

# The Storms of Life

by Fred Tomlinson

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*This sermon from Acts 27 focuses on the journey of the Apostle Paul facing a storm at sea, highlighting the importance of surrendering our lives to God amidst life's trials. Paul's boldness and faith in God's guidance are emphasized as he stands firm in the midst of the storm, reminding us to surrender ownership of our lives to God completely. The message calls for a deep, sincere commitment to serving the Lord wholeheartedly, echoing Joshua's challenge to choose whom we will serve. The sermon emphasizes the need for a radical surrender to God, acknowledging His sovereignty over life's storms and the importance of living by faith in all circumstances.*

**Scripture:** Acts 27:23, Romans 1:1, Joshua 24:15, Psalm 23:1, John 14:27, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 12:1, 1 Peter 5:7

**Topics:** "Surrender", "Faith in Trials"

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## Description

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## Transcript

From the book of Acts, the Acts of the Apostles, if you would turn there with me, and to chapter 27. Can I give you just a little bit of background here as we come into this passage? I know that for some of us, it's not very long since we worked all the way through the book of Acts on the Sunday evenings. And so for those, all of this story is very familiar.

As we know very well, that the preaching and ministry of the Apostle Paul, as he traveled from place to place, very frequently stirred up trouble. There was a positive side to it as well, of course. But, this had certainly been the case in Jerusalem, and the Jewish people really fell into two groups.

There were those who were open to his word, and to the message of the gospel, and there were those who were completely opposed to it. And so the conflict really was very much between the two Jewish categories. Even within the Jewish people, in the Jewish leadership for that matter, there were two very real categories.

There were those who were the Pharisees, and those who were the Sadducees, and without me going into the particular differences and distinctions between them, the fact is there were some fundamental issues that they disagreed on. And when Paul did his preaching, he said enough to stir both sides up. And so there was conflict going on there, and things had developed to a very serious stage in Jerusalem.

And Paul's own life was certainly in jeopardy. And without me going and touching through all the particular events that followed that, suffice it to say that Paul was whisked away by the Roman leadership that were in control, the overseers there in that area, and he was taken to Caesarea and was imprisoned there, in some senses, and in some cases for his own safety. In any event, during the whole process, the fact that the Apostle Paul had Roman citizenship came to the surface.

He raised the matter, as a matter of fact. Please read the whole story and get all the details. And at a certain stage in the development of his trials with Festus and Agrippa, finally, he appealed to Rome and to the Caesar.

And so it was agreed, although there was no clear charge against him, and that was a bit of an awkward situation, but in any event, he was to be taken to Rome and face the Caesar at that time, who was Nero. And that's really where we come into this story. All right, so that's what's been happening, or in a nutshell.

So we're looking down into chapter 27 and verse 1. And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus Band, and entering into a ship, of Adramitian, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia, one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. If I can just pause there for a moment. The us, of course, refers in the first person to Luke.

It's Luke who is the writer, the historian, and keeping the record. So Luke was accompanying Paul on this journey, and so was Aristarchus, and we have some history on him from other readings in the scripture. But these are certainly two faithful men who are standing with the Apostle at this time, and they're traveling with him at this time.

And so we read on in verse 3. And the next day we touched Sidon, and Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself. And when we had launched from thence, we sailed unto Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy, and he put us therein. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Indus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete to Salome, and hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the Fair Havens. Nigh whereunto was the city of Lycia.

We'll stop reading just there. I might just encourage you to consider reading the entire chapter at your earliest convenience. We'll drop down further in a minute or two, but I can't take the time to read it all this morning.

The particular message that I believe the Lord has put on my heart this morning is such that I've chosen to give it a title, The Storm of Life. I've taken that phrase from one of Wesley's hymns, which you all know very well, I think. Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly, while the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high.

Hide me, O my Saviour, hide, till the storm of life is past. Safe into the haven guide, O receive my soul at last. As I read through this incredible story, it's incredible for a whole variety of reasons, not least because of the sharp detail that's part of the story.

