



ENDURANCE

HEBREWS 10:36

Shipwrecked

Endure through the Storm with Hope

The storms of life – at one time on another, we all face them.

One word may be all it takes to describe your storm:

Divorce

Death

Suicide

Cancer

Terminal

Bankrupt

Homeless

Attack

Addicted

Indicted

Fired

Guilty

Affair

Broke

Alone

Lost

Each of those words brings to mind a major storm – one you are in now, or one you remember from the past. When you are in a storm, you deal with so many emotions:

Fear - What will happen next? Will this storm ever end? Will I survive? We all struggle with fear in the face of a storm.

Loneliness - **No one can possibly understand what I am facing, what I am going through.** It is so easy to feel alone in a storm.

Anger - You get angry at your storm. “Why me? Why now? Why, God? **This just isn’t fair. I don’t deserve this.**”

Discouragement - Your storm may feel endless and hopeless. When the storm drags on, you encounter discouragement, even depression.

The question today is: **how do you survive a storm?**

One of the heroes of the Bible is a guy who wrote much of the New Testament - Paul. Paul faced his share of storms. He was in and out of prison, beaten, stoned, left for dead – a lot of storms. Now, nearing the end of his life and ministry, Paul is on a ship, headed for Rome to stand trial for publicly sharing his faith in Jesus.

The voyage doesn’t go well. They find themselves in a storm, headed for a shipwreck. We started through the story last

week looking at some storm-surviving principles. Let's do a quick review. We learned four things. To survive a storm:

Ask for help - Don't withdraw and try to go it alone. Ask for help. God wants to help you. We want to help you. Ask.

Be realistic - Many of you have been taught that to admit your need is negative confession. The thought is: "If I admit I'm sick, God won't heal me" or "If I admit I am struggling, I am accepting it." That's not scriptural. Over and over in the gospels, when people approached Jesus, He asked them, "What do you need?" It's OK to be honest about what you are facing. Admitting your need is one of the keys to receiving His strength.

Speak in faith - I know – it seems opposite. Be realistic – speak in faith. But, understand – **confessing your need does not negate your faith**. Realism is about your need. Faith is about your God who can miraculously supply the need.

Listen for His voice. There comes a point in the storm where you don't need to hear from a person, you need to hear from God. Get away from the crowd. Find your quiet place. Get alone with your Bible and your God. You need to hear from God.

The storm was raging. The ship was headed for a shipwreck. But, Paul was able to speak words of faith because he listened for and heard God's voice. Late at night, in the middle

of the raging storm, **an angel appeared and said, “Do not be afraid.”**

Paul had a word from the Lord. But, he didn't keep it to himself. Even though he was facing death, Paul was still focused on others.

When I visit people in the hospital and pray with them, I often pray, “Lord, send someone by this room that needs the message this patient can share. Give them opportunities to minister through this.”

A couple months ago, Pastor Addison and I were visiting Brother Nichols in the hospital. He's an Arkansas Assemblies of God minister who has a passion for reaching others. I prayed that with him. As soon as I said, “Amen”, Brother Nichols started telling us about different people he'd been able to witness to in the hospital. He and his wife were so excited at their opportunities to tell about Jesus.

That's not our tendency is it? In a storm, it is so easy to become consumed with me, my problems, my troubles. In a storm, we want to drop out of ministry, quit teaching that class, quit leading those kids. Don't do it. Even in the middle of your storm, **Focus on others**. Find a ministry. Help someone in need. Encourage others. Why? Because **focusing on others helps you keep your storm in perspective**. When you focus on

others, you discover other people are also facing storms – many worse than yours. Focusing on others helps you remember the miracle working power of God. Fight your tendency to withdraw from ministry. Do the exact opposite – reach out more!

25So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me... 26Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.”

Paul says, “We are going to be OK, we’ll survive, but sorry guys, we are going to wreck.” Here it is again – Paul was realistic. In Paul’s second letter to the church in Corinth, he wrote:

*II Cor. 12:9But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.***

Paul actually said, “I boast about my weaknesses”. It’s a powerful **principle: God’s power is revealed in your weakness.** Your weakness is an opportunity for God to do what you cannot do. Your weakness creates the perfect opening for a miracle.

