

Getting to the Other Side of Your Storm

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon encourages listeners to invite Jesus into their storms for guidance and to reach the other side of their struggles.

Duration: 44:22

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:41, Acts 19:10, Acts 27:9, Acts 27:20-21, Acts 27:25

Topics: "Storm Of Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Paul and his journey to Rome. The speaker emphasizes the importance of following God's will rather than our own desires. He highlights how following our own will can lead to despair and hopelessness, while following God's will brings purpose and hope. The speaker encourages the audience to invite God into their lives and trust in Him, even in difficult times.

Transcript

Now, Jesus, tonight, Lord, I yield my mind and body to you. I know this is a divine appointment. I know that you have, personally, selected people to be here tonight.

And you know every thought of every heart and mind. And now I know that I'm standing and speaking what's in your heart. Father, I thank you that you're going to give me the words and help me to stay out of this mix, so that it's your heart that is spoken.

It is your mind that is revealed. It is your kingdom that advances. And I pray, as we heard today, there be a demonstration of the spirit and the power tonight.

Lord, that you absolutely set people free. Absolutely bring battles to a decisive end. A victory in Christ.

And Father, I thank you for this, with all of my heart, in Jesus' name. Acts 27, please. If you'll go there, Acts chapter 27.

I'm going to be speaking tonight on getting to the other side of your storm. How many tonight would like to get to the other side of your storm? Now, storms come and storms have a purpose and a reason and a season. They come to everybody's life.

But there just does come a time. I've been there, you've been there, that we just go to our prayer closet and say, okay, Lord, thanks for the storm. Really appreciate the things that I've learned.

But it's just time. I just need to get out from under this for a little while, if you don't mind. I need to rejoice again.

I need to have my hands on something other than oars in a boat trying to make it to the other side. I need to rejoice. Now, there's a story in the Gospels of a night when the disciples were in a boat, and the Scripture says they were toiling and rowing.

They were afraid. They thought they were going to drown. And Jesus came walking to them.

And of course, the scenarios are different. There are different interactions. If you look in the different Gospels, let me paraphrase.

Basically, they were afraid. They always were afraid when they saw him. Why should we be afraid when it's Jesus in the middle of our storm? You wonder sometimes what would even be the basis of that fear.

But they opened their hearts to him, and they invited him into the boat in this one particular Gospel account. And then it says in the King James at least, Jesus stepped into the boat, and immediately they were at the land. They were at the place where they were originally heading to.

Now, there's two possibilities here. Number one, Jesus stepped in the boat, and just as Philip, for example, was translated in the book of Acts, this boat was miraculously taken from one location to another. That's one possibility.

The other is the whole scenario happened about three feet from shore. I think it's probably three to six feet from shore. It was dark, don't forget.

They're rowing, and they don't know where they are. And they're almost at the end of their journey. But you see, there's only one problem.

Jesus is not in the boat yet. And folks, this is the word the Lord has given me tonight for you before we even begin. Some of you are in a storm, and you are just feet from shore, really.

You're feet from the other side. But the journey continues, or the forces that are coming against you are still driving you back from the shore, because Jesus is not yet in the boat. You've not yet opened your heart and invited him in.

And when you invite him in, you're inviting the entire agenda of God. You're not just inviting a minimal form of divine protection. You are inviting the agenda of God into your boat.

And I believe tonight that if you can hear this, what the Holy Spirit has given me to speak, that there are many here tonight. You're going to get out of your seat, and you're going to make your way, even if it's just in your heart, even if you don't do it physically, but you're going to make, you're going to open your heart and say, Jesus, you are welcome. You are welcome into the midst of my situation.

You are welcome to speak to me, whatever you want to speak to me. You're welcome to challenge me. You're welcome to overturn my whole agenda and my direction.

And the moment you do that, you're going to be on the other side of your storm. The purpose of the storm will have been accomplished in your life. And the storm that God sends is to produce in us that desperation.

I know exactly what I'm speaking about. I've been in hurricanes, not just rowboat storms. I've been in absolute hurricanes in my spiritual walk.