I have read that there are those who are very familiar with shipping and with that particular location and so on, who say it's just remarkable the detail that they find in the way things are handled as this story unfolds. So clearly accurate. And the particular responses to the challenges that the seamen take are so accurate and so appropriate for the challenges that they were facing.

That's very interesting. But there's a sense in which when I read through the story, that I can't help but feel, there's a sense in which I'm reminded of my own journey, of our journey, the journey of life itself. And there are several features here, more than I can bring out this morning, which seem to speak to that personal journey, that journey of faith, that journey of living out our lives as Christian men and Christian women in this world.

And so for Paul, of course, the journey was from Caesarea to Rome. Paul knew in his heart and had known for some time that eventually he would go to Rome. He's made a few statements.

Let me just draw your attention to them in chapter 19, if I just turn back a little bit here. Chapter 19, verse... Just verse 20, So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. Then verse 21, After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

And you could turn over a little further, chapter 23. And I'll just read verse 11, I think, for now. Verse 11, And the night following, the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

And we can find another statement where Paul says that it was his desire to go to Rome. Rome was, of course, the central, the major city in the world at that particular time, seat of the Roman power, the city of the Caesars. And Paul, with his passion to preach the gospel and to make it known far and wide, would inevitably see Rome as a very, very significant location in which to preach the gospel.

And clearly he longed to be that one that God could use to preach the gospel there. So I believe it was in his heart, he was aware of the geography and the very fact of Rome being so significant. But then at the same time, what we're seeing now is that God actually spoke to him also.

So it wasn't merely a desire that he had, but God spoke this into being. And from that moment on, he would know with certainty that this was not merely just a human desire that he had, but in fact that God had spoken it into being. And so as he is traveling at this particular time, he has that awareness.

He has a very real sense of his destination. And just at that point, to pause for a moment, for those men and women today who have given their lives to Christ, they've responded to the gospel, they've placed their faith in his redeeming work, they share a sense of destination. Not Rome, of course, but of that heavenly kingdom.

I like just even the last words of the hymn I quoted earlier. Hide me, O my Saviour, hide till the storm of life is past, safe into the haven guide. O receive my soul at last.

When Wesley wrote those words, he had a sense of destination. The actual destination remains a mystery. It was a mystery to Charles Wesley when he wrote the hymn.

It's a mystery to us today. We search the scriptures, we find pieces of information, but God has not described it in any real detail for us. But it probably is an arguable point.

But certainly, what we gather are only fragments of something which will be revealed eventually. But we have that sense, and so as we were thinking earlier, as we were praying for Jeff and for his family around him at this time, it's a wonderful thing as a Christian, someone who has lived now in the benefit of his redeeming grace, and now at this particular stage in his journey, and then in our journey, ultimately, there's that hope that the world knows nothing about at all, that changes everything, it throws a light on our lives, it throws a light on everything that is our lives, on the whole journey of life, because God has spoken in his Word, and his Spirit in our hearts resonates with those words, and we find faith to believe that which is a complete mystery to us. The whole issue of physical death itself is a mystery to us.

No one can stand in a cemetery saying farewell to a loved one and not be filled with a sense of mystery. It's quite beyond us to understand and comprehend exactly what is going on. But for the Christian, we have a hope, and I remind you again that the word hope, as it appears in the New Testament, is never a word which is the kind of word we would use today when we say we hope these days of sunshine are not going to quickly come to an end.

They may do, but we hope they won't. But when we find that word in the New Testament, the Greek word carries through the idea of a sense of certainty, a sense of confidence, a hope, it's rooted, it has an anchor within the veil, the Apostle writes on another occasion. It's rooted into a very solid foundation.

And so we have a destination that's been promised to us. The particulars, however, of the journey, even for Paul, the particulars of his journey, when he was speaking earlier in the chapter I read to you a moment ago, and he hears God confirm to him that his destination is going to be Rome, he will get there at some point and be able to preach. In fact, God had more or less said that to him.

Jesus had said it to him back on the Damascus Road. But he didn't know how he would get there. He didn't know what the particulars would be of the journey, and neither do I, and neither do you.