27On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea...

Fourteen nights! Can you imagine? This is not a short-term thing. Paul is in an extended storm.

I remember one of our men's deep-sea fishing trips. The waters were rough that year. My friend, Eddie got so seasick he turned green. I'd never seen that before. He got sick on the way out to fish. He had to spend the rest of the day on that boat. What a miserable six hours. But, nothing compared to fourteen nights! They don't make enough Dramamine for that!

27On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea,... when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land.

How did they sense that? I don't know. I'm not a sailor. But, somehow, they knew.

28They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep. 29Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.

We don't have any record that they all decided to follow Jesus. But, they did all decide to pray. And – we identify with them, praying for anything – some hope – just a glimpse of

daylight in the midst of their storm. I've learned, even the most hardened sinner doesn't refuse prayer when their storm gets really rough. **Now, the story takes a really strange turn:**

30In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow.

What? What are they doing? **These sailors are trying to abandon ship without anyone out knowing it.** They said they were putting out anchors, but they were really trying to bail out in the lifeboat. This is so wrong. The sailors are the ones piloting the ship. Without them, the rest of the passengers don't have a chance. They lost sight of their assignment – to stay with the ship. Paul intervened.

31Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." 32So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it fall away.

So much for the plan to abandon ship. Now they are all in it together. They are going to stay with the ship. There were no other options. The lifeboat was gone. When you are facing a storm: **Don't take shortcuts.**

You know what is right. But, when the storm is dragging on, it is tempting to do wrong when it looks like it would help end the storm sooner.

- **No one will know if you cheat on the business deal.** The extra money could bail your business out.
- **Lie on the witness stand and win the custody case.** The storm will be over, right?
- **Quit tithing and giving to God.** Then, you won't have anymore financial problems.
- **You're hurting from your divorce** – the best way to quit hurting is to enter another relationship as soon as you can – right?

Don't do it. I know it looks like the easy way out, but it isn't. It's so tempting. You want the storm to end – why not try it? Even in a storm, stay committed to what is right. Anyone can do right when things are going wonderful. **In your storm – do what is right – stay with the ship.**

Don't bail out on God. Don't bail out on your family. Don't quit on obeying God. Don't quit church. Don't quit giving. Don't quit serving. Don't quit your ministry. Don't quit worshipping. Don't quit caring for others. **Stay with the ship.**

33Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant

suspense and have gone without food—you haven't eaten anything. ³⁴Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive.

Paul knows – “This storm isn’t over yet. **If we are going to survive, we are going to need strength.**”

This is a lesson so many people need to learn. In a storm, **Take care of yourself.** You need to eat. You need to sleep.

I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had to send a family member home from the hospital. I tell them, “I know you want to be here. I know you don’t want to leave. But, if you don’t get some food and some sleep, you are going to crash. You need your strength for this storm.”

Most of the time, they get mad at me. Why? They’re just looking at the storm. Take care of yourself in a storm.

Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.”

Again, Paul is focusing on others. He is encouraging everyone else on this ship. “You are going to make it. You will survive. Be encouraged. We are going to be all right.”

Remember, Paul was on the same ship in the same storm. His conditions were no different than theirs. How could Paul encourage others? Because Paul had been delivered from prison – several times, and saved from death. Paul had been through storms. Paul knew the miraculous, supernatural storm-saving

power of God. **When you are in a storm, remember the miracle working power of God.**

³⁵After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all.

This might be my favorite part of the story. They are captive on a ship, in a long-term storm. The lifeboats are gone and they are headed for a wreck. Paul gets out some bread, and before he eats it, prays in front of everyone. **I wonder what he prayed? What could he possibly give thanks for?**

“God, thank you for this beautiful day. Thank you for the rain. I know there are farmers who need it. Thank you for these wonderful sailors who have decided to stay with the ship. Thank you for this food. We are so excited to eat. Thanks God for all your blessings.”

