

A new season is coming

Andy Moyle

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This sermon is based on a transcript of a prophecy by Mike Betts.

It's the end of a tough year for many, so what more appropriate place to go to in Scripture than the end of Acts 27:13 onwards. If you have a Bible, do grab it as I'll be working through it and prising out some helpful insights for us.

Paul is heading for Rome - he's under arrest for Christianity and on his way to make an appeal before the Emperor. They are about to set sail to Italy from Cyprus at the wrong time of year for sailing. Let's pick up the story.

v13-14 South wind blowing gently... a tempestuous wind struck.

No-one knew what was about to come. It was a shock.

None of us knew what was coming in 2020 - blowing gently along in life and then suddenly a tempestuous storm blows up - Covid-19. Most of the world locked down, millions dead and millions out of work.

It was a shock and a trauma. And it is okay to not be okay. It's okay to need some emotional, physical and spiritual healing. We are not super humans!

I've found some help in "The ruthless elimination of hurry" by John Mark Comer and "Gentle and Lowly" by Dane Ortlund.

v15 "ship was caught and we could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along"

Change was forced along. We have had to give way to draconian restrictions of lockdowns and tiers - 2020 is ending in tiers. Boom, Boom

Like a tempest, it is far bigger than us. We are not in control and we feel it. We are unsure and concerned.

At times like this we can lose sight of God's promises to us and over us.

v16-20 violently storm-tossed, jettisoning cargo, throwing the ships-tackle overboard.

How many things have we, have you had to throw overboard this year? Hugs, meeting friends, gathering on a Sunday, gathering in a life groups, a cheeky Nandoes with family, conferences.

I travel quite a bit to support church plants and there's been none of that this year- I've not gone further than Spalding! I said that in a Zoom meeting and a couple of people commented how nice Spalding is!

Decision, after decision has been changed by the relentless storm.

v20 - neither sun nor stars appeared for many days.. all hope of being saved was at last abandoned.

Actually its a holy moment. We don't have any hope in and of ourselves. Life is fragile and then it ends. True hope, the thrill of hope comes when we abandon hope of self-preservation and turn to Jesus, cling to him, surrender to Him, depend on Him, abandon ourselves to Him.

Paul wrote in 2 Cor that he had reached moments (Acts 27 one of them) where we despaired even of life itself.

But we are not surrendering to Covid! We are surrendering to God - who's sovereign hand will guide us. Paul writes "this happened that we may not rely on ourselves but on he who raises the dead."

Have you surrendered to Him - have you come to Christ? And as a Christian are you surrendered to Him. Or are you relying on yourself or getting anxious?

v22-24 Take heart... there will be no loss of life

Can't say that there will be no loss of life physically to Covid-19. But there will be no loss of life to the purpose that God has caught us up in. We are not finished. Far from it. God has got amazing promises over the Gateway Church and He will do it through you and me.

Paul must stand before Caesar - he was not defined by the storm, he had a calling beyond it. So do we!

Only the ship was lost - the vehicle. The vehicle of Sunday physical gatherings has been lost for a season, but there will be new vehicles. We're back physically on the 3rd at the Gaywood Community Centre again.

v26 But we must run aground on some island.

Online only is a Malta for us. A port in the storm - it bridged the gap and gave breathing space. It won't be the only vehicle permanently.

v35 They took bread and gave thanks, v36 all were encouraged, v44 they made for shore on plans and pieces of wood.

There's a simplicity to our faith that is a lifesaver.

The simplicity of breaking bread together, even online and relying on the cross - the wood on which Christ died.

Households breaking bread and celebrating clinging to the cross and all that means is so important.

Give thanks! What are you thankful for in season?

Be encouraged in these things - breaking bread, giving thanks, relying on the cross.

v39 They did not recognise the land

We are in the midst of a new normal. The landscape is different.

But notice in 28:1 & 2 the unusual kindness of islanders

There's a favour coming with government and authorities that sees the church as an encouragement and blessing in the community not a threat.

A snake jumps out on Paul and he is not hurt - I think the coming season will be marked by more miracles and healings.

v7-8 healings open up for the Gospel

Publius the chief of the island is ill and Paul lays hands on him and heals him. Because of that healing there's an opening for many others to come and be healed. Earlier in the year I prayed for Jo in Norfolk Phone Repairs and now when I go here partner gets me to pray for others in the shop! This coming season will be marked by an increase in healing as we take risks and go for it!

I'm a firm believer in early offer of prayer to lead to sharing the Gospel is there anything you would like prayer for? On Thurs Jan 14th fortnightly Mike and I are going to run a Zoom Grow in God's mission course using some of the materials David Bareham taught a year or two ago. If you want to get bold this coming year and make early offers of prayer and know what to do and how to share the Gospel, do join us.

By the end of Acts 28 they have moved out of the shipwreck season and into 2 years of favour. We will get to the end of Covid and we will see more of God's favour. But favour is shown as we step out.

Take a look at v30 he welcomes all, he proclaimed, and he taught boldly!

Let's get bold!