We don't know. From the point that we put our trust in Christ and we become a child of God, we're born again, as we were hearing from the text earlier. We have a confidence concerning the ultimate destination, but the process of getting there is unknown to us.

None of us know how it's all going to unfold. We have reasonable confidence that the journey will involve many joys and many pleasures for us, and we can find Scriptures that support that idea as we walk and live within the context of the revealed will of God to us. But at the same time, we are aware that storms are an inevitable part of the whole process.

But we don't know the details of them, and so on. I'd like to just say this, as it becomes obvious from reading this story and this account, that it's a true fact. It is certainly guaranteed that God in his sovereignty is sovereign over the storms.

He's sovereign over all of the details of the process of the journey of life for us as Christian people. And so within the context of his grace and his providential involvement in our lives, even the timing is a part of that process. It's not merely that he can have a sort of a list of the various things that are going to happen for

my journey or for your journey.

But he's overruling the whole thing. He is God. And even the timing of how things unfold, not only so far as I personally am concerned, but so far as events and circumstances around me are concerned.

He works all things together according to his will and purpose for us. And this brings a wonderful sense of assurance and strengthens our faith, certainly. And I believe that when God said to Paul, you're going to be going to Rome at some point, God knew exactly how he was going to get there.

He knew exactly when it was going to take place. For example, he knew that the journey would be a very dangerous journey, humanly speaking. He knew that the journey would take place at the wrong time so far as sailing across the sea was concerned.

It was a dangerous time. But God ordained that it would be under those circumstances, that there would be danger involved in the whole situation. Because he, once again, was going to work all of the factors together to serve his purpose.

It was a bad time to travel, but it was the perfect time for the unfolding of what God had ordained and planned. Amen. John Piper has made this statement.

He said, in all the setbacks of your life as a believer, God is plotting your joy. That's a wonderful statement. Or a man who lived a few years earlier, William Cowper, he said this, God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. Deep in unfathomable minds of never failing skill, he treasures up his bright designs and works his perfect will. He knows exactly what he's doing all the way along.

But certainly, once again, for the Apostle Paul, anticipating going to Rome, he never dreamt that he would be travelling on an Egyptian grain ship to Rome. A grain ship which would have no cabins in it for the passengers, and that on that grain ship, which would be heavily laden with grain, taking it to Rome, to Italy, there would be no fewer than 276 passengers on the boat. Passengers, when I say passengers, I'm meaning including the seaman and the owner of the vessel.

We know that there were soldiers, plural. I know that. I know there was a centurion who had responsibility for him.

But I'm looking further on in the chapter, in verse 42, it says, and the soldiers' council was, etc., etc. In other words, because it wasn't just one soldier on board, there were soldiers. And we know that the owner of the vessel itself was on board.

We know, of course, that there was a captain, because we're told this as well. And there were other sailors. And there were prisoners.

And at least we know that there were three Christian men on board. And could Paul ever have imagined that travelling on such a grain ship under these conditions, that he himself at that time would be a prisoner with the Roman centurion looking after him and taking care of him, and so on? So there were a lot of things about this journey that he would never have second-guessed. And I don't think I have to force the thought upon you.

But is it not obvious that there are features to do with our journey which is yet future, however long or short that may be, that we would never have second-guessed as God unfolds and works out His perfect plan and His perfect will? All right, I'm looking back into the chapter. In verse 7, do you remember where we read there how they had sailed, and so on? Toward the end of the verse it says, "...and the wind not suffering us." So already there's a resistance to them. Is there not a variety of features of resistance that are opposed to you and to me as we move forward, seeking to live according to the pleasure of the Lord and according to His Word, and so on? There are all kinds of factors that are working.

They're all part of the storm of life for the Christian believer. But the wind was against them. By the time we get to verse 9, we read this.

Now, when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past. In other words, when Luke is referring to the fast there, he's reminding them of the particular time of the year that they're now entering into a winter period. It's a dangerous time to be out on the high seas.

And so the phrase that catches my attention there is that the place is dangerous for them. And so the apostle, let me read on here. It says in verse 10, "...he said to them," this is now the apostle has stood up to speak to them.

