**5th April 2020 – Pastor Faith**

**Riding on the Storm of Life**

Acts 27 – The Storm at Sea

This lesson comes from the story of the shipwreck of Paul who was on his way as a political prisoner to Rome. We cannot control the storm, but we can control how we act and respond in the midst of a storm. From this passage, we learn 4 things that we can do to strengthen our faith in the middle of the storm.

1. **Brace up (Acts 27:17)**

The sailors bound ropes around the ship to strengthen it in order to try to minimise damage from the storm. 1 Peter 1:13 tells us to “gird up the loins of our minds” or to “prepare our minds”. Just as the sailors prepared for the storm by tying ropes around the ship, we need to be aware of what our thoughts are tied up with during times of crisis. We must have a mindset that is prepared, thinking like God, staying in peace in God’s ways, and using His promises to combat any doubts or fears. Are we being consumed with news and social media or are we strengthening our resolve with the word of God?

***Share with the group a Bible verse and how this verse has strengthened you this week in your specific circumstance. (i.e. Ps 91; Isaiah 43)***

1. **Lighten up (Acts 27:18-19)**

As the winds continued, we then read that the crew began to throw cargo overboard to lighten the load on the ship. In times of crisis, we often see ourselves getting down to what is essential and realise what is important to us. Now is a good time to do a stock take of our physical and emotional baggage. Have we been consumed with material belongings? Are we carrying emotional burdens of unforgiveness and bitterness? These things will weigh us down in a storm and cause distraction from our purpose within the crisis.

1. **Calm Down (Acts 27:22-25)**

**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.

Paul encourages the crew by telling them that an angel stood beside him. This speaks of God’s reassuring presence in our lives, allowing us to take courage for what lies ahead.

1. **Anchor Down (Acts 27:29)**

The crew threw out four anchors so that they would not be driven against the rocks at the shore.

1. God’s presence – knowing that we belong to God and He is with us. God with us, Immanuel. Paul called Him “the God to whom I belong.” He brings peace in storm.
2. God’s purpose – realise that we have a job to do. God’s purpose cannot be destroyed and we are always called to be salt and light of the world. In this state of shutdown does it mean that our purposes are no longer valid? *Think about small acts of kindness that we can do for others around us.*
3. God’s people – Now is not the time to jump ship and go rogue but rather to stay connected with likeminded people who will encourage and uplift us to get through the storm together.
4. God’s power – God’s power is always available to us in big and small situations. More than ever, we need to be aware of God’s power in our lives. Pastor Faith shared 2 instances where God helped her to recover things that were lost. It is one thing to call upon the power of God, but another to realise that his power is at work in all areas of our lives. **Sharing testimonies helps us to be more aware of how God is working in our lives and in the lives of those around us, and we begin to realise together how real and truly available God’s power is.**

**Questions for discussion**

1. The Anchor of Purpose. What are God’s purposes for your life that you are inspired to pay more attention to how you have less distraction?
2. Do you have anything you can discard to lighten your load and so move on better with God or man? (For example, Emotionally/Spiritually)