

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson # 103

COMMENTARY ON: 27:12-26

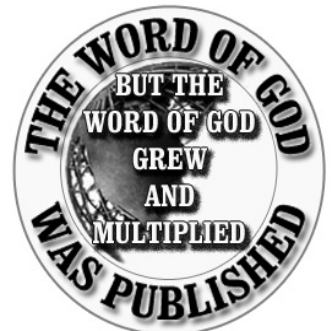
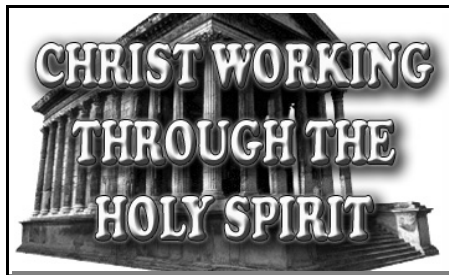
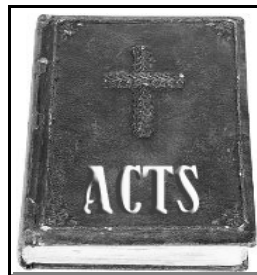
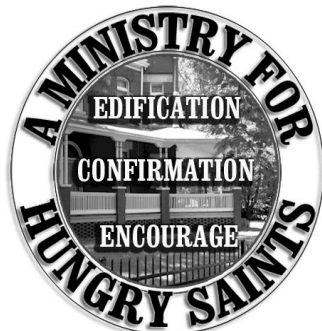
A COMFORTING WORD IN THE STORM

By now, the winter was coming on, and it was apparently not possible to travel by ship at that time. The pilot and ship master judged that Fair Havens was not a good place to spend the winter, and they should move to a more convenient location. Having set out for the next port, they encountered some violent wind that required a stopover at the small island of Clauda. There they had to undergird the ship. Because they were in danger of sinking into quicksands, or sandbars, they had to lower the sails and be driven along by the raging sea. They were forced to lighten the boat by throwing its cargo and tackling overboard. After spending a long time without food, Paul stood forth and announced that the angel of the Lord had appeared to him, informing him that he would stand before Caesar. The boat would be lost, but all of the people on board would be saved. The board would be wrecked, and they would end up on a certain island, tired and tired, but safe. He told them to be of good cheer.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

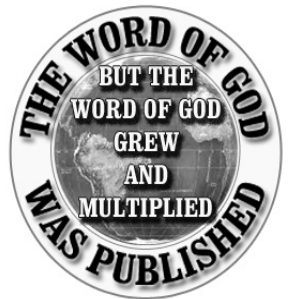
" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ

The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 103



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED =Amplified Bible (1965), ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV =English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GNB=Good News (1966), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE= International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV= Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

----- GREEK LEXICON LEGEND -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

A COMFORTING WORD IN THE STORM

“ 27:12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west. ¹³And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete. ¹⁴But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. ¹⁵And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. ¹⁶And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: ¹⁷Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, struck sail, and so were driven. ¹⁸And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; ¹⁹And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. ²⁰And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. ²¹But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. ²²And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. ²³For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, ²⁴Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. ²⁵Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. ²⁶Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.” (Acts 27:12-26)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT
By now, the winter was coming on, and it was apparently not possible to travel by ship at that time. The pilot and ship master judged that Fair Havens was not a good place to spend the winter, and they should move to a more convenient location. Having set out for the next port, they

encountered some violent wind that required a stopover at the small island of Clauda. There they had to undergird the ship. Because they were in danger of sinking into quicksands, or sandbars, they had to lower the sails and be driven along by the raging sea. They were forced to lighten the boat by throwing its cargo and tackling overboard.

After spending a long time without food, Paul stood forth and announced that the angel of the Lord had appeared to him, informing him that he would stand before Caesar. The boat would be lost, but all of the people on board would be saved. The board would be wrecked, and they would end up on a certain island, tried and tired, but safe. He

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told them to be of good cheer.

WISDOM IN PRACTICAL MATTERS

There is a wisdom dispensed from heaven that has to do with practical matters. The wisdom given to Solomon is an example of this type of soundness of mind. Twenty-nine times the book of Ecclesiastes refers to this kind of wisdom as pertaining to things “under the sun.” It has to do with practicalities relating to life in this world. This is valid wisdom, but does not directly integrate with the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. By that, I mean it does not contribute to the effectiveness of salvation. Paul spoke of times and circumstances in which it was not wise to marry, for it would cause “trouble in the flesh” (1 Cor 7:26-28). If men did marry, they were not sinning in doing so, but would experience some inconvenience that might very well impact upon living unto God.

- ⇒ When He sent out His disciples, Jesus told them, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Mat 10:16).

⇒ There are matters that are technically lawful, yet, from the standpoint of this kind of wisdom, they are not expedient. “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Cor 6:12).

⇒ There are other matters that are technically permissible. However, from the standpoint of this kind of wisdom, they are not expedient. “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not” (1 Cor 10:23).

⇒ Paul advised the Corinthians on a wise way of fulfilling their commitment to send aid to the poor saints in Jerusalem. “And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago” (2 Cor 8:10).

⇒ The saints are admonished to “be wise unto that which is good” (Rom 16:19).

⇒ Paul was a “wise masterbuilder” (1 Cor 3:10).

⇒ Believers are to “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15-16).

⇒ Paul warned and taught every man “in all wisdom” (Col 1:28).

⇒ Those in Christ are to “walk I wisdom toward those who are without” (Col 4:5).