Can I just, this is only my imagination. I don't know what an Egyptian grain ship really looked like. But I am told, well, there certainly wouldn't be 276 cabins on it.

But the chances are extremely high that the majority of the passengers, the people traveling on the ship, were right on the deck itself. There's a storm that's beginning to brew here and take place. Things are dangerous just for shipping.

Imagine being huddled together with these people, this variety of people on that ship. It does remind me of so many other features of life as we live our lives through. But now the apostle Paul is standing up because things are becoming quite dangerous.

And he says, "...sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hers and much damage, not only of the lading and 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 the apostle Paul. So, here's the man of God. And we're not able to say that when Paul stood up on this occasion that he was preaching the gospel to the crowd.

But it is clearly true that he was sharing godly wisdom. And he said, this is an exceedingly dangerous trip that we're launching out on here. And you need to know what you're doing here.

And he was giving his human counsel, I'm sure. But nevertheless, I think it speaks to us of the way in which we as Christians share the godly wisdom of the gospel with men and women with whom we're traveling. And we share with them.

And it's interesting to see here that that message that Paul was preaching to the sailors, these expert sailorsmen, the captain, was rejected out of hand. And the centurion who was responsible for Paul's life here, he chooses to go along with the wisdom of the captain and so on. And is not that the case as we share? You know, we can look back at this story and say, you know, because we believe that Paul was a man of God, we would say, they should have been taking notice of him.

If we're just looking at it from this very human point of view, we'd say, they should have been taking notice of him. He wasn't a qualified sailor or mariner, but he's a man of God. And we should give some attention to what he's saying.

And is it not true that today as we seek to share the message of truth, the message of the gospel with men and women, in so many cases it's rejected out of hand. It's a completely unpopular message. It's inappropriate in this culture in which we live today even to even mention the name Jesus.

Any reference to the Christian gospel, of course, brings an offensive response in so many cases. And human wisdom takes over. We were talking in the prayer meeting on Wednesday, I can't remember, but some reference was being made to what we call common sense.

And in so many cases it's true. And I'm now thinking not so much of the people outside who are unconverted that we preach to, but I'm thinking even within the context of the family of God. In so many cases we live and operate and function according to our common sense rather than the wisdom of God and the Word of God.

And because common sense makes sense, but in so many ways the Word of God cuts right across that and approaches things from a totally different perspective. And I believe I could say to you this morning that there are very many people who are professing Christian people who've made shipwreck of their testimony and shipwreck of their lives because they've chosen common sense over and above the Word of God and the principles of godly living which the Bible describes for us. And so truth is rejected by the world, broadly speaking.

But, you know, there's a sense in which also I can say that the truth of the gospel is so often rejected within the context of the Christian family at large. I'm thinking now not just of the opposing factor of common sense as I've referred to it, but I'm thinking of prejudicial ideas and interpretations of Scripture. And so when Priscilla and Aquila, if you're familiar with the story, when Priscilla and Aquila come along and seek to describe the way of God more accurately or more perfectly, it's rejected because it doesn't fit the status quo of what people have been trained to believe and accept as being the normal Christian experience.

And so the wisdom of the truth of the gospel, which is now being shone with brighter light to men and women who are calling themselves Christians, and maybe are, but the idea that there's something more than they have been taught and more than they're currently experiencing, in many cases is an offense and people don't want that. And that is a great tragedy. And I trust that we are people who are hungry to know God as fully and as perfectly and as completely as is possible.

You know, the hard words, as they're referred to. You remember when people listened to Jesus, John chapter 6, and they said, these are hard words. Who can hear them? Who can accept this? And at that same time, it says that many of those that were following Him up to that point, they turned away and left Him at that point.

But the Scriptures, of course, contain some hard words of Jesus. Someone said that these words, they're not hard to understand. They're just hard to swallow.

I mean, for example, when we hear Jesus saying, you think I've come to bring peace. He said, I'm not. I've come to bring a sword, even within the context of families.

Jesus said this. We thought, how can this be? Well, that's the answer to that's for another session. All together.

