

92. Paul Became the Leader During the Storm

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that God will preserve their lives until they have completed the ministry that the Lord has prepared for their lives. When people who are not Christians have a close encounter with death, our children can also tell such individuals that God has preserved their lives to give them one more opportunity to repent of their sin of unbelief and turn to God by placing their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ. Today, we are going to see how Paul, the prisoner, became the leader on the ship because of his faith in the Lord.

Acts 27:27-29 says, “Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic *Sea*, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. And they took soundings and found *it* to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found *it* to be fifteen fathoms. Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come.” We saw in our last topic that the people on the ship had not seen the sun or the stars for many days. Here, we see that the number of days had reached fourteen since they had left the harbor of Fair Havens.

Throughout this time, they had been driven up and down in the Adria or Adriatic Sea. At the time of the New Testament, the Adria or Adriatic Sea was the area that stretched from the western coast of Greece and Croatia on the east to Italy and the island of Sicily, which was southwest of Italy, on the west. About midnight, the sailors could tell that the ship was getting close to land. When a ship gets close to land, the sound of waves crashing against the rocks can be heard, especially in a storm when the waves are large.

The sailors immediately took soundings to find out how deep the water was where they were. The first time they found that the water was twenty fathoms (a fathom is six feet) or about one hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later, the next sounding showed that the water was only fifteen fathoms or about ninety feet deep. That immediately brought a new fear to the sailors. They were afraid that the water would get so shallow that the front of the ship would run aground on the rocks or get stuck in the sand and the waves would break the ship into pieces during the night. As a result, the sailors quickly dropped four anchors from the back of the ship to keep the ship from getting any closer to the shore. The word translated “prayed” means to wish or to pray. Some people probably wished for the day and other prayed.

Acts 27:30-32 says, “And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, ‘Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.’ Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.” The sailors decided that they were going to try and escape from the ship in the small boat. In fact, they had let the small boat down in the water and were pretending that they were going to put out anchors from the front of the boat. Meanwhile, they were actually planning to escape from the ship and try to get to land in the small boat.

Paul realized what the sailors were planning to do. Then, Paul spoke to the centurion and the soldiers. Paul told them, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” The soldiers took immediate action when they heard the words of Paul. The soldiers cut the ropes that held the small boat and let the small boat fall into the water. Here, we see that Paul began to take leadership to protect the people who were on the ship. Paul realized that the sailors would be needed to steer the ship once the daylight came.

A godly leader is one who sees what needs to be done in order to do what is best for all of the people. Joseph demonstrated this kind of leadership when he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh. He did not just interpret the dreams. Once he had interpreted the dreams, he gave godly counsel. Genesis 41:33-36 says, “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.” Here, we see that godly counsel tells people how to prepare for the future.

Paul showed that same godly wisdom as he told the centurion and the soldiers how to prepare for the coming of the morning light. Psalm 119:97-100 tells followers of the Lord how to gain godly wisdom so that we can do what is best for all people. Those verses say, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for *they* are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies *are* my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.” Here, we see that we gain godly wisdom from the Word of God. Joshua 1:8 says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” This verse shows that we gain godly wisdom as we meditate on the Word of God.

As we meditate on the Word of God in our own lives, we will see that God guides us so that we are able to give godly counsel from the Word and allow God to work in the lives of people through His Word. The Lord promises, in Ephesians 3:20-21, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” The previous verses show that God works through His Word as we pray for those that the Lord has called us to lead.

God also used Paul to provide leadership for everyone on board when the light of the morning came. Acts 27:33-37 says, “And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored *them* all to take food, saying, ‘Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing. Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.’ And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat. Then they

were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship.” Here, we see that Paul took leadership by both his words and his actions.

Paul spoke to everyone on the ship as the day began to dawn. He reminded them that it had been fourteen days since they had eaten very much food. When a ship is being tossed by the waves in a storm, most of the people become so seasick that they do not want to eat. In addition, it is very hard to prepare much food when the ship is going up and down. Paul realized that the people on the ship were going to need to get to land and they needed physical strength to reach land. Paul urged everyone to eat so that they would be able to survive. Then, he used a statement that was used several times in the Old Testament, and later, quoted by Luke. Luke 21:18 says, ““But not a hair of your head shall be lost.”” This statement is a statement that God will provide complete protection from the dangers that people face.

The words that Paul spoke were important. However, his actions were even more important. We have seen that we provide godly leadership both by prayer and by sharing the Word of God. However, true godly leadership also provides an example to follow. That was what Paul did next. He took some bread and gave thanks to God for the bread that God had provided. Then, in front of all of the people on the ship, Paul began to eat the bread. By his action, Paul showed that his full trust was in the Lord and that he knew that the Lord would bring them safely to land.

The other people on the ship saw the actions of Paul and his actions provided great encouragement to them. Then, they also took food and began to eat. Paul wrote, in 1 Corinthians 4:16, “Therefore I urge you, imitate me.” Later, in 1 Corinthians 11:1, he wrote, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” Paul did not speak those words here. Instead, as he began eating the food, the other people on the ship were encouraged and they also began to eat food. Christ also showed the importance of leading others by our own example. After washing the feet of the disciples, Christ said, in John 13:15, ““For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”” Godly leadership leads by example.

We also see the number of people who were on this ship. We see that there were a total of two hundred and seventy-six people on the ship in addition to the load of wheat that the ship was carrying. This meant that this was a very large ship for that day. It also meant that God saved the lives of many people from physical death through the godly leadership of Paul. Here, we see the impact of leading by example. We also want to show our physical and spiritual children the importance of learning to lead others by their example. As they learn to pray and meditate on the Word of God, the Lord will give them many opportunities to lead others as they share Biblical principles and show others how to apply those Biblical principles by the example of their own lives. Biblical principles that are both taught, and then modeled by example, are used by the Lord to change and transform the lives of many others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to lead others by their godly example.