⇒ James admonished that if, in the matter of being perfect and entire, wanting nothing, any believer lacked wisdom, we are to “ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

Wisdom in these areas does not elevate one’s fellowship with Christ. It is not the level at which salvation or damnation is determined. This does not mean there is no need for such wisdom, for often the lack of it makes one more vulnerable to the attacks of the wicked one, and puts one at an unnecessary disadvantage. This kind of wisdom does not promote growth in Christ. It is not the appointed means of overcoming the devil, or gaining an eternal inheritance. Yet, no person of God should be content to be without it.

Again, there is a practical wisdom that comes down from above – wisdom that is not bound on every soul, for it does not immediately pertain to God’s great salvation. Nor, indeed, does it deal with matters that are common to everyone. In our text, it pertained to people in an earthly storm. In Corinthians it had to do with people considering marriage, and the considerate gathering of a collection. However, it is very real wisdom, and assists God’s children in avoiding many unnecessary hardships and difficulties.

This is the kind of wisdom Paul exhibited when he said the voyage would be with peril to the cargo, the ship, and the people. It is lower form of wisdom that has been sanctified by the Lord. It has to do with living wisely in this present evil world.

THERE IS A HIGHER WISDOM

It is true that there is a kind of wisdom that is directly related to salvation. It has to do with avoiding sin and being involved in righteousness. **This is a higher form of wisdom, and impacts directly on whether a person goes to heaven or hell.** Of this wisdom it is written:

⇒ “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30).

⇒ “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is true that there is a kind of wisdom that is directly related to salvation. It has to do with avoiding sin and being involved in righteousness. This is a higher form of wisdom, and impacts directly on whether a person goes to heaven or hell.

the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph 1:17).

⇒ *“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9).*

⇒ *“In whom are hid all the treasures of*

wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3).

This is a wisdom that is associated with the appropriation and maintenance of eternal life. It has to do with recognizing the ploys of the devil and the promises of God. It has to do with how men conduct themselves before God, and what they do with the work He has given them to do – whether they are faithful or unfaithful servants.

The wisdom expressed in this text

had to do with surviving a storm. The higher wisdom had to do with bearing witness to Jesus in Rome. The first had to do with surviving a natural storm, the second with surviving the assaults of the devil.

The person who can distinguish between these two forms of wisdom, and assign proper priorities to them, is one who will be able to navigate through difficulties in the best manner, and land at last on the eternal shore.

THE HAVEN WAS NOT COMMODIOUS

“27:12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.”

The decision to move ahead, even though sailing was *“dangerous,”* apparently involved considerable consultation and reasoning. The fact that Julius yielded to the opinions of the pilot and the owner, choosing to reject the counsel of Paul, let to some further reasoning that involved others. It appears from the text that there was some kind of consensus reached that involved quite a few people.

THE HAVEN WAS NOT COMMODIOUS

“And because the haven was not commodious to winter in . . .” Other versions read, *“was not suitable to winter in,”* ^{NKJV} *“was not suitable for wintering,”* ^{NASB} *“not suitable for spending the winter,”* ^{NRSV} *“not a good one in which to be for the winter,”* ^{BBE} *“not well suited to sitting out the winter,”* ^{CJB} *“being ill adapted to winter in,”* ^{DARBY} and *“was not well situated and so unsuitable to winter in.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Here, the advisors thought of the whole trip rather than the portion of it they were then experiencing. It was apparently known that while on the trip to Rome, they would have to spend the winter someplace. From that perspective, Fair Havens was suited better for the non-winter seasons. It does not appear that it was an intended haven for ships at all times of the year.

In order to think in this manner, they had to forget their present peril. They

also had to treat the word of Paul as though it was not true. Additionally, they had to view the storm as lasting briefly, and that it would allow them to safely make it to a better place for the future. As their experience will confirm, this was nothing more than an exercise in vain thinking. They had been warned by Paul that moving on to the next port would involve the loss of their cargo, the loss of the ship, and possibly the loss of their lives. But all of that was meaningless to them, because they were thinking within the wrong context.



A PARALLEL TO SPIRITUAL LIFE

There is a parallel here to spiritual life, and it is worthy of special consideration. When the children of God are passing through trials, the most important consideration is getting safely through them. **This will require obtaining mercy and grace to help in the time of need** (Heb 4:16). It will necessitate trusting in God during the present distress, realizing that it is their faith that is being tested (1 Pet 1:7). Satan will also be present during the times of testing, seeking to allure us out of the safety

zone, and into the broad road that leads to destruction (1 Pet 5:7-8).

If ever there is a time to avoid carnal assumptions, it is during the time of trial. It is possible to think of the future from an earthly point of view, assuming that you will soon be through the trial. However, that may not at all be the case. While there is a sense in which you must focus on the future, it must be an eternal future, not a temporal one. From this perspective, the trying of your faith is in order that it might be found *“unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”* (1 Pet 1:7). That means that we must conduct ourselves properly throughout the trial, not living by assumption, but by faith. **It is faith that must be maintained in trial,** and that is why it is imperative that we approach such times with wisdom and godly determination.

THE MORE PART ADVISED

“ . . . the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.”

Paul did not categorically tell the pilot and owner of the ship what to do. He did, however, warn them that proceeding with the trip at that time would bring them into certain danger of losing their cargo, the ship, and their lives as well. Now, it appears that there was further discussion on the matter that swayed Julius to proceed to a supposedly more convenient port.

The More Part Advised

Other versions read, *“the majority advised,”* ^{NKJV} *“The majority reached the conclusion,”* ^{NASB} *“the majority was in favor*

of^{NIV} “the greater number of them were for going out to sea,”^{BBE} and “the majority favored the plan of putting to sea again from there.”^{AMPLIFIED}

This is what is called consensus, or general agreement. It is the principle by which certain countries determine who will be their president. Some view it as a democratic process, and value it very highly. It is, in fact, considered by some to be a vital element of political freedom.

