

# Surviving the Storms of Life

## Pt 1 Basic Survival Skills - Acts 27

This morning I want to begin a series entitled “Surviving the Storms of Life”. As many of us have found out that life isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. Life is hard, it hands us difficult circumstances that at times seem unbearable or impossible to overcome. We need to be able to find our way through and find our hope in Jesus (Amen).

There’s a story about a bird, Chippie the parakeet. He never saw it coming. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage. The next he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over. The problems began when Chippie’s owner decided to clean Chippie’s cage with a vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang, and she turned to pick it up. She’d barely said "hello" when "ssssopp!" Chippie got sucked in. The bird owner gasped, put down the phone, turned off the vacuum, and opened the bag. There was Chippie -- still alive, but stunned.

Since the bird was covered with dust and soot, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom, turned on the faucet, and held Chippie under the running water. Then, realizing that Chippie was soaked and shivering, she did what any compassionate bird owner would do . . . she reached for the hair dryer and blasted the pet with hot air. Poor Chippie never knew what hit him. A few days after the trauma, the reporter who’d initially written about the event contacted Chippie’s owner to see how the bird was recovering. "Well," she replied, "Chippie doesn’t sing much anymore -- he just sits and stares."

Have you ever felt sucked in, washed up, or blown over. Have you ever experienced the unexpected surprises of life? This morning I was to look at a group of people who had been like Chippie, they were not singing anymore just kind of sitting and staring in total shock and trauma.

It’s a story about the Apostle Paul and a traumatic voyage experience. Acts 27 tells us that a storm was raging, rain was pouring down and despite the best efforts of the crew, the boat was being battered and beaten by the storm. And the morale of the 276 people on board was sinking with the ship. **Acts 27:20** tells us:

*20 The terrible storm raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last all hope was gone.*

Many of us today find ourselves in the same situation, and many in our world have lost hope. Over the next couple of weeks I want to talk about different storms that we may face and how we can make it through the crashing thunder and the blowing rain. This morning I want to look at some basic Storm Survival Skills and then in the weeks to come we’ll get a little more in-depth.

There is always something we can do when we go through difficult circumstances, yet at times it seems like we become paralyzed, like we just can't seem to look past the circumstances into the possibility of life after the event. This morning I want to look at three things we can do to survive difficult times.

### **Three Immediate Things We Can Do to Survive Difficult Times.**

#### **1. Avoid the Storms you can.**

**Do you realize that many of the struggles that we go through are due to ourselves.**

We make poor choices, we don't take the time to plan, we don't think things through, and the next thing we know we are in trouble because of something we did or didn't do.

There are storms this morning that can be avoided. In verse 10 of our text we see that Paul knew that they were in trouble. It tells us (**Acts 27:10**):

*10 "Men," he said, "I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on—shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well."*

His warning was ignored. Of course others had other ideas and off they went into the dangerous Mediterranean. And lo and behold what happens? A storm comes - wow! Who could have seen that coming? Here is the idea for you. **Listen to good godly advice.**

**Psalm 37:30-31** tells us:

*30 The godly offer good counsel; they teach right from wrong. 31 They have made God's law their own, so they will never slip from his path.*

So often we take advice from people who are in the same boat that we are in – that is insanity. They are going through the same struggles and are stuck like we are. Follow people who you would consider godly – not religious, but godly (those who always have God on their minds and who do the right thing). These are the people who have experienced God's truth in the midst of the battle. **Learn from the wisdom of people who have gone before you.** Paul wrote in **Colossians 3:16**:

*16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.*

It's a wonderful thing to learn from your mistakes but I find it far better to learn from other people's mistakes. They can help speed up the growth process and avoid any unnecessary setbacks. So, listen to godly advice, listen to the experiential knowledge (the wisdom) of others, and also **listen to the words of a friend.** **Proverbs 27:9** tells us:

*9 The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.*

It is always good to get the help of a friend, someone who knows us the best, someone who knows our weaknesses, our strengths, someone who knows how we think and

process things, and someone who will tell us like it is. Sometimes a good swift kick in the pants is the best thing for us. But notice that it says, the **“heartfelt counsel” of a friend – in the Hebrews actually means “counsel that is a refreshing breath”**. Anybody ever had something like that, that when a friend speaks to you they are refreshing and like a breath of fresh air.

In one of the most difficult times of my life, there was a youth pastor friend who I met up at camp, who always went out of his way to come to me and remind me of my talents, who reminded of my calling in life, who voiced his value of my friendship, who always was a listening ear, and who told things like it was. My friend, Robert Guillier and his words were refreshing to me and pulled me through a time when I could have walked away from ministry.