I know what this is about. And I know the moment that finally, I'm willing to hear God. It's as if a peace comes.

The same Christ that stood in the boat and said, wind, stop, and waves be still, speaks into my life. And I begin to realize that the purpose of this storm has been accomplished in and for me. Now, Acts 27 is about, it's about a journey.

And I want to go, I'm going to go verse by verse from verses 10 to about somewhere in the middle of the 20s. And this is a, I'm going to liken this to the typical Christian life, typical Christian journey. From the time we begin to walk with God, we head out as it is.

We say in our heart, I want to live for the Lord. And we begin the journey. This is exactly what happened with the Apostle Paul.

And he was on a ship. He was in the divine will of God. He's moving to an end that the Lord had desired for his life.

Now, there are other people with him on this journey who are not spiritually minded. And take this now, the story as the type of the Christians who are not yet hearing from God. They are minimally hearing from God.

They like the fact that there are men of God on their boat as it is, but they are not themselves yet hearing from God. And they are moving, their whole life is moving in a direction that is going to bring them to shipwreck. And God is doing everything in his power to prevent this, but there's a deep inner stubbornness in them to hear what God is speaking.

In verse 10, verse 9, it says, And now when much time was spent, and sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already passed, Paul admonished them. And he said to them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading in the ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless, the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

Now, there had been a season of fasting. It's actually a historical time. This time of the fast was over.

Paul, who is a type in the story of the voice of the Holy Spirit, is now speaking to those who are contemplating a journey. Just as you come to the house of God, and some of you are here tonight, some of you are here this morning and this afternoon, and you are in your mind contemplating a journey. You want to go somewhere and you're happy as it is to have God with you on this journey.

And Paul now is speaking and warning, just like you quite often hear from this pulpit. If you're in a house where God is speaking, He will caution you when you're heading in a direction that is not good. And Paul said to them, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading in the ship, but also of our lives.

And you've heard it from here. You've heard us stand in the pulpit and say, Turn off ungodly television. It will not only hurt your journey, but it will eventually even take away your spiritual eyesight.

It will hurt you. You've heard Pastor Neal from time to time talk about marriages that are destroyed, children's lives that are wounded because husbands and wives will not cease this flirtatious behavior in the workplace, thinking that no harm can come from it. And they come to the house of the Lord.

They're on their journey. They claim to be walking with God. But the voice of the Lord comes and says, You must stop in this journey.

You must not do this because you see, God sees the end from the beginning. He knows where you're going. He knows where you're going to be 10 years down the road.

He's not confined to time like you and I are in this sanctuary this evening. Verse 11 says, Nevertheless, the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And here's a type of the person who says, No, I we've built something.

And this thing where we've built is taking us on a journey. And we prefer to trust this thing that we have built. And we believe that this thing is going to get us where we're going more than those things that God is speaking to us.

And many, many people are like that. In Luke chapter 10, for example, a lawyer came to Jesus and the lawyer said to Jesus, What must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said, Well, simply love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Then the scripture says this man willing to justify himself said, Then who is my neighbor? Then Jesus begins to show him three types of people who are on a journey.

Now, remember, his question is, What must I do to inherit eternal life? Or in other words, what is the evidence that I'm on a pathway that's bringing me to the life that God has destined for me, not only in time, but also through eternity? And he spoke about the priest who's heading off to do his priestly duty in the house of God and sees a man who's been left for dead on the side of the road and passes him by and goes along with his journey into his religion. And we see another man who's a Levite, a type of a worshiper. And he does the same.

He passes by this wounded, bruised and bleeding man. And you see, because these men had built their own ship, they had built a form of religion. And folks, this form of religion they thought was sufficient to carry them into everlasting life.