However, the majority is not always right – in fact they rarely can be so described. In Noah’s day, the majority were wrong. The same was true of the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim. When the “children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron,” although they were in the majority, they were totally wrong. **For the majority to be right, they must be righteous, and have a grasp of the truth – and that is a circumstance that has rarely, if ever, been found among the sons of men.**

+ It is true that Solomon wrote, “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov 11:14). And again, “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Prov 15:22). And yet again, “For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov 24:6). **However, is this set forth as proper protocol in Christ Jesus?** In the salvation of God, “wise counselors” are those who know the ways and will of the Lord. They are people who, like penitent Israel, “asked counsel of the Lord” (Judges 20:23). **At no point can the work of the Lord be approached as though it involved a democracy.** I say this knowing full well that it is possible for the saints to be “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor 1:10).

However, that is not the kind of oneness that is described in this text.

Attain Unto Phenice

“ . . . the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.” Other versions read, “if by any means they could reach Phoenix,”^{NKJV} “if somehow they could reach Phoenix,”^{NASB} “hoping to reach Phoenix and to winter there,”^{NIV} and “on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix.”^{NRSV}

The trip from Fair Havens to Phoenix, or Phenice, was from 50-60 miles as the crow flies. “Phoenix” is a transliteration of the name used here, while “Phenice” is a translation of it.

The majority felt as though it would be best to winter in that harbor, which was more commodious, comfortable, and conveniently spacious. Apparently it was situated so the winds of the winter would not have as great an impact on the vessel as they would in Fair Havens. At least, that is what the people thought.

It seems to me that Luke records this in vindication of Paul – to confirm that he had access to superior wisdom on the matter. The record will show that this is precisely correct.

When decisions are made like those of the greater number of people in this text, there is too much assumption.

- ⇨ They assume the conditions will remain as they are.
- ⇨ They assume conditions will not get worse.

- ⇨ They assume they will be able to safely navigate for a short while on the tempestuous sea of life.
- ⇨ They overestimate their ability.
- ⇨ They underestimate the danger that confronts them.

A PARALLEL OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

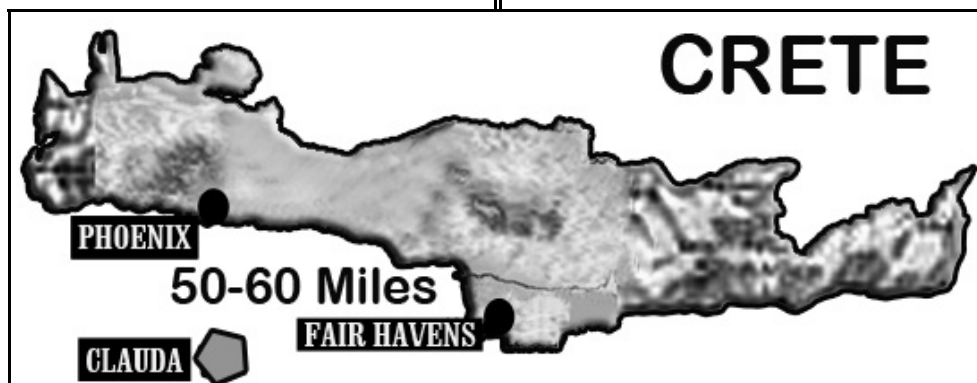
What do the children of God do in times of danger and stress – when it seems as though everything is against them? Is that really the time to seek convenience, more freedom to move about, and more external protection? Nearly all worldly counselors advise such a procedure. That is why those who deal with the mind often offer sedatives to calm the oppressed. It is why there are such things as retreats, and havens for the weary. I would not venture to say such things are of themselves wrong. The point here is whether or not they are right.

When we are under fire should we not seek to resist the encroachments of the devil rather than to hide from them. Ought we not to cast down imaginations, rather than to flee to a cave where they are least apt to bother us? Was Israel right in withdrawing from the battle when the Philistine giant appeared and intimidated them with his shouting?

Convenience is a thing that is to be assessed – filtered through the will of the Lord, and attended by much prayer and supplication. Felix told Paul he would call for him when he had “a convenient season” (Acts 24:25). He was, so to speak, seeking another harbor he felt was more “commodious.” The Gentile world, having refused to “retain God in their knowledge,” resorted to another harbor in which they could do things that were not really “convenient” as regards their eternal welfare (Rom 1:28).

Paul warned of conduct that is preferred by many, and portrays a kind of lifestyle that seems to have more freedom, and be more commodious. However that is not really the case at all. He wrote, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks” (Eph 5:3-4).

Some, who are feeling the winds of conviction, seek to locate in another place



Having set sail for the next port, and against the godly advise of Paul, the vessel encounters a fierce wind through which the pilot is unable to navigate – by Given O. Blakely

where they imagine they will be more comfortable. They listen to the testimony of others who say they are happy, and are having more fun. Thus they seek to relocate in an environment that gives the flesh the upper hand. Consequently, they are in greater danger than they have ever been before.

When called to go to Nineveh, Jonah thought it more convenient to get in a boat at his own expense, and head for another place. Because of his choice, he had a terrible experience, and when he was graciously delivered from it, he had still had to go to Nineveh, just as God had said.

There is a most intriguing word in the book of First Kings concerning a prophet who gave heed to the contradicting word of another prophet. It confirms the necessity of giving heed to the Lord, as opposed to listening to the counsel of others. This record concerns the prophet sent to king Jeroboam, restoring his hand that withered when he cried out against the altar (1 Kgs 13:1-7). This text commences with the king's request for the prophet to enter his house so he could receive refreshment and a reward. I am quoting the text from the New King James Version.