But the whole, the message of the cross, as we understand it, as God begins to open that up to us and to our understanding, is rich and wonderful and promises us so much more than in so many cases is accepted as being the normal Christian experience. Let's be open, shall we? Let's determine to be open to the Word of God, to the whole Word of God. We want the whole counsel of God.

And we want to find His grace working in our hearts and faith being quickened to say, yes, Lord, to whatever it is that He is saying to us. It goes on to say here that a softer wind then begins to blow. It's moving through different transitions so far as the weather is concerned and so on.

And it says, I'm just looking down in verse 13, and when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, at loosing thence they sailed close by Crete. Do you see, it's a very telling verse. It's like in the midst of the storm, they've now moved into a quiet period.

And I think the words are so telling, not only the soft pleasant wind that was blowing, but they supposed that they had obtained their purpose. Everything's cool. Life is good, verse 13, suddenly, and so on.

And isn't this like human nature? There's a sense in which when things are difficult, there's a storm raging, people get more serious. We're going to see that even more, yes. As we carry on here this morning.

But it's true, people get more serious. I mentioned a graveside scene, so often is the case. People who've got no thoughts for God, no interest in the gospel, but then they find themselves in that kind of a setting where they're watching a coffin being lowered into the ground of someone, containing someone that remains, of someone that they've loved so deeply.

It makes people think, it's a sobering moment. And that sobering moment carries a potential benefit if people would just allow themselves to pursue those thoughts that are beginning to develop in their minds. But in so many cases, that doesn't happen, because life moves on.

We walk away and get on with our own life, and those scenes are forgotten. And this is not true for everyone around the world. Of course, we know there are people who live, it seems, in permanent pain and suffering and trouble and chaos.

But for us, at this particular point in time, I don't know how long it's going to last, but, you know, we can turn away from those scenes to one degree or another, and we can get on with our lives and so on. And the wind seems to be quieting down, and let's just move on. Things are going well at work and, you know, and so on.

The deal's gone through to our favour, and we're encouraged and so on. And it's easy in those moments to think we've obtained our purpose. This is what life's supposed to be like.

This is good. But, you know, it's in these seasons of life, and in particular, it's how we deal with these different changing seasons that really defines the issues of our faith and trust in God. If when the wind's blowing softly, we don't give attention to the things of God and to our souls and the things concerning the things of God, that certainly is a telling development, isn't it? And so on.

If God is only good for people, I don't think I like saying what I'm saying, when they're in trouble, you know, people pray when things are just falling apart in their lives, but they never dream of surrendering themselves to God when things are going well. But God's looking for a people who are traveling through the storm of life with whatever weather conditions are involved, good times and bad times, who put their faith and trust in God and so on, and keep it there continually. And, you know, really talking about the varying experiences of life that defines where we're at really in our hearts toward God.

It's not only how we act in those situations, although I believe that's involved and we could develop that idea, but I think more particularly it's how I react. It's our reactions that are more telling, that more accurately define who I am inwardly than my actions. It's my responses when things are not going well, and it's my responses when things are going well that really they're a true measure of where I am in my heart and in my relationship with God and toward him and so on.

Verse 14 says this, although we've just got the south wind blowing softly and they think they've obtained their service, verse 14, but not long after, isn't this life? Not long after there arose a tempestuous wind called the Euryclidon, and when the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind, we just let her drive, and running under a certain island which was called Claudium, we had much work to come by the boat, and it reads on there certainly, but now they've reached the stage where life is falling apart rapidly. This is a period of absolute disaster, and evidently it's even beyond the most experienced seamen here. They don't know what to do.

Things are out of control at all, and let me just say it again. I've said it a couple of times in different ways already, but these are such important times for us in our lives when we need to wake up. I believe that the Holy Spirit is seeking to wake up men and women in all kinds of situations of life and different stages in life, trying to get their attention, but certainly there are some fierce winds, some fierce storms that have the potential to really get our attention, and I think this is exactly what's going out at this point in time.

It says in verse 19, let me read 18, and we being exceedingly tossed with the tempest, the next day they lighten the ship, and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. What they're doing now, they're getting rid of everything. They've reached a stage where nothing is more important than their own lives.

