

"GOD IS IN CONTROL, BE COURAGEOUS!"*(Source: Bible Study guide: Lessons)*

WORSHIP

Opening Prayer/Worship Song: God is Able, Nothing is Impossible

READ

ACTS 26:31-32, ACTS 27:22-25 (ASK SOMEONE TO READ LOUD AND CLEAR)

"and when they had gone aside, they began talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment." And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, 24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.' Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told."

DISCUSSION

What do you love most about a rainy day (drinking hot coffee/chocolate, eating your favorite food, spending time with family watching your favorite movie or TV series)? What frightens you, and what comforts you during stormy weather?

Appealing his case to Caesar, Paul was ordered by Festus to be transferred to Rome. The apostle was now headed to Rome, where he had wanted to go—although he had not necessarily planned to go as a prisoner. The last two chapters of Acts are devoted mainly to Paul's journey to Rome. The keynote of the story is God's providence, especially in preserving Paul for his Roman testimony. The story is also told to indicate how far and difficult the journey to Rome is, as the gospel heads toward the ends of the earth. Paul in his final missionary journey, experienced "storms"—an actual storm, a shipwreck and a deadly snake bite. Storms may represent many things in our life- trials, difficulties, uncertainties, etc. But Paul entrusted his life to God; he responded this way to troubles that came his way. When we face trials of various kinds, the question is what do we do to navigate successfully through them? Let us learn from Paul as he faces various storms on his way to fulfilling God's plan

for his life. Like Paul, we can be courageous in any storm because God is in control.

GOD'S PLAN

In **Acts 1:8**, we are called to witness for Christ, the plan of God is to empower us as his witnesses to the ends of the earth. He has chosen us to bear his name (**Acts 9:15-16**) and **Acts 13:2** clearly states that God sets apart specific individuals for His work, a plan that has been set even before we were born. But God knows it will not be easy to accomplish the mission He has appointed His servants to do. It will be hard because of the "storms" that will come into our lives. That's why in Acts 23:11 God gave us an encouragement to be courageous in completing His plan for our lives.

In Paul's journey, we can see that being a follower of Christ does not make our lives "storm-free", but God made us "stormproof"! Christians are not immune to troubles in life, but Jesus said that we can be courageous in facing "storms". Many of us have different kinds of storms going on around us right this moment, but like Paul, let us keep courage because God is in control over his plan for our lives. He will fulfill it, He will see us through.

"GOD IS IN CONTROL, BE COURAGEOUS!"*(Source: Bible Study guide: Lessons)***GOD'S PRESENCE**

In **Acts 27:22-25**, an angel of the Lord appeared and assured Paul that the Presence of God was with them, comforting Paul with these words— "Do not be afraid, Paul". God's presence amidst the storm is far more comforting than anything else so if you are facing one right now, know that God is with you, He will never leave us nor forsake us. Luke, the author of Acts, probably remembered another occasion when followers of Jesus were on a boat that was threatened by a tempestuous storm. Jesus then commanded the winds and the waves to be still, and they obeyed Him. At the point where it seemed most hopeless, Jesus "rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm" (**Luke 8:24-25**). In a similar way, God allows us to weather many storms throughout our lifetime, but He is always present with us and extends his protection to us until our appointed time on earth is completed. We can be courageous because we know that God Himself is in our storm.

After days of being tossed at sea and when all on board were at the point of despair, God intervened not to stop the storm, but to communicate a message of encouragement and hope to Paul (**v.21-26**). The angel reaffirmed the promise Jesus himself had earlier made to him (**23:11**). The angel gave Paul insight into their situation: specifically telling Paul that the ship will be destroyed, but not one person will die. It was clear that Paul had a greater destiny than death by shipwreck. The divine plan would not be thwarted. The ultimate reason for Paul's deliverance was his testimony in Rome.

GOD'S PROMISE

Paul leaned on the promises of God regardless of the storms he faced. In fact, when the sailors planned to escape from the storm, Paul commanded them to stay put, otherwise all them will die (**v.27-28**).

Because of God's promise to deliver them all, Paul, at the height of the storm, encouraged the men to have a meal. He took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all (**v. 33-38**).

GOD'S POWER

Acts 28:1-10 recounts how God used Paul in a mighty way on the island of Malta. Not only did Paul and his companions find shelter on the island, he was also granted the opportunity to heal the sick and share the Gospel to the Maltese people. Even Paul being bitten by a venomous snake became an occasion for God's power to be witnessed by all, as Paul simply shook the snake off and suffered no harm at all. The storm, the shipwreck and the snake's poisonous bite brings to mind Romans 8:28, "*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*" Truly, God's power is at work as He allows difficulties in our lives for us to have opportunities to witness for Him. God's greatest providence for the fiercest storms in our lives was demonstrated at the cross of Jesus Christ. He saved us from eternal destruction through Christ's death and resurrection! So, when we are in the midst of any kind of storm in our journey through life, the anchor which we can hold on to is the cross of Jesus Christ. He is in control, and we can be of good courage!

SHARING

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Can you share a situation in your life that leads you to come closer to Jesus?
2. What promise of God, that changed your faith?
3. What opportunities has God has given you to proclaim His presence, power and promises as you go through the storms of life? Have you maximized these opportunities to share the gospel to others around you? If not, what has hindered you from doing so? How can you improved as a follower of Christ?