"But the man of God said to the king, If you were to give me half your house, I would not go in with you; nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place. For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came.' So he went another way and did not return by the way he came to Bethel. Now an old prophet dwelt in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; they also told

their father the words which he had spoken to the king. And their father said to them, "Which way did he go?" For his sons had seen which way the man of God went who came from Judah. Then he said to his sons, 'Saddle the donkey for me.' So they saddled the donkey for him; and he rode on it, and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak. Then he said to him, 'Are you the man of God who came from Judah?' And he said, 'I am.' Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread. And he said, 'I cannot return with you nor go in with you; neither can I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place. For I have been told by the word of the LORD, 'You shall not eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by going the way you came.' He said to him, 'I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.' (He was lying to him.) So he went back with him, and

Eat no bread and drink no water, your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.' So it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, the prophet whom he had brought back. When he was gone, a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his corpse was thrown on the road, and the donkey stood by it. The lion also stood by the corpse. And there, men passed by and saw the corpse thrown on the road, and the lion standing by the corpse. Then they went and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt. Now when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard it, he said, 'It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD. Therefore the LORD has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him'" (1 Kgs 13:8-26).

The penalty for not giving heed to

Some, who are feeling the winds of conviction, seek to locate in another place where they imagine they will be more comfortable. They listen to the testimony of others who say they are happy, and are having more fun. Thus they seek to relocate in an environment that gives the flesh the upper hand. Consequently, they are in greater danger than they have ever been before.

ate bread in his house, and drank water. Now it happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back; and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD, and have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the Lord said to you,

the word of Paul will not be as harsh as the one paid by that prophet, who believed a lie. That is only because Paul's word did not concern specific directions from God. However, the events that follow clarify how serious it is to ignore a word delivered by a man of God. It is only because Paul was on board the boat that the repercussions were not more serious.

THEY SUPPOSED

"¹³ And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete."

Now, giving heed to those who agreed it was appropriate to proceed to the next port, the ship and its occupants commence the journey to that more convenient port. Things will appear at first to justify their conclusion, but time will confirm they had made a big mistake.

WHEN THE SOUTH WIND BLEW

SOFTLY

"And when the south wind blew softly . . ." Other versions read, "when a moderate wind came up,"^{NASB} "when a gentle wind began to blow,"^{NIV} and "when the south wind blew gently."^{RSV}

There was a sudden change in the weather, with the storm apparently subsiding. Sailing would now be much easier, with the wind softly blowing upon the hoisted sails. Everything was favorable – at least that is the way it appeared.

THEY SUPPOSED THEY WERE RIGHT

" . . . supposing that they had obtained their purpose . . ." Other versions read, "supposing they had obtained their desire,"^{NKJV} "they thought they had obtained what they wanted,"^{NIV} "they thought they could achieve their purpose,"^{NRSV} "supposing they were gaining their object."^{AMPLIFIED}

Having made the determination that they should sail to the next port, the circumstance appeared to justify their view. The wind

was ideal, and therefore they concluded they were right. Any hesitation to carry out their will was dissolved, and they proceeded to do what they had determined.

THEY SAILED CLOSE TO CRETE

“... loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.” Other versions read, “putting out to sea,”^{NKJV} “weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete,”^{NASB} “so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete,”^{NIV} and “they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, hugging the coast.”^{AMPLIFIED}

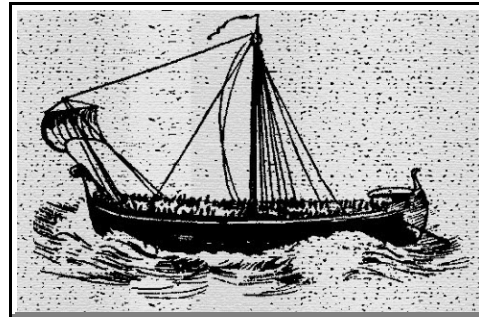
Experience in the sea caused them to use some caution, not venturing into the deep. Thus they sailed as close to the shore of Crete as they could, apparently judging that if the weather changed, they could maintain some degree of safety.

The expression “weigh anchor” is a nautical term, and means the following. “Weigh anchor is a nautical term indicating the final preparation of a sea vessel for getting underway. Weighing anchor literally means raising the anchor of the vessel from the sea floor and pulling it up to the side of the vessel after the engines have been brought up to operating power.”^{WIKIPEDIA} “put up the anchor: Synonyms: bring the anchor home, cast off, loose for sea, put to sea, unmoor, up-anchor.”^{VISUAL THESAURUS} “To weigh anchor means to take up or lift the anchor off the sea bed when getting underway or ‘under weigh.’”^{NAUTICAL TERMS}

Preparing to sail took considerable effort, for this was no small vessel. In addition to cargo and ship tackling, there were 276 people on board. An idea of the size of this vessel is provided by **Bible History On Line**: “The Apostle Paul’s ship was actually a grain ship . . . It was of enormous size and the corn ship that Paul traveled on carried 276 men. Ships of this size had a tonnage

of 2,600 tons. The hull ran up to a bird’s-head carving above the bows and a bird’s-tail at the stern. In the midst was a high mast, usually of cedar wood and near the prow was a smaller one for hoisting a small sail. Two large oars were used to steer. On the deck was a wooden hut for the helmsman which was also used as a temple of worship containing an idol.”^{BIBLE HISTORY ON LINE}

I provide this information, that is admittedly not precisely accurate, to confirm the magnitude of the effort required to sail, as well as the enormity of the danger associated with sailing the open seas.



Above is an ancient artist’s drawing of the kind of ship involved in our text. Estimates of the size of these ships as provided by ship specialists, estimated to be 413-424 feet in length, and 62 feet in breadth (top to bottom).^{WAPEDIA, SHIPS} That would be equivalent to a six story building, with a surface significantly larger in length than a football field. This is only an estimate, but provides a rational idea concerning the size of the ship involved in this text. It was doubtless considered strong enough to withstand considerable waves of water.