Their lives are in severe and serious jeopardy, and I'm thinking again, and excuse me for saying it, but there are so many stages in our journey when I think God is saying something like this to us, that it's time to lighten our ship. It's time to reprioritize our lives. It's time for us to wake up and realize that the things of eternity are far, far more important than the temporal things which get so much of our attention, in which sometimes we find great pleasure, at other times we find that those very things are grievous to us, and so on.

But I think we can very easily support this concept from other passages of Scripture, that the journey for a true Christian man and Christian woman is such that we travel lightly. You know, we sang, I learned to sing when I was a boy, and I didn't know any of these things really. This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through, we sang.

And there are some other lines to that. But we don't get that, because we get so involved in the temporal things of life, they're so demanding, they promise great rewards in terms of pleasure or excitement or fulfillment or whatever they are, and so on. But they grab at us.

But God is looking for people who are listening for his still small voice, and he's saying to us, come out from among them, touch not the unclean thing. He's saying that the love of money is the root of all evil. This is not just people with a lot of money, in many cases it's people who don't have any money, but they're still focused on it and worrying and fretting about it one way or another.

You're fretting because you don't have it, and when you've got it, you're fretting how to look after it, it seems. I don't know really much about that. But in so many ways, we're being told that there's another way of living altogether.

That which is not of faith is sin, said Jesus. So we're to live by faith in every area of our lives where he is the central factor in our lives, and so on. They were throwing things out of the ship which had great value.

They were throwing things out of the ship which really were part of their security. At one point, they've got a little extra boat that they're carrying. In the end, they throw that overboard as well.

They were being radical, getting rid of everything. And that's what God wants to do in your life and mine, where he gets our whole attention and where we surrender our whole lives to him without question. It's at this stage in this journey that the preacher, prisoner, stands up once again.

It may be true that when we saw him a few minutes ago giving out his warning that maybe he was just talking to the people who were responsible for the ship, but there's no question that this time he's talking to everyone who can hear him. He's got something to say to them. And he stands up.

Let me just read this to you. Verse 20. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was taken away.

But after long abstinence Paul stood forth. Interesting. It's foolish for me to even make such a suggestion, but it would have been so interesting if we could have, I don't know, if we could just have a glimpse at Paul during this whole process as he's the man of God who is confident in his heart that he's going to Rome and he's going to stand before Caesar.

And his faith is in God. And he's watching the panic of everything that's going on around him. And when it says after long abstinence, that to me at least speaks of the fact that Paul was somewhere, maybe, just maybe in a similar way to the way in which we see Jesus sitting in the boat and he's falling asleep when there's a storm on Lake Galilee, remember.

I wonder if it was like that for Paul. But at a certain point he stands up. He stands up in the midst of them and he said, Sirs, first of all, you people who I talked to last time, he says, you should have hearkened to me and not loosed from Crete and to have gained all of this harm and loss.

He's not going to rub it in anymore. He's just saying, don't forget I spoke to you and it's all come to pass. Like I believe that God gave me that word for you and you chose to ignore it.

But he said, but listen to this. He said, There stood by me this night. This is one of the most wonderful verses in Paul's writings in my mind.

For there stood by me this night the angel of God whose I am and whom I serve. And I've chosen to read the Old King James translation this morning for that verse because I don't think any of the other translations put it nearly as well as that for me. He said, just look at these words.

God whose I am and whom I serve. He stood by me. He spoke to me.

And he has a word here and I think it's at this point in my message to you this morning that really we're at the very core of what I believe God has put in my heart for us this morning. It's what Paul is able to say. Picture it.

We're led to believe. I don't know if it's true. We're led to believe that Paul was a little man.

We're led to believe that there was nothing particularly impressive about his appearance. In fact, there are some who go further and say there was something that is hinted at, they feel in another passage that suggests that there was something concerning his facial appearance that was offensive. I don't know if that's true.

It doesn't say that in the Bible, but it may be true. But in any event, this Jewish preacher man who is now a prisoner and he's standing up in front of these people with this boldness and with this message, you see, he may not appear to be very impressive and very skilled or knowledgeable in these matters, but he had the spirit of the living God in his heart. And that's what made all the difference.

