

91. God Spoke to Paul During a Storm

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children the importance of depending on the Lord for guidance, instead of depending on our own knowledge. We saw that Paul was being taken by ship to Rome because of his appeal to Caesar. Today, we are going to see why the owner of the ship and the others on board should have listened to Paul and the guidance that he had received from the Lord, instead of depending on their own knowledge.

Acts 27:14-17 says, “But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon. So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let *her* drive. And running under *the shelter* of an island called Clauda, we secure the skiff with difficulty. When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck said and so were driven.” The ship had started sailing along the south side of the island of Crete with a south wind. It was only forty miles from Fair Havens to Phoenix so they thought that they could make that trip safely.

However, we see that they had only gone a small part of that 40 miles when the wind changed direction. The wind started blowing from the northeast instead of the south. The wind had the force of a hurricane. This kind of wind was greatly feared by those who sailed on the Mediterranean Sea. Everyone on the ship suddenly realized that their lives were in great danger. They could not turn the ship so that it faced the wind. Instead, the wind began to drive the ship and there was nothing that the sailors could do to control the ship.

They received a small break from the wind when they passed south of a small island named Cauda. The sailors had just barely enough time to make the lifeboat secure. Once they had the lifeboat on the ship, the sailors immediately put cables around the ship and tightened them with winches in an effort to try and hold the ship together during the storm. However, once they passed that island the sailors on the ship knew that they now faced a much greater danger. They knew that they were being driven toward an area known as the sandbars of Syrtis. In the past, many ships had been driven onto those sandbars and then the waves would beat on the ships until the ships were broken apart. They immediately lowered the sails of the ship and put out a sea anchor to try and slow the progress of the ship. Then, all they could do was let the ship be driven by the wind.

Acts 27:18-20 says, “And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next *day* they lightened the ship. On the third *day* we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on *us*, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.” The next day, the storm grew even worse. The ship took a violent battering from the storm as the ship was tossed by the waves. They also threw the cargo on the ship overboard in an effort to lighten the ship. The third day, the storm continued its violence, so then they threw the tackle of the ship into the sea. The word translated “tackle” means *the equipment or gear of the ship*. They threw the tackle overboard in an effort to make the ship lighter.

However, the storm did not end. Instead, we read that the storm lasted for many days. The storm

was so terrible that they did not even see the sun once during those days or any stars at night during that time. As the storm continued day after day, the people on the ship gave up any hope that they would even survive. The word translated “saved” means *to rescue from danger or destruction*. It is most often used in the New Testament to talk about salvation from sin. Christ used the word in Luke 19:10, when he said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” However, in this verse, the word is used to speak of being saved from physical death.

Acts 27:21-24 says, “But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, ‘Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.”’” The men on the ship went many days without food. This was probably due both to their fear and to the fact that the storm was so bad that most of them were seasick from the tossing of the ship in the waves.

Paul had waited a long time to say anything. However, after many days, Paul stood up and said that they should have taken his advice not to sail from Crete. He said that would have spared them from the damage and loss that they were experiencing. Most people would stop at this point after they had said, “You should have listened to me.” In contrast, that was just the introduction to what Paul wanted to say. Paul said that he wanted to urge the people on the ship that day to be cheerful and to have courage. Paul went on to tell the men that none of the people on the ship would die. Only the ship would be destroyed. The key is that what Paul said was not his own opinion.

Paul went on to say that an angel spoke to him the previous night. This angel had been sent by the God to whom Paul belonged. This angel had a message for Paul from the God that Paul served. Christ told the Sadducees, in Mark 12:26-27, “But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning bush passage*, how God spoke to him, saying, “*I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*”? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.” Paul had later written, in 1 Corinthians 15:20, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Paul knew that he served the God of the living, because he served the God who created all things.

The angel that had spoken to Paul had stood beside him and gave him a promise. That promise was, ““Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.”” Paul knew that he did not have to fear. God had said that he must stand trial before Caesar. That was the plan of God to make it possible for Caesar to hear the message of the Gospel. However, the angel also gave Paul a second promise. God was going to show his grace to everyone on that ship by sparing all of their lives from the storm even though the ship would be destroyed. Here, we see why Paul told the people on that ship that they could be cheerful instead of being filled with fear.

Paul went on to say, in Acts 27:25-26, “Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be

just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island.” In the middle of the storm, Paul assured the men on the ship that they could be cheerful and have courage. Paul had experienced many fears in his past life and he had always found that God was sufficient. In 2 Corinthians 7:5-6, Paul wrote, “For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside *were* conflicts, inside *were* fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus...” Paul had experienced much difficulty in his life. He had seen conflicts around him. He had experienced fears within. He had times in his life when he was downcast. In all of these situations, Paul had found that God had given him comfort. Now, Paul wanted those on the ship to experience that same comfort and peace.

The reason Paul could have that comfort is also given. Paul said that he had faith in God. As a result, he expected God to do exactly as God had promised him. Here, we see a very important key for our own lives. We cannot trust in ourselves or our own ideas. However, we can trust in God and His Word. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Everything in the Bible was given by the very breath of God as the Holy Spirit guided the writers that wrote the various books of the Bible. As a result, we can have faith in God and His Word.

The meaning of faith is explained for us in Hebrews 11:1, which says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” We could also say that faith in God means that we know that God will do exactly as He has promised even though we have not seen it happen yet. God had spoken to Paul through the angel. That was why Paul had full confidence that God would preserve the lives of every person on that ship even though the ship would be shipwrecked.

Paul also told those on the ship what would happen to the ship. The angel had said that the ship must run aground on some island. The word that is translated “must” means *it is necessary*. Here, we see that it was the plan of the God that the ship would be destroyed, but that all of the people on the ship would have their lives preserved so each one would have one more opportunity to repent of the sin of unbelief and come to God through faith in Christ. This is an important lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. Many times, when people have a close encounter with death, they wonder why they were able to escape death. We want to show our children the importance of using such opportunities to share with people that God has given them one more opportunity to repent of their sin. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to see the opportunities that the Lord gives to share the Gospel.