But Jesus is answering the lawyer's question and he's telling them and the crowd that are listening, this is not sufficient. You see, if what you profess to be of my heart, God says, does not actually possess my heart, if there's nothing in it to minister to fallen man, if you find the vessel that you're on and the journey you're on is always ducking and dodging the bleeding man in society, then you don't have something that's leading you to everlasting life. For to have the eternal life or the life of God within us means that we bear within these earthen vessels the very burden, at least in some measure, of Christ himself, who came to this earth and became a man and was not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to everlasting life.

Tell me, how do I have the life of Christ within me and not have the burden of Christ within me? How do I say that he is my Lord? His life is becoming my life day to day. I'm changing from image to image and glory to glory. And I care nothing about perishing society around me.

Tell me, am I really on the right journey? Have I really constructed the right vessel? Am I really moving in the right direction? But you see, people even here tonight will choose to believe this religion that they've concocted more than the things that are spoken by God through the Holy Spirit. God through the Holy Spirit will come and challenge religion that has no compassion for the lost. And people have then to make a decision.

Do I believe that this journey I'm on is going to lead to the loss of life? And folks, if you have no compassion for the lost, there are people that are going to lose out as it is their opportunity to know God, because simply you're on a journey without that compassion, without that passion of God. And you and I have a choice to make. We believe the things that the Holy Spirit is speaking to us or we believe this vessel and that we have concocted out of our own minds or perhaps you're following a religion that is simply made out of the minds of men.

It has no burden for the lost. It has no cross. It has no blood.

It has no altar. It has no sacrifice. It has no nothing.

It is it is simply a self-induced and a self-absorbed journey that has the name of God somehow on the bow of its ship. But it is destined for disaster. It is not going through to the other side.

Verse 12 says, And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart than Salso, if by any means they might attend to Phenis or there might and there to winter, which is in the haven of Crete and lied toward the southwest and the northwest. And verse 13 says, And when the south wind blew softly, supposing they'd obtained their purpose, losing thence, they sailed by Crete when the south wind blew softly. That's exactly how so many people are led, even in the body of Jesus Christ.

Almost like putting my finger to the wind and whichever direction seems to bring the least amount of resistance to my ambitions, my plans and my wishes. That's the direction I'm going in. And there's so many people today that are following the soft south wind, the soft south wind that requires nothing.

It just simply it has such an appearance of ease. It has such an appearance of God in it, just like the prodigal son in Luke, chapter 15. There's a young man who just he's in his father's house.

His father is trying to give him at least in some measure an understanding of of what his house is all about, but he can't seem to grasp it. And finally comes to his father and you can just feel the soft wind just leading him out of the father's house and out of the father's work and off to Hawaii somewhere where he can just relax on a beach with all of his friends and just have a real good time. And he's being led by this.

And he comes to his father and says, Give me my inheritance. And I can't help but think of the multitudes in the house of the Lord who have this inheritance of the life of Christ, have the treasure of heaven opened at their disposal to enter into the work of God. But they come to the house of the Lord and it's the same cry as the prodigal son.

Father, give me my inheritance that I may go out and enjoy my life, that I may go out and have a good time with all of my friends, that I may travel and journey. Now that now that you've set me free and now that I've become a child of God, I have so many plans, so many ambitions that I want to fulfill, so many things that I want to do. So such a sense of destiny that I feel needs to be accomplished through my life.

So now I know, Father, I can't do it without the inheritance. You see, this is the this is the measure of the deceptiveness of this young man's religion. He knew that he couldn't accomplish this without the inheritance.

He knew what he was without his father's inheritance as it is given to him and within him. And there are many, many come to the house of the Lord and you know that without God, you're a reprobate. Without God, you're an adulterer.

Without God, you're a liar. Without God, you're a drunkard. Without God, you're an adulterer.

You know it and you know what you'll be. So so many come to the house of the Lord and say, Father, also, thank you for calling me now, your son and your daughter. I just asked you now, give me the portion that I need.

I need a portion of your life. I don't want the whole thing and I don't want the whole burden. I don't even want to I don't even want to know fully what it is that you want me to do.

I just want the portion because, you see, the soft wind is blowing and it's carrying me to my sense of destiny that I have for myself. And I must go and fulfill this. The father, of course, gives him what he requires is seemingly without argument.