And it's that that will make all the difference in your life and mine. Where we're no longer merely who we were born and who we were for a period of time. But there came a point, if we're truly Christians, there came a point when we heard the gospel, we recognized our own need in the light of his word, we surrendered our hearts to him, and we received his very spirit into our hearts, we've received him.

This man, Paul, he said on another occasion, another succinct but powerful statement, he said, Christ liveth in me. Christ liveth in me. That's to be the testimony of every man and woman of God.

And to be able to say it with that kind of confidence. So when he stands up here, once again, he's not preaching the gospel, per se, the gospel that was so incredibly precious to him, but this is a different moment, he's got a different message, and it's a message from God. It's as though he is saying, he doesn't say it, but it's as though he's saying, thus saith the Lord.

Like, pay attention, men. In fact, in one translation, his opening statement is, be of good cheer. Cheer up! They've been fasting for days, and they're given up all hope that they're going to live through this ordeal.

And he says, cheer up! I've got a message from God for you. That just reminds me of a man that we had a lot more to do with years ago, who was with kind of a bold, short man, English, bold as a lion. And he was on the upstairs deck of a Liverpool City bus with another man that we knew very well, a young man who was very shy and very reserved.

And they were sitting at the front of the bus, upstairs. And at a certain point, so goes the story, the bold friend stood up and turned around to face the bus full of people. And he said, hi, my name is, no one quoted here.

He said, and this here is David, and he's just going to share his testimony with you. He's got a word from God for you. You know, that's what it amounted to.

Something like that was happening here. You know, would to God that more of us who call ourselves Christians had that holy boldness, not just to stand up on a crowded bus. I'm not meaning that particularly.

Why not? But the fact is that confidence where we can say the Spirit of God lives in my heart. I am a Christian man. I've received the Spirit of God in my heart.

I'm no longer who I used to be. God has transformed everything about my life. I love the statement.

He said, whose I am and whom I serve. So many, and I think this came up in one of the recent meetings. It might have been Sunday night here.

I don't know. Peter Boyle was speaking at the time. He was talking about himself, actually.

But I think something was resonating in other people's lives as well. But he was talking about words and how you can be so wordy and we've got thousands of words. We're clever with words.

We've got a lot to say one way or another, whether it's in the forms of telling stories, telling tales, joking, informing people how clever we are or how much more we know about situations than everybody else does and so on and so on. But all four men and women who are able to bring the Word of God into a situation. Paul was that kind of man.

In the midst of a terrible storm, he had the Spirit of God in his heart. He had the Word of God in his mouth. Thus saith the Lord.

It's not that we need to say thus saith the Lord. It's to become obvious in our posture, in our attitude, in our tones and in the words that we speak and so on. He goes on to say whose I am and whom I serve.

Whose I am. Can you say that? Whose I am. When Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans and to the Philippians and to Titus, in each one of those three epistles, he starts off by saying, he's telling his readers, those who are going to read his document, who was writing.

We put our name at the end. He said, Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ. Most translations would say a servant, but the word is doulos.

It's a slave. He said, Paul, the slave of Jesus Christ. Whose I am.

He's saying, and he put it this way on another occasion, he said, I am not my own. He'd given up. He'd surrendered.

He'd yielded ownership of his life to God. Whose I am. I'm no longer my own.

I am his property. This is the normal Christian life. I'm not sure it's the common Christian life.

It's true. It speaks of one absolutely resigning the ownership of their life. It's a total resignation of everything to him.

You know, that's what Paul meant when he said a slave of Jesus Christ. The same word is used in a feminine context and it's used by Mary. Do you remember when the angel visited her with that unique message? She said this, behold the handmaid.

That's the word. The handmaid of the Lord. She was saying in essence, behold, I'm your slave.

I have no ownership over my own life. She resigned herself. She yielded.