I think it's possible Paul prayed a really long prayer and shared Jesus in his prayer. He might have prayed, “Thank you Lord that I don't have to be afraid in this storm because you are watching over me. Oh God, if I didn't know that, I would be scared to death! If I didn't have you, I would worry about breaking my necks on those big rocks down there. If I didn't have you, I'd be worried about what it feels like to drown. If I didn't have you, I'd be worried about being eaten by sharks. But, God, I have you so I don't have to be afraid of any of that. I can't imagine trying to

survive this storm without you. And, oh yeah God, thanks for the food.

We don't know what he prayed. We do know he gave thanks. **Even while you are in a storm, be thankful.** Be thankful for who God is and what He has done for you. **Don't let the storm silence a grateful heart.**

Pastor Dave Richards demonstrated this so powerfully in his battle with cancer. He and Cheryl had some of the most powerful worship experiences of their life – thanking God in the midst of their storm. **Dave stayed thankful – even though he was in a storm.**

Dave – Great is Thy Faithfulness

That's my favorite song to sing in a storm. Not only am I thanking God, I'm reminding myself about His faithfulness, His love, His strength. It would be so selfish of me to not be thankful just because right now things aren't going well.

“Rod – that's crazy! You want me to be thankful in my storm? I don't feel like being thankful.” **Instead of focusing on what you have lost, focus on what you have.** Focus on God's blessings. Be thankful. Remember, **Gratitude is not a feeling. Gratitude is a decision.** I don't have to feel thankful, I can choose to be thankful. Do you remember what Paul wrote in First

Thessalonians 5:16? We learned the verse at the start of this year:

*1 Thess. 5:6 Be joyful always; 17pray continually; 18give thanks in **all** circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

Do you know what “**all**” means? It means “all”. When things are going right, be thankful. When things are going wrong, be thankful. When it's peaceful, be thankful. In the middle of a storm, be thankful.”

“But I don't have anything to be thankful for.” Be thankful Jesus died on a cross for you so you don't have to spend eternity in hell. If you can't think of anything else, that's a pretty good one.

35After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all...Then he broke it and began to eat.

36They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves.

37Altogether there were 276 of us on board. 38When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

They threw the rest of their food over board. What an amazing step of faith. 276 people and no food left. **It was all or nothing – time to be saved.** Time for the storm to end. In a storm: **Take a step of faith.**

You've heard me talk about it. In fact, I'll admit it - I'm probably extreme in this area. **In the scariest times for our family, the first thing I do is increase my giving.** Why? **I want God to know – “I have confidence in you.** You are my source. I trust you.” **I want my family to know – we are going to make it because God is on our side.** This storm will not stop us from trusting Him and believing in His supply. I know it's hard to imagine – but in the middle of your storm, take a step of faith.

I'm not telling you to do something stupid – but, do something that requires faith.

- Give an extra offering to missions
- Share about Jesus with your neighbor
- Call your parents who you haven't talked to in years
- Give your car away to a single Mom

Be bold. Do something. Take a step of faith.

³⁹When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could.

They saw land. Finally, a chance, an opportunity to survive the storm. I can picture all 276 men, standing on the deck. They can't wait to be off that boat!

40Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach.

No anchors left – they are going to shore. Not sure what land it is, but they don't care. It is land.

41But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.

So close – but yet so far. They can see the land, but now they are stuck. Instead of the storm being over, their ship has now run aground in the pounding surf and is breaking apart. They almost made it to safety, but now – it looks like it is over.

42The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. (Seems kind of extreme). *43But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land.*

44The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety.

It's kind of an anti-climactic ending. "Everyone reached land in safety." But, it really is an incredible miracle. All 276 passengers survive the shipwreck. No one is lost. God's word to Paul was true.

It's a powerful lesson for you and me: Don't quit – this storm will end.

Your storm will not last forever. God is going to see you through the storm. His promises are true. Even when it looks most desperate, don't quit! The fear, the loneliness, the anger, the disappointment? God wants to replace those with His joy and His peace. You truly can find healing, forgiveness, peace and His presence – even in the middle of your storm. And – your storm will end. God is faithful. He is with you. You are not alone. You can make it. You can and will survive your shipwreck and your storm.