Today, every once and a while he sends an email, we connect on the phone, or we run into each other at a foursquare event – it doesn’t happen all the time, but he speaks truth whenever we are together. Another way we can survive difficult times is to:

## **2. Remember that God is in the Storm**

In **Acts 27:22-25** we read:

*22 But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down. 23 For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, 24 and he said, ‘Don’t be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What’s more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.’ 25 So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said.*

Man **when we get into the storm it’s easy to begin to believe that we are alone**. It’s easy to forget that God has a plan for our lives. It’s easy to begin to play loose and easy with the commands of God. It’s easy to isolate ourselves from God. The enemy of our souls uses this as a tactic. Things get tough and he gets you to blaming God for your circumstances, questioning if God really cares, and running from God right into snares that have trapped so many others. (bad relationships, alcohol, drugs, spending, isolation, depression, fear)

Just at the time that we most need the Church, it’s people, it’s encouragement, and it’s instruction - the devil convinces us that no one cares and we’re in this alone. In the midst of this violent storm - and angel of God appears to Paul and tells him not to worry everything is going to be alright. God is going to pull them through.

Remember Paul didn’t ask for this trip, he warned against going, now he is stuck with the disastrous decisions of others. God steps in and says to him - Paul - remember I am in control - I will see my plan fulfilled in your life - if you will only trust me. **Remember no matter what storm you are in - God is in it with you**. Paul wrote in **2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**:

*16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, 17 comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.*

No matter how I feel, or what I hear, or the more I feel alone, or can't go on, Lord you are faithful and ready to comfort and strengthen me. There is nothing impossible with God. David wrote in **Psalm 18:29-25**:

*29 In your strength I can crush an army; with my God I can scale any wall. 30 God's way is perfect. All the Lord's promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection. 31 For who is God except the Lord? Who but our God is a solid rock? 32 God arms me with strength, and he makes my way perfect. 33 He makes me as surefooted as a deer, enabling me to stand on mountain heights. 34 He trains my hands for battle; he strengthens my arm to draw a bronze bow. 35 You have given me your shield of victory. Your right hand supports me; your help has made me great.*

David writes these words after numerous battles and the betrayal of King Saul. Hearing from those who have experienced the deliverance of God, those who have a testimony of how they have pulled through and how in the midst God was faithful, **we need to hear the victories of God from others in order for us to believe them for ourselves.** Finally this morning, we can survive difficult times by casting out anchors.

### **3. Cast out the anchors**

**Acts 27:27-29** tells us:

*27 About midnight on the fourteenth night of the storm, as we were being driven across the Sea of Adria,\* the sailors sensed land was near. 28 They dropped a weighted line and found that the water was 120 feet deep. But a little later they measured again and found it was only 90 feet deep.\* 29 At this rate they were afraid we would soon be driven against the rocks along the shore, so they threw out four anchors from the back of the ship and prayed for daylight.*

The men on the ship cast out 4 anchors into the sea to hold them in place until the sun could reveal their location. That's not a bad idea. Too often we are propelled along in life and run aground because we don't know or don't care where we are going. It is time for us to wake up and see the destruction that we are heading towards. Let me share with you **four anchors that will hold in the storm.**

*a. Anchor 1: The Unchangeable Nature of God*

**Malachi 3:6** tells us:

*6 "I am the Lord, and I do not change."*

*17 God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. 18 So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. 19 This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. **Hebrews 6:17-19***

His unchanging nature gives hope in the storm. The same God who stood with countless others before us, is the same God we follow today and will be with us as well.

*b. Anchor Two: The Unfailing Promises of God.*

God's promises are unfailing. His promise to provide, to protect, to preserve, and to prepare never go unfulfilled. His promises are eternal and unfailing for us.

*c. Anchor Three: The Unbelievable Love of God.*

We know that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. **Ephesians 3:18-19** Paul tells us:

*18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. 19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*

*d. Anchor Four: The Unmerited favor and grace of God.*

God loves us we can't earn it and we can't lose it. He has chosen to make us His children. To love us and keep us as His own. Don't forget what you have and who you are. **1 Peter 2:9:**

*9 But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests,\* a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.*

These four anchors are sure and steadfast and they never fail. Paul wrote to Timothy while in prison in **2 Timothy 1:12:**

*12 I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.*

My encouragement to you over these next few weeks is to hear the word of God and trust that when life gets stormy and the sea gets rough, to trust in the Lord Your God to see you through. He will make a way for you in the midst of the storm. Let's pray!