She surrendered her entire self to God and to whatever this mystery was that he was talking. She at least I don't know to what extent all this came clear to her at the moment but I'm sure there would be a flash of revelation to her mind when she heard this message and she's now surrendering to it. She knew that whatever this was going to be and however it was going to work out because she said Lord, I don't even know a man.

And of course the response was the Holy Ghost shall come upon you and this holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. Talk about hearing a message that just is mind boggling. But notwithstanding that when she said behold the handmaid of the Lord she knew there would be some kind of terrible shame associated with this.

She knew that there would be disgrace involved in this kind of surrender to what God was saying to her and yet without any hesitation she responds. And she could not have known at that point in time what would take place 30 some years later at Calvary. It was prophesied not long after that resignation when she was told a sword would go through go through her heart.

And surely that was a reference to her standing at the cross and seeing what was taking place there. But her response without knowing all the details we were there a while ago weren't we without knowing all the details of the journey she said Lord I surrender everything to you. It was Adam Clark a Methodist commentator who once said Lord I am at your service at your disposal to do whatever you commend me.

I think it's true as I draw toward a close here that very few really come to this place but God is calling you this morning to come to this place where you can say I am his slave. It's so easy to claim to be serving the Lord as we use that phrase quite commonly in our evangelical circles don't we you know we're glad about such and such a relative who's serving the Lord but what does that mean when Paul said whose I am and whom I serve there was a depth of meaning and significance to that that so often is not known you know we can say well I'm serving the Lord but have you surrendered ownership of your life to God in that complete way and I think failure in this area is why so many people struggle in the Christian experience it never seems to work out it never seems you know and life it just doesn't come together Spurgeon said this listen to this statement he said if Christ is not all to you he is nothing to you he will never go into partnership as a past Savior of men if he be something he must be everything and if he be not everything he is nothing to you so this is a very serious challenge that we're looking at you know I don't know where those who are listening to me this morning I want to tell you it's not too late to make a massive change in your life there was an event that took place many many years earlier than the one we've just been reading about when Joshua himself was an old man and they'd separated the country you know into its various categories belonging to the various tribes and so on but the fact is already false gods were being embraced and so on there was confusion in the camp and Joshua he says this as he gathers all of Israel together it's going to be his last message to Israel he says now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness put away the gods of your fathers that they serve beyond the river and in Egypt and serve the Lord he said and if it's evil in your eyes to serve the Lord choose this day whom you will serve he said like let's face it let's come to terms with this either this is going to be everything or it's nothing make your decision once and for all so many of us die by a thousand cuts you know what I mean instead of coming to a place where we face right up and do the deed make the declaration to God from the depths of your being and surrender everything to him this is exactly what Joshua is saying like make your mind up if you want to serve the other gods go for it he said but he said as for me and my house we will serve the Lord he goes on here can I read it just a little further he says and if it's evil in your eyes to serve

the Lord choose this day whom you will serve whether the gods of your fathers in the region beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord then the people answered and said far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods for it is the Lord our God who brought us up and so on please read it it's the last chapter of Joshua 24 and so it goes on and then they make the kind of response that Joshua was calling for and then toward the end of this section Joshua says to them all he said you are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord to serve him and they said we are witnesses you see he's saying hear yourself he said do you hear what you're saying how many of us have made responses we've prayed what we felt was the right response on a given occasion but then all too soon we've gone back on it and we're running the show ourselves again God is saying by his spirit it's time it's time to wake up it's time to face up it's time to give your whole life to God this life cannot be experienced it cannot be lived it will never be satisfying it will never be fulfilling it will never glorify God it will never be fruitful until we make this kind of full and complete surrender to him and that's what Joshua was calling for back then and I believe it's what the Spirit of God is calling for this morning from each and everyone listening to me Paul reached his destination a lot more happened before he got there that we've not talked about for us the destination of course is heaven a song goes like this God leads his dear children along in shady green pastures so rich and so sweet some through the waters and some through the flood some through the fire but all through the blood some through great sorrow but God gives a song in the night season and all the day long or as Wesley put it and I close with this hide me oh my Savior hide till the storm of life is past safe into the haven guide oh receive my soul at last let's pray

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/wUtMHtUoDXg.mp4>

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