PARALLEL TO SPIRITUAL LIFE

There is a remarkable parallel to spiritual life in this account. **As you probably know already, one of the characteristics of crises is that they tend to reveal the scope of one’s understanding.** Also a sense of values is made known. Because of a weakness in their faith, and a consequent lack of familiarity with both the nature of God and of the life that is in Christ Jesus, many professed believers venture into dangerous territory, when there is no need to do so. They experience unnecessary hardship, and fall into snares they could have been avoided. They are too hasty in many things, and thus are unable to see the larger picture. Trouble rushes upon them, and, having acted unwisely, they do not know why.

There are also those who are devoted more to institutions than to Christ Himself. Like mariners of our text, the largeness of the institution affords some sense of safety to them. However, this runs counter to every aspect of Divine revelation. Noah and his family were in the minority. Lot and those who escaped with him were in the minority. The Israelites were the smallest of all nations. Gideon’s army was far too large at first, and had to be whittled down from 32,000 to 300 before it could be used by God. Jesus said the way that leads to life is found only by a “few.” **Yet, in all of these instances, safety was found among those who were approved by God.** It is never wise to glory in largeness, or boast in bigness. It is not that there is some virtue in smallness. Rather, throughout history, God receives the greater glory from the few of any given generation. Their outward smallness is one reason why they live by faith.

BUT NOT LONG AFTER

“¹⁴ **But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.**”

Suddenly, in a moment of time, the environment was changed, and something the mariners did not expect happened. It is something on which they did not reckon, and so it caught them by complete surprise.

NOT LONG AFTER

“*But not long after . . .*” Other versions read, “*But before very long,*”^{NASB} “*But soon,*”^{NRSV} and “*But soon afterward.*”

AMPLIFIED

Hardly had the crew launched their ship, sailing close to the island of Crete, when they faced something that apparently had not entered their minds. **Apart from faith, the mind of man is not astute enough to account for every possible circumstance or adversity.** It can only reckon on what they have gone through. Most men have learned this by experience, but few men live with this in mind.

AGAINST IT

“... there arose against it . . .” Other versions read, “*there rushed down from the land,*”^{NASB} “*a wind of hurricane force . . . swept down from the island,*”^{NIV} “*rushed down from Crete,*”^{NRSV} and “*came bursting down from the island.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

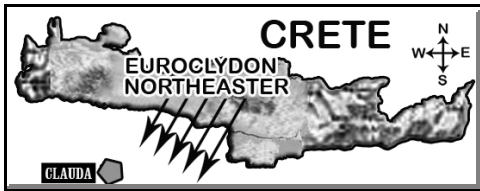
The fierce wind seemed to focus on the ship itself, as though there was no other objective than it.

A TEMPESTUOUS WIND

“... a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.” Other versions read, “a violent

Having set sail for the next port, and against the godly advise of Paul, the vessel encounters a fierce wind through which the pilot is unable to navigate – by Given O. Blakely

wind, called *Euraquilo*,"^{NASB} "a wind of hurricane force, called the "northeaster,"^{NIV} "a violent wind, called the northeaster, rushed down from Crete,"^{NRSV} and "a violent wind [of the character of a typhoon], called a northeaster."^{AMPLIFIED}



The wind against which they had been battling came from the sea, and therefore in attempting to go from Fair Havens to Phenice, they sailed close to the island of Crete. Now, however, they faced something on which they had not reckoned: a wind coming at them from the land – and it was apparently of greater ferocity than the one that was generated on the sea. Rather than sailing out of danger, they had actually sailed into danger.

THE PARALLEL TO SPIRITUAL LIFE

It is not a stretch of the imagination to liken this voyage to our pilgrimage through this present evil world. It is a grand lesson when we learn that temporal life is tailored to acquaint us with spiritual life. Spiritual life is not a mere duplication of earthly life, only on a higher level. **Sound reasoning must not begin with the earth – the eternal cannot be patterned after the temporal.** It should require nothing more than an affirmation to

establish that to insightful souls.

There is a certain liberty permitted the believer that allows for making decisions. The purpose of God is not shaped by those determinations, but the participation of the saints is. In our text Paul going to Rome was, as it were, cast in stone. How he arrived there allowed for some decisions by the people involved. Paul chose wisely, seeing that proceeding with the proposed trip to Phenice was too perilous. The Centurion, however, made a harmful choice, and was allowed by heaven to do so.

The Case of the Printer from New Elliott

I personally know of the danger of wrong choices. I also know by experience of the Lord's deliverance from the consequences of such choices. During the early part of 1970, myself and my father, Fred O. Blakely, were faced with the results of a burgeoning mailing list for The Banner of Truth and The Word of Truth. The costs for these publications had escalated due to increasing printing and mailing costs. My father was ministering at a congregation in New Elliott Indiana, while I was ministering in Merrillville, a nearby community. During that time, a new family came to fellowship in New Elliott. The man was a professional printer, and owned a local print shop. Having been apprized of our publications, he offered to have them printed for the cost of the paper alone. The only stipulation was that we perform the labor required to set the type. My father and I talked about the matter, and entered into fervent prayer about it. The cost savings would be thousands of dollars each

month for the two publications.

We finally concluded that this was the Lord's will, and that He had provided this convenient outlet. We determined to announce our decision the next Lord's Day, and inform the printer we would proceed in formalizing the agreement.

On the Friday prior to the Lord's Day, the local newspaper, The Hammond Times, featured a special article on the front page. We both recognized the accompanying picture to be that of the printer with whom we were going to make the agreement. The article chronicled this man's arrest and the seizure of his printing establishment. He was guilty of printing bogus bonds and other financial documents, and was subsequently imprisoned.

