome

Object: Experience God’s peace (in the storms of life)

Context: Paul traveling by sea to Rome when a life-threatening storm strikes the ship. Last week we considered the *problem* of storms and *promise* of God (Acts 27:1-24), today we contemplate God’s *prescription* and *plan* for peace.

A. The reasons for storms

1. God *brings* a storm to correct us (Jonah 1:14-16)
2. God *allows* a storm to build and demonstrate our faith: (Job 1:19)
3. God *uses* storms to draw you close to Him and grow your faith: (James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-4, Psalms 107:23-31)

B. Prescription for God’s Peace (22-29)

And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³ For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, ²⁴ saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ ²⁵ Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. ²⁶ However, we must run aground on a certain island.” ²⁷ Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. ²⁸ And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms. ²⁹ Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come.

1. Receive comfort from God’s Word (22-24)

Paul encourages them to *take heart* (22) be encouraged or strengthened. Although the ship will be lost, there will be no loss of life. Paul was proclaiming to all aboard the ship the message from God through an angel promising the lives of those on board would be spared, and reminding Paul that he would be safely brought to Rome as previously foretold (23-24, 23:11). Imagine those on board, and how they might respond to Paul’s message. Perhaps contempt or anger about perceived false hope, consternation such as anxiety or dismay about this revelation, curious in the sense of interested but not believing, or comfort for those who believe the good news.

“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). Everything written in the Bible is there for us to

learn, to prepare us to endure, to be strengthened during difficulty, and to experience God's hope! Yet, you determine how you interact with God and His Word. *How has God's word comforted you in this season of your life?*

2. Trust God (25-28)

Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me (25). Paul declares that in light of God's promise, *take heart* or be comforted, because he believes it will happen just as God said. God's peace or comfort flows from trusting God's word as reliable. They will first *run aground on an island* (26). For the next two weeks they will continue to experience an intense storm (27). During the ongoing storm(s) it is a test of faith, and an opportunity to come to faith, and a time to grow in faith. Finally, the sailors sense they were approaching land and the water is getting shallow (27-28).

3. Pray (29)

Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed ... In the midst of the night, in the dark and unknown, they pray. Paul undoubtedly prayed to the true and living God, and the sailors and passengers would likely have usually prayed to pagan gods like Neptune or Poseidon. Yet, the events might cause them to turn to YHWH just like the pagan sailors in Jonah who saw God's promises and power (Jonah 1).

Now almost everyone prays to some degree to some perceived deity. Even 25% of atheists pray in times of difficulty (Pew 2018). Yet, failing to pray to the true and living God is just as futile as praying fervently to a false god. Through prayer we demonstrate our dependence upon and devotion to God, and as we learn to trust He exchanges fear and anxiety with peace (Philippians 4:6-8).

C. Plan to trust God (29-36)

1. Use the Anchor (29)

Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern ...

Four anchors were dropped from the back of the ship to avoid being smashed into the rocks near the shore.

God's plan encourages us to focus on one anchor:

"Our hope in Jesus Christ is the sure and steadfast anchor for our souls" (Hebrews 6:19). Jesus calms our souls. The soul is the eternal essence of a person. What humans need more than elimination of storms is rest for our souls. Jesus offers rest for souls (Matthew 11:28-30).

2. Don't jump ship (30-32)

And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, 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 away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.*

The sailors planned to escape in the skiff (lifeboat), under the pretense of putting out anchors from the front of the ship (30). Paul alerts the centurion that if those men leave the ship the others won't be saved (30-31). Note, your actions impact others. The centurion orders his soldiers to cut the ropes and let the lifeboat go so that no one jumps ship (32). Also note, the centurion is listening to Paul. In essence, the centurion now values God's wisdom.

In the midst of a storm, one might question their faith. Similarly, when the values of the culture conflict with a biblical worldview there is a sense of storm. There may be a temptation to deconstruct or leave the ship of faith, for a perceived **other** lifeboat. Instead, ask questions of people whom you respect to give you godly counsel, and will respect you and your questions. Even if some of the people on board the ship are acting or thinking in a way that does not reflect Jesus, He is still the only answer to experience God's peace in the midst of the storms of life.

3. Partake of the Bread of Life (33-36)

And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing." ³⁴ *Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you."* ³⁵ *And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat.* ³⁶ *Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves.*

We need Jesus the Bread of Life (John 6:35) to give life, sustain and strengthen.

Day was about to dawn (33), a picture of a new beginning where the darkness fades to light. Paul urged them all to partake (33). They had gone *fourteen days without nourishment*, and they needed food for *survival* (33-34). As Paul took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to partake, the others were encouraged and followed (35-36). Here we are reminded of communion and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19). Fellowship or communion with Jesus (and His people) are essential to navigate storms with God's peace. Presumably, there are some that have gone without nourishment from the Bread of Life, and He invites you to partake and be filled. We need Jesus the Bread of Life!

D. Promise fulfilled (37-44)

³⁷ And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship. ³⁸ So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea. ³⁹ When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. ⁴⁰ And they let go the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore. ⁴¹ But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. ⁴² And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. ⁴³ But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, ⁴⁴ and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.

1. God will deliver (37-41)

There were 276 people on the ship (37). The sailors spotted a beach among a rocky bay. They let go of the rudder controls and the anchors, hoisted the sail and ran aground at Malta, a tiny island 200 miles from Tunis (40-41). Although the ship was lost, all the people survived.

2. God is faithful (42-44)

The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so none would escape (42). Yet, the centurion wanted to save Paul, and interceded and gave everyone the opportunity to get to land (43-44). They all made it safely, because God is faithful to fulfill His promise (22-23). God will get His people to their desired destination (John 14:1-6).

3. God's people can experience peace (Romans 5:1)

God's peace is available through faith in Christ: you can be reconciled, renewed, and refreshed (Romans 5:1).

Study Guide Qs:

- 1. How has God's word provided comfort in this season of your life?***
- 2. Where are some circumstances where people may be tempted to jump ship contrary to God's plan?***
- 3. How can partaking of Christ (drawing close to Him) influence your perception of storms?***
- 4. Share an experience where God gave you peace through a storm.***

"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

- 1. Here is a helpful article about calming storms <https://www.gotquestions.org/calming-the-storm.html>.**
- 2. Recommended reading, A.W. Tozer's *The Knowledge of The Holy*.**

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

- 1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?**

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?

2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

Ask a neighbor where you live, work, study, play or worship how they are dealing with the storms of life (and be prepared to share your approach).

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Notes:

1. Preparation and participation: Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better. As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

5. The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples. Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.