



DEVOTION FOR THE WEEK

Storm-tossed?



[Read Acts 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. ¹⁶ Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. ¹⁷ After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along. ¹⁸ Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. 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.

Dearest Brothers and Sisters-in-Christ,

We are now entering the second week of Advent – the period where we prepare ourselves to, (a) celebrate the time when Jesus first came to us, and (b) to look forward to His second coming.

How to prepare ourselves? John Piper suggested that we can¹:

1. Pursue Christlikeness now
2. Ready yourself for suffering²
3. Work faithfully for Christ

“Ready yourself for suffering” is a particularly significant reflection because we are reminded of the true nature of our era. We live in the already-but-not-yet era, where though we are already redeemed in Christ, we still have to face the storms of life.

Paul faced a huge storm on his way to Rome. The ship sailed because the south wind (in the correct direction of the journey) blew gently (v13). But halfway through, a tempestuous north-east wind (in the complete opposite direction) struck them. Luke wrote that they had to give way to the wind (v15) and twice he mentioned that they were just driven along by the wind (v15, 17). They were simply storm-tossed, and because they could see no sun or stars for days (no markings of direction available), *“all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned”* (v20). This group of people was lost at sea because of the storm. God spoke to Paul amidst the storm, affirming his life and of all on board (v24).

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-we-prepare-for-the-second-coming>

² In his unpacking of **“Ready yourself for suffering”**, he mentioned on how an increase of lawlessness will lead to the coldness of love among Christians. I am once again reminded of the word that God gave me when I prayed for WAC last week, which I released during the ministry of the word – “This advent, move out and love one person in the church (with the love that is rooted in truth). Are you willing?” If you have responded, do take steps to act upon it. If you are still hesitating, come before the Lord in prayer. If you don’t know what I am talking about, I welcome you to listen to the sermon on WAC website.

Even so, the sailors did not believe Paul and still tried to escape (v30).

At times, we may also feel like the sailors. We face storms in our lives, and because we lose all direction markers, and because the storm lasts for a long period, our faith and hope wear thin. Even though God may be speaking through sermons, through our devotions, through people near us, even speaking to us directly in our hearts, we are unable to quieten ourselves down and hear Him.

Paul was calm because he had already expected the ship to run into problems. He knew the voyage will be dangerous during this period of time (v9-10). We need to adopt the posture of Paul – one that can ***‘Ready yourself for suffering’***. Perhaps such a steady posture allowed Paul to be able to hear God amidst the storm.

Finally, Paul’s ship ran aground somewhere (v39) and all of them were brought safely to land (v44), just as God said. They ended up in Malta (Acts 28:1), and Malta is in the correct direction towards Rome. Did you realise that, amid being storm-tossed, amid being totally at a loss, God was fully in control and they ended up in the correct direction, even when they were unaware?

If you are amidst a storm right now, take great comfort that God knows and is in control of where you are going. If you are not, do ready yourself for any storm that may come. While we wait for His second coming, we give thanks for His first coming (His birth), because He came, He died, He rose again, and He gave us everything that we need to brave through the storms of this life.

In His Love,
Ps Joann