After again meeting, my father and I concluded that this had all been a test, and that we had made the wrong decision out of haste, and an undue regard for financial advantage. The Lord graciously delivered us from a circumstance that would have seriously impacted our ministry for years to come. We had been momentarily diverted by the apparently good sound of a temporary advantage.

An Application

Many a poor soul has suffered needlessly because of poor decisions. Their thinking was too hasty, and did not duly consider the circumstances set before them. As a result, some people had to suffer unspeakable inconvenience, as will be the case with the voyage covered in this text.

THE SHIP COULD NOT BEAR UP

"¹⁵ And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive."

The northeastern wind forced the ship further away from the island of Crete, and the pilot found he could not control the ship any longer.

WHEN THE SHIP WAS CAUGHT

"And when the ship was caught . . ."

+ Other versions read, "the ship was caught by the storm,"^{NIV} "the ship got into the grip of it,"^{BBE} "caught and driven,"^{DARBY} "the wind carried the ship away,"^{GWN} "the ship was whirled about by the wind,"^{MRD} "the ship was snatched along by it,"^{WILLIAMS} and "the

ship was seized by it."^{EMTV}

Those who thought they could make it to Phenice imagined they could maintain control of the ship all along the way, even though they probably knew it would require a



lot of effort. However, there were seasoned sailors among them, and they felt confident of their abilities. They had probably navigated through many storms, and were sure they could do so through this one.

However, they were wrong – seriously wrong. Instead of mastering the storm, the storm now had the mastery over them. Having ventured into the domain in which the storm ruled, the ship was seized by the storm, and was pulled into its ferocity, all of the efforts of the sailors notwithstanding.

COULD NOT BEAR UP INTO THE WIND

" . . . and could not bear up into the

Having set sail for the next port, and against the godly advise of Paul, the vessel encounters a fierce wind through which the pilot is unable to navigate – by Given O. Blakely

wind . . .” Other versions read, “could not head into the wind,” NKJV “could not be turned head-on into the wind,” NRSV “could not face the wind,” RSV “was not able to make headway into the wind,” BBE “not able to bring her head into the wind,” DARBY “could not resist the wind,” GENEVA “couldn’t sail against the wind,” GWN and “could not resist the wind.” TNT

Suddenly, the mariners had entered an impossible situation. They could not navigate the ship under these circumstances. All of their expertise withered, and they were absolutely impotent to manage the situation.



There was a certain technique employed to capitalize on the wind. This was accomplished by various sails. By independent, yet coordinated settings, they would cause the wind to serve their purposes, and drive the ship in the precise direction they desired. Large vessels had rather complex sails-systems, as the ship graphics image indicates.

Every possible scenario was addressed by the size and position of these sails so that, ordinarily, the ship could progress through the waters toward its destination, whether the winds were gentle or fierce. Those in charge of the ship based their decision to sail on the existent weather conditions plus their expertise, and in view of the equipment on board the ship. It all seemed to make perfect sense.

Now, however, they faced a storm of extraordinary proportions. Their expertise was no longer valid. The equipment they had was not adequate. The pilot could not steer the ship, and thus they could not advance toward their goal. The wind had captured their vessel, and there was not a thing they could do about it.

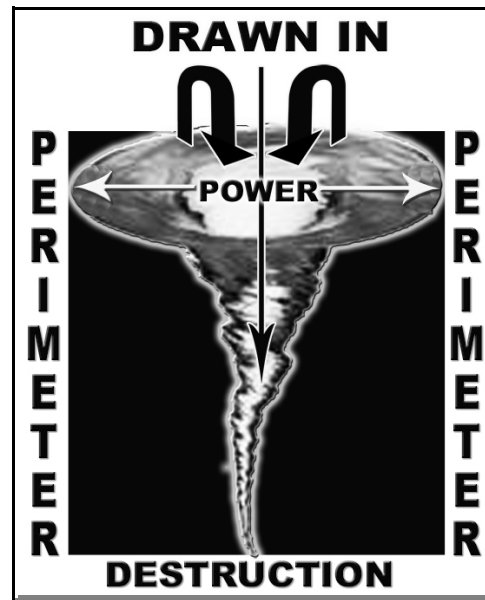
WE LET HER DRIVE

“ . . . we let her drive.” Other versions read, “let ourselves be driven along,”

NASB “gave way to it and were driven,” NRSV “giving up the ship to the winds, we were driven,” DOUAY “were carried away,” GENEVA “were carried along by the wind,” GWN “resigned [the ship] to its power,” MRD “were driven by the weather,” PNT “let go, and were drave by the weather,” TNT “we stopped trying to resist and let the wind blow us,” LIVING “we gave up and were swept along,” ISV and “we gave up and, letting her drift, were borne along.” AMPLIFIED

It is to be assumed that the mariners did everything they knew to do. They used every tool available to them. Yet, it was all in vain. They finally had to give up, for there was nothing left in their arsenal, or sea-wisdom and equipment. The sails did not function correctly. The rudder was useless. The pilot’s hands were tied, so there was nothing left to do but submit to the wind, and let it carry the vessel without any effective human intervention.

PARALLEL TO SPIRITUAL LIFE



The parallel to spiritual life is most arresting. It simply cannot be mere coincidence.

Spiritual trouble and danger are like a whirlpool that draws the individual into it, like the storm seized the ship. There is a kind of perimeter to this danger that will protect us if we maintain a distance from it. But should a person venture too close to that perimeter, he will be drawn into the vortex of the whirlpool, just as surely was the ship of our text was drawn into the storm. Once they are caught in that vortex, there no hope of

working out of it by human strength of wisdom.