And, you know, the Lord is very gracious. If it's not in your heart to to serve him, you will walk out of this house still with a measure of his life in you. This is the amazing thing about the grace of God.

If it was you or I that were God, we would just simply pull the plug and let you go out empty. But God lets you go out and you still have a measure, even though your ship is headed in the wrong direction, even though you're moving, your life is is heading into a place of storms and great, great difficulty. God and his grace still goes with you.

It's it's amazing when you begin to see it. And, you know, the story, the father is not in the field with the others. The father is waiting on the porch for his son to come home.

He's waiting because there's a revelation he wants to give him. There's something this son is heading into a terrible storm, just like we're about to we're reading in Acts chapter 27. He's he's going into a place of famine.

He's going into a place of want. He's going into a place of shipwreck and ruin. He's going into a place where he himself is going to become poor, like the man beaten up on the Jericho Road.

And he's going to find nobody willing to give him anything there who doesn't have the spirit of God. Finally, comes to himself and gets up and begins to head for home. And when he comes home, he finds something he should have known all along.

His boat, as it is, as I can see him heading down the road back to his father and his boat is now just feet from shore. And it's when finally he receives the embrace of his father. His heart is now open to say, father, what is it that you have for me? He may not understand it, but even the fact that he's heading home, the fact that he's willing to be embraced by his father and finally perhaps understand what the father's will is for his life.

He now receives the covering, the ring of authority and the shoes of commission that are put upon his feet. And now he becomes an ambassador of his father throughout his and father's entire kingdom. Verse 14 says, not long after there arose a tempestuous wind called Euro Clyde.

And when the ship was caught and we could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. And that's exactly what happens to people who are out of the will of God. You're driven now, driven, you can come into this church even tonight, absolutely driven.

Verse 16, it says, running under a certain island, which is called Claude, we had much work to come by the boat, which when they had taken up, they used helps and undergirding the ship in fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, straight sail. And so we're driven. And this is exactly where you are.

I know I'm speaking prophetically to someone here tonight because God gave me this very word to speak to you tonight. There are people who have come in to this house. You are driven.

You are using helps. You've got more tapes and books than half of this church combined. You are constantly got a you've got a Walkman in your ears listening to tapes.

You're in the middle of the most horrific storm of your entire life. You're undergirding the ship. You're reading books how to do this, how to do that, how to get out of this, how to get into that.

You're listening to every tape you can get on the topic of getting through your storm. You are afraid that you're going to sink, it says right here, and fearing lest they should fall into quicksand. In spite of all the sermons you're listening, you're getting this increasing sinking feeling coming into your spirit like I'm not going to make it.

My ship is going down. I don't care how many times I look in the mirror and say, you are great and you are and try to be positive in the morning. Talk about my destiny and all of these things.

I am sinking. I know it. And it says in a straight sail and we're driven.

And here you are. I had a vision of this as I was preparing this message of people. You got your sail out.

You're going down Broadway, driven. You're going into work, driven. There's a little breeze that goes by people's desks when you are not the savior of Christ.

It's a little breeze of a person who's driven because they're on the wrong journey. You're driven at home. You're driven to work.

You're driven everywhere you go. And now you're driven in the house of God and your sail is only down just for a moment during this service, saying, God Almighty, would you be kind enough to get me through this storm? I need to get to the other side of this thing and being exceedingly tossed verse 18 with the tempest. The next day they lightened the ship.

You know, there's a day coming where you start throwing out your books and tapes and all of these undergirdings because you begin. I know there are people here that have been doing this recently. You're saying, ah, you're taking the tape and just chucking it in the garbage as you're walking down Broadway or wherever you're going, heading forward.

You said, ah, that's useless. It's not you're you're throwing out all of these undergirdings. Not that the word is not good, but at the moment you're not willing to hear it.

And it says the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. In other words, finally, you get to the point where you're casting out your own plans. You're casting out your own ability to get through the storm.