This perimeter is not clearly marked. It may appear as though favorable and gentle circumstances lie all about it – like the gentle wind of in text seemed to nullify any supposed danger. Should a person imagine they can get close to contaminating influences without being affected by them, they have not thought correctly. “Evil communications corrupt good manners” – that is the unmitigated truth (1 Cor 15:33). Other versions read, “Bad company corrupts good morals,” NASB “Bad company corrupts good character,” NIV and “Evil companionships (communion, associations) corrupt and deprave good manners and morals and character.” AMPLIFIED Many a poor soul has been overcome by evil in some form because they ventured too close to it. They made the wrong friends, went to the wrong places, and subjected themselves to the wrong influences.

Suddenly they were seized, like the ship on which Paul was sailing was seized a fierce wind.

Apostolic Doctrine

A vivid picture of this sort of thing is declared in the apostles’ doctrine. In it the purpose of God is stated as involving the growth and maturity of His people. The intended objective for the various teaching ministries is stated this way: “That we henceforth be no more children, **tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ**” (Eph 4:14-15).

The implications are clear: growth into Christ is not possible if we are being tossed to and fro by the winds of man-made doctrines. Those doctrines can take hold of a person’s life and throw them about like the Euroclydon tossed the Alexandrian ship of our text. How many times I have witnessed professing Christians immersed in confusion because of what they have been taught by pretentious preachers and teachers. It is no wonder that we are warned about getting involved in matters that minister questions instead of godly edifying. As it is written, “Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do” (1 Tim 1:4). And again, “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender

Having set sail for the next port, and against the godly advise of Paul, the vessel encounters a fierce wind through which the pilot is unable to navigate – by Given O. Blakely

strifes” (2 Tim 2:23).

Concerning those who teach things that minister questions, as well as our response to them, it is written, *“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord*

Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting [to be lavish or excessive in one’s attention, fondness, or affection MERRIAM-WEBSTER] *about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men*

of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1 Tim 6:3-5).

God’s ministers bring affirmations, not questions, and they are to be seriously pondered.

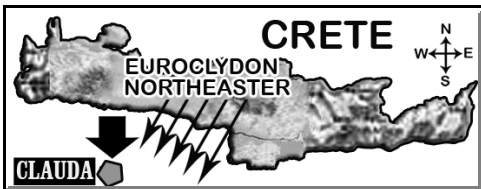
A CERTAIN ISLAND CALLED CLAUDA

“¹⁶ And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:¹⁷ Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, struck sail, and so were driven.”

Having put out to sea against the advise of Paul, they not only will endure more danger, but will have to work the harder to get to their intended destination.

RUNNING UNDER A CERTAIN ISLAND

“And running under a certain island which is called Clauda . . .” Other versions read, *“And running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda,”* NASB *“As we passed to the lee of a small island called Clauda.”* NIV



Clauda was several miles off the coast of Crete, the wind having carried them a considerable distance off course. Using the island as a shelter from the wind, they sailed to the south of it. This island is seven miles long, and three miles wide. McCLINTOK-STRONG’S

WE HAD MUCH WORK

“. . . we had much work to come by the boat . . .” Other versions read, *“we secured the skiff with difficulty,”* NKJV *“we scarcely were able to get the ship’s boat under control,”* NIV and *“we managed with [much] difficulty to draw the [ship’s small] boat on deck and secure it.”* AMPLIFIED

The “boat” of reference is not the ship itself, but the skiff, or lifeboat that was

probably hanging on the side. They hoisted it onboard for at least two reasons. First, they probably were thinking of possibly using it should the ship be wrecked at sea. Second, it was no doubt used to assist in girding the ship, which is referenced in the next clause.

UNDERGIRDING THE SHIP

“. . . Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship . . .” Other versions read, *“had hoisted it aboard, they passed ropes under the ship to hold it together,”* NIV *“hoisting it up, they took measure to undergird the ship,”* NRSV *“After hoisting it on board, they used supports with ropes to undergird and brace the ship,”* AMPLIFIED *“banded the ship with ropes to strengthen the hull,”* LIVING *“After the men took the lifeboat in, they tied ropes around the ship to hold the ship together,”* IE *“They pulled it up on deck and used ropes to brace the ship.”* ISV

GIRDING OR FRAPPING

“To draw together, to bind with a view to secure and strengthen, as a vessel by passing cables around it; as a tackle by drawing the lines together.” TOTTEM[1913]_Webster

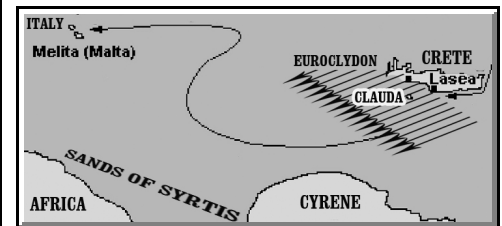
Nautical girding is a technique called “frapping.” It is accomplished by passing ropes under the vessel and drawing them tight in order to strength the hull of the ship. Considering the amount of the vessel that was under the water (possibly as much as 20-30 feet), this was a sizeable undertaking, and no doubt associated with danger. Yet, these seasoned sailors knew how to do the proper things in the hour of crisis.

Notice how they strengthened the unseen part of the ship – the hull. They did not simply reorganize the deck. The part of the ship that supported it was made stronger.

FEARING THE SANDS

“. . . and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands . . .” Other versions

read, *“and fearing they should run aground on the Syrtis sands,”* NKJV *“and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis,”* NASB *“fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis,”* NIV *“fearing they would run on the Syrtus,”* NRSV and *“afraid it might hit the sandbanks in the gulf of Syrtis,”* CEV *“afraid that they might run into the sandbanks off the coast of Libya,”* GNB *“afraid that they would be driven into the Syrtis [quicksands off the north coast of Africa].”* AMPLIFIED



The coast of Africa was about 350 southwest of Clauda. Along its coast, and between it and Cyrene, were two “quicksands” – sandy areas barely covered by water.