You're finally casting it out and say, God, I'm not going to make it if you don't come. I'm not going to make it. You see, you could have avoided this entire scenario by saying that in the beginning.

You know, I'm learning this as I go along to avoid this long, long stormy journey by just inviting Jesus to come in the beginning, inviting him to speak in the beginning, inviting him to take the helm, inviting him to chart the course and inviting him to say, Lord, you take me where you want me to go and you do through me what you want to do. I'm tired of charting my own course. And I'm finally getting to the point where I'm willing to throw out the tackling of the ship.

I'm willing to throw out all the things that I have gathered and put on this homemade religion of mine that is that I feel are necessary to get me through to what I think my life should be. And, you know, the amazing thing is God in his mercy just simply sends us into a storm and gets us to the point where we finally realize that it's not by might nor by power. It's not by the thoughts of man.

It's not by my own plans and my own devices. It's just by yielding to God. It's by letting him take the reins of my life in this short little vapor of a life that I have and let almighty God just begin to lead it through from beginning to end.

Lord, do you want to send me to Tanzania? Send me to Tanzania. You want to send me to the Bronx? Send me to the Bronx. You want me to do this in your house for the rest of my life? I would be happy to do this in your house for the rest of my life.

But, oh, God, I'm just so tired of my own plans. I'm so tired of my own dreams. I'm so tired of all of the preachers on television that are sowing nothing but flesh and carnality in my mind and in my spirit and teaching me only how to be discontent and putting me on a ship that you've not designed and sending me on a journey that you've not called me on.

Oh, God, thank you that in your mercy, you are willing to send a storm and you're willing to stop me in the midst of this journey. And you're willing to cause me one more time to have to cry out to you. Verse 20, it says, when the sun nor the stars appeared in many days and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was taken away.

But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, sirs, you should have hearkened to me. Now, remember, this is a type, this is a type of a Christian on a journey. And Paul is a type, as I'm speaking tonight, of the Holy Spirit, the voice of God.

Finally, when all hope that we should be saved is taken away. I think it's second Kings, second Kings, rather, chapter six, when Elisha in a certain city was surrounded by the warring armies of the king of Syria and the servant of Elijah woke up in the morning and he saw the scripture says a great host had surrounded him. And the servant said to Elisha, oh, no, what alas, master, what are we going to do? And Elisha just said, oh, God, please open this man's eyes and have him see that there are more with us than there are against us.

And of course, the Lord now in the midst of this bad situation opened the servant's eyes and he began to see what he could not see because he was walking by his natural mind. He was walking in his natural thinking. The scripture tells us that when his eyes were opened, he saw round about the mountains all surrounding it, he and Elisha and the people of God at that time, chariots of fire, angels and warring angels and chariots of fire.

He saw this incredible power of God that was there at his disposal, but yet his eyes could not see it. And Paul, the scripture tells us in verse 20 that all hope was taken away that we should be saved. Finally, we get to the point where we say, God, what are you speaking to me? You know, it's amazing.

I know I speak for every pastor on this platform and every leader. We should know this. But from time to time, I have to go through this again.

It's something about human nature. We chart a course and we think it's right and we try to keep it alive. Maybe it's a dream, a vision.

Maybe it's just a direction. Maybe I don't know. It's just different little things.

Maybe it's our own image of ourselves sometimes. And we try to keep it alive. And God says, no, this thing has to die before I can come and speak to you.

This whole thing has to die. I've just been there a few times. And all hope, it says, was taken away that we should be saved.

In other words, this thing can't be kept alive any longer. It can't go any farther. It's got to stop here.

And finally, our hearts are open. And the scripture says in verse twenty one, but after long abstinence, Paul stood in the midst of them. In other words, the voice of God comes back again.

This has been a long journey. There's been a lot of stuff going on here. They've been using helps.

They've been fearing quicksand. They've been striking sail. They've been driven by the wind.

They've been casting out their own tackling. They've been lightning, lightning the ship as it is. They finally lost hope that they can save this direction that they're on.

And after all of this, they're finally through it. Paul, representing the voice of God, one more time rises up. God has always been there.

He's always been willing to speak. It's just that they've not been willing to listen. And he said, sirs, you should have hearkened to me.

You should have not loosed from Crete and to have gained this harm and lost. In other words, you should have listened to me way back then. I was telling you not to go in this direction, but you were you were bent on doing this.

And you headed off in this direction. And because you did, it's all come to nothing. And because of my love for you, the Lord says, I've caused this cry to come into your heart.

I've caused this desperation. Remember, we began by saying you're just three to six feet from shore, most likely. But the only thing left is that you have to invite me now, the Lord says, into your boat.

You just have to invite me in. And when you invite me in, you don't get just protection. You get the agenda as it is for your life of God.

Because remember, they went to the other side and Jesus didn't follow them. They followed Jesus. There is a huge difference, folks, when things are in right order.

And Paul says in verse 22, Now I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. In other words, you're going to live, but your plans are going to die. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am and who I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul.

Thou must be brought before seizure. And, lo, God has given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe, God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

Now, this is incredible. Here are these people who have followed a soft wind. They followed a soft wind to achieve their own objectives.

They've ended up in a storm. The storm has produced in them a despair. The despair has progressed to the point of hopelessness that they don't even believe that they're going to be saved or make it through the storm.

Now, that's what happens when men follow their own will. They follow their own direction. That's always the end result.

And God's mercy will bring it to that end. You better hope that God doesn't let you continue on in your own plans, in your own schemes, because it will all come to nothing. But who then has the word of hope? Who is the person of good cheer? Here's the Apostle Paul, steps out of the middle of the ship while everyone else is trying to figure out how to get through the storm.

This man is down as it is in the bowels of the ship, and he's just communing with God. Here's a man who is completely willing to follow God even unto death, not only to go to Jerusalem, but to go to Rome, to go wherever God calls him to go, to go to prison, to do whatever God asks him to do. Completely satisfied with the life that Christ has given him.

He's on a journey. It's a completely different journey. Nobody on this ship can understand this journey.

Nobody who is walking by their own abilities and their own will can even begin to remotely understand this. Here is a man who stands on the midst of this ship and says, be of good cheer. Don't be afraid.

God spoke to me and told me I have to be brought before Caesar. Now, you have to understand, most Caesars were incredibly wicked. They were bloodthirsty.

They were not. Their dispensation of justice could be, if you annoyed them, it'd be in a moment. Just throw you to the lions, take off your head, boil you in oil.

And Paul says, be of good cheer. God spoke to me and I have to appear before Caesar. Amazing.

Everybody on the ship for a moment must be just standing back and blinking here. Here's a man who's on a journey that none of us want to go on. But he's the man who has the word of God.

He's the man who has not just the word of God, but God has given him everyone who sails with him. Now, folks, you may not like the journey that God has you on. Initially, it might be incredibly distasteful.

But I tell you tonight, if you will obey God, God will give you your children, your grandchildren, your sons, your daughters, your neighbors, your friends, your family. Not just you, but the people who sail with you. He'll give them to you because they will see in the midst of their storm, a steadfastness.

They'll see a light in your eye when their eyes have gone dim. They'll see a rock under your feet when they're sinking in quicksand. They'll see you standing in the midst of the same opposition and difficulty that faces every man, woman and child ever born into this world.

But you are standing with purpose. You are standing with an objective. You are standing with words of hope in a dying generation.

You know what your life is about. You know where you're going. And God says, not just you, but I'll give you those who sail with you.

I'll give you those who speak to you. I'll give you those who are all around you. I'll make your life a light.

I'll set it upon a hill. I'll pour out of your living water for those that are thirsty. I'll make the theology comes out of your mouth, a rock for those that are sinking in quicksand.

I'll make your life a compass for those that are confused in this darkened generation. Be of good cheer. I believe God.

See, this is the oxymoron, for lack of a better word. It's the man who's going on what humanity says is the most distasteful journey of all, who's the man with hope and life. And his course is set and he has a compass in his hand and he sees the end from the beginning.

His eyes singly focused, his whole body is full of light. And this man, this woman. Becomes the person who is able to gather the lost, the wounded, the dying, the struggling.

It's this man, Paul, who says, Jesus, you are welcome on my boat. He's not even on a boat of his own making in this particular case. But ironically, the boat that he's on is not the boat he's traveling on.

There's another boat that's carrying him. There's an unseen vessel that is taking him. It's amazing when you begin to see it.

There's an absolute split between the physical and the spiritual world. And they have Paul on a physical boat. But it's not the physical boat that's carrying him.

It's a spiritual boat. It's a boat that Paul has said in his life. Now, it's not like Paul didn't go through hard times.

You remember the scripture. He said, I don't have you ignorant, brethren, of the trouble that came to us in Asia, that we were pressed down above measure. That we despaired even of life.

It's not like Paul hadn't gone through storms himself and known difficulties and trials. But somewhere along the line, Paul made the decision, that final decision that said, Jesus, you are welcome to be the center of my storm. You are welcome in the boat.

And through the storm, I've been studying Paul for a long time. And through the storm, I see he never lost his song. He never lost his hope.

When everyone else is running for fear, Paul is the eternal optimist, really. He's the one who goes to jail and everyone around is trying to stop him. And even in jail, he just takes out a pen and just simply begins to write Timothy and begins to write different people.

He's not free to preach, but he's free to write. And God has put a pen in this man's hand by the Holy Ghost and is writing the holy scriptures that we have today. And we see simply the end journey of a man whose his sense of destiny is not what he thinks he should be.

It's not where he thinks he should go. It's where God is leading him. Would be to God, wouldn't it be incredible if we could have a church age like that again? If we could have a church age, everyone wants to emulate Acts chapter two and they all want to go into an upper room and they all want to come out and roll around and speak in tongues.

But there's so very few that are willing to embrace the call. And it was a call to be a martyr in those days. And they were fully aware of it.

It was a call to leave familiarity and go into the territory of the spirit, which to them, at least before the baptism, was an unfamiliar territory. It was a call to go, as it were, to the ends of the earth and be witnesses, living witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. And the uttermost parts of the earth, there were places that people hadn't gone to, they were they were not familiar with the journey.

But it was a call of God on their lives to make this journey. And these hundred and twenty peoples came out of this upper room, stepped out into the public as it is. And they made a declaration.

We're on a journey because the scripture says they were speaking in known languages. The wonder of the anticipated outworking, the Megalios, which is the anticipated outworking of the inward life of God. They were speaking it out loud.

And amazing when you begin to see it, that God took these hundred and twenty and very shortly there were three thousand one hundred and twenty. And very shortly after that, there were probably well over five, six, seven thousand. And very shortly after that, all of Asia at that time and many parts of the known world had been literally overturned by the gospel of Jesus Christ through a people who are willing to simply say, Jesus, in spite of where this takes me, I invite you into this boat.

I invite you into this journey that I'm on. I invite you to be the center because it's not going to be an easy journey. And they knew it.

But I invite you into the center of this journey. And Paul says in verse twenty five, Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God. Even as it was told me, I believe God.

There comes a point, folks, where that's what it's all about. I believe God. I stopped trying to reason it out.

I stopped trying to figure it out. I see it here. I believe it.

I believe God that if he leads me, he will keep me. If he calls me, he will empower me. If he asked me to do something, he'll give me every resource I need, that it can be done in a manner that brings honor and

glory to his name.

If he's called me on the journey, then he's going to take me on the journey. I live until God says I don't. It's over when God says it's over.

Until then, I live for him. I'm moving him, Paul says. We have our being in him.

It is Christ and Christ alone. It is all Christ. And everything in us is Christ and through us is Christ.

John, chapter five, and I'm going to close with this. You don't have to turn there. A man who is thirty eight years lame.

He's laying on a mat at a. In a place of where water was stirred in. Every once in a while, and there was a different porticoes leading down to the stirring of the water. And Jesus stood one day beside this man and.

He said, will you be made whole? The man says, I will have no man. And when I get up and try to go, somebody else goes down before me. And he's the type of the person.

When Christ comes and he's standing right outside of your storm, even tonight, even this very moment, he's standing three feet from the bow of your boat. And he says, will you be made whole? And he's the type of a man or woman that says, well, it's just been too long. It's been too hard.

I have too little strength and it's too late when God himself is saying, will you be made whole? Will you let me come and make you. By sovereign supernatural power into what I have, I have, God says, destined your life to be where I have destined you should go. And I don't know what happened in this man's heart, but somewhere along the line, I don't know.

He'd been 38 years like this. 38 years with excuses, 38 years and probably his storm was as severe as any storm that you and I might be facing tonight. He'd given up hope.

I don't even know why he's still laying there, because by his response, he had no hope of ever getting to the water of healing. And standing beside him is Jesus himself and says, will you be made whole? And Jesus just says, rise, take up your bed and walk. I have a journey for you.

Here's where your journey has taken you. Powerless. Hopeless.

All this, all these words in your mind, too little, too late, too long. But I'm giving you an opportunity now to get up. And you're going to roll that thing up and stick it under your arm, that's exactly what he told him, roll up your mat, put it under your arm.

I'm going to send you on a journey. And it wasn't going to be easy because, folks, I'm telling you, he ran into religious criticism the very first few steps he took. But I'm going to send you on a journey.

And it's not your journey any longer. It's it's my journey. All you have to do now is invite me into your storm.

It's as easy as that, folks. I've said all of that for 42 minutes to say that all you have to do is invite Jesus into your storm. Say, Lord, I give up.

I've rode long, hard and enough. Please, God, get in my boat. And I when we hit the shore on the other side, I will follow you.

I'm not going to ask you to follow me. I will follow you. If that's in your heart tonight in the annex balcony, main sanctuary, if you're among those that I know God is speaking to and you just you need to get through, you've come here tonight, say, God, I've got to get through this storm.

If this is a divine word just for you and the Holy Spirit is drawing you, you've heard what God is speaking to your heart and you're going to willing to lay down your plans and hear what the Lord will speak. Come and meet me here. Let's stand together.

Balcony annex. We'll wait for just come and meet me here. We'll pray together and you're going to be through your storm.

This this storm anyway, you'll be through it before the night is out. Hallelujah. Thank you, Jesus.

Balcony, you go to either exit annex. We'll wait for you to come here. You're going to go through.

You're going to go through. Paul, remember, he said, I believe, God, that it shall be even as it was told me. So that's really the choice you're making coming here tonight.

I believe, God, that if I'm willing to ask him, it's going to be just as it was told me. Hallelujah. Move in close.

Please make room for those that are coming. Lord, you are welcome. Lord, you are welcome.

Pray with me, Jesus. You are welcome in the center of my storm and my journey. God, thank you for not letting me prosper in the flesh.

Thank you for stopping me from moving in directions that bring no glory to your name and no deliverance to those that are lost. Thank you for the storm. Thank you for the storm.

God, Jesus, I thank you that you're my only hope. You're my only life. And I invite you into the very center of my Christian journey.

And I ask you, Holy Spirit, to open my heart and open my ears to the voice of God, the plans of God and the direction of God. I yield the direction of my life and I ask you to take me and use me for your glory. I will follow you.

I'm no longer asking you to follow me. I will follow you where you lead me. I will follow you.

Jesus, thank you. Thank you, God. With all my heart, I give you praise.

I give you glory. I give you thanks from the depths of my heart. Thank you, Lord.

Pastor Neal, I just had a I just had a vision in my mind as we were praying of all these boats hitting the shore. I don't know if you're feeling this. I just have a sense in my heart as we're thanking God that your boat is hitting the beach.

You're finally through. You're through the storm. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, God.

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