THE QUICKSANDS OF SYRTIS

“Modern explorations find both of them to be highly dangerous bays, where the treacherous sandy shore is barely covered with water, and where terrific clouds of sand are suddenly raised by the wind, obscuring then sight and overwhelming men and even ships, The Greater Syrtis is now called the Gulf of Sidra, between Tripoli and Barea; and the Lesser the Gulf of Cabes. The former is specially intended in the account of Paul’s shipwreck.” McCLINTOK & STRONG’S

The winds were of such ferocity, and characterized by an obvious longevity, that the mariners feared being mired in the quicksands just off the coasts of Africa. Yet, these seamen did not fall apart or despair – at least not yet. They still had some things they could do, and they set out to do them.

WE STRUCK SAIL, AND SO WERE DRIVEN

“ . . . *struck sail and so were driven.*” Other versions read, “*let down the sea anchor, and so let themselves be driven along,*”^{NASB} “*they lowered the gear, and so were driven,*”^{RSV} “*they let down the sails and so went running before the wind,*”^{BBE} “*they lowered the topsails and thus continued drifting,*”^{CJB} “*they lowered the drift-anchor, and in this way they were driven along,*”^{CSB} “*they let down the sail yard, and so were driven,*”^{DOUAY} “*they strake sail, and so were carried,*”^{GENEVA} “*floated out the sea-anchor and so let themselves drift,*”^{NJB} “*they let down a vessel, and were carried,*”^{PNT} “*having let down the mast -- so were borne on,*”^{YLT} “*they lowered the gear (sails and ropes) and so were driven along.*”^{AMPLIFIED} “*let down the driving anchor, thus they were being driven along by the wind,*”^{CEV} “*lowering the tackle, so they were borne along,*”^{LITV} and “*We only managed to avoid them by throwing out drift anchors,*”^{MESSAGE}

The various versions present thirteen views of what “*struck sail*” means.

- ⇒ Let down the sea anchor. The main anchor let down to the sea floor.
- ⇒ Lowered the gear.
- ⇒ Let down the sails.
- ⇒ Lowered the top sails.
- ⇒ Lowered the drift anchor. This was pulled behind the ship, consisting of canvas or other materials, and designed to slow the vessel down.
- ⇒ Let down the sail guard. Similiar to, if not identical with the drift anchor.
- ⇒ Floated out the sea anchor. Similiar to, if not identical to the drift anchor.
- ⇒ Let down a vessel.
- ⇒ Let down the mast – The pole holding the main sail.
- ⇒ Lowered the gear (sails and ropes).
- ⇒ Let down the driving anchor. Similiar to, if not identical to the drift anchor.
- ⇒ Lowering the tackle.
- ⇒ Throwing out drift anchors. Similiar to, if not identical to the drift anchor.

While this may appear quite incidental, here is how I view the matter. First, if something is written by the inspiration of God, I want to know what it means. As you can see, if one confines himself to searching the various versions of the English Scripture, this sometimes becomes an impossible task. Second if we can substantiate that historical incidents have spiritual parallels, it is imperative that we obtain a proper understanding of what is written concerning those events.

Albert Barnes says of this passage, “There has been a great variety of interpretations proposed on this passage. The most probable is that they took down the mast, by cutting or otherwise, as is now done in storms at sea, to save the ship. They were at the mercy of the winds and waves, and their only hope was by taking away the sails.”

Adam Clarke says, “Some think that lowering the yards, and taking down the top-mast, is what is intended; but in such a perilous situation this would have been of little service. Others think, letting go their main or sheet anchor, is what is meant; but this seems without foundation, as it would have been foolishness in the extreme to have hoped to ride out the storm in such a sea. Passing by a variety of meanings, I suppose cutting away, or by some means letting down the mast, is the action intended to be expressed here; and this would be the most likely means of saving the vessel from foundering.”

John Gill notes, “the mast is never cut down before the loss of other things; wherefore this is to be understood of letting down the sail yard, and contracting the sails; the Syriac version renders it, “we let down the main sail”; or, “the sail”, using the Greek word ‘Armenon,’ which signifies ‘a sail.’”

The passage informs us WHY they performed this action – it was because they feared being run aground in the quicksands of Syrtis. Therefore, in my judgment, this had to do with lowering the sails, particularly the most prominent ones, to slow the progress of the ship. It would be better for the winds to simply carry the ship, rather than be aided by hoisted sails.

There are circumstances where luxuries and conveniences make things more difficult. Such times are made even more difficult when an appetite for such things has been cultured and preferred above all else.

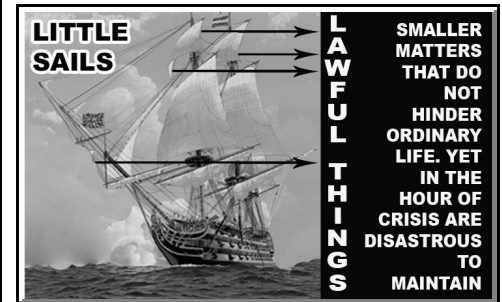
THE SPIRITUAL PARALLEL

When believers are being carried along by circumstance, and are alert to their situation, they should do everything possible

to slow the speed of carrying away.

Because of the nature of life in this world, believers are to be as expert as possible in handling crises. As you know, all such circumstances are not apparently, or obviously, solvable. But we must do everything possible to avoid being mired in the quicksands of carnality.

As in this event, the storm itself cannot be managed by those who are in it. **Storms, whether natural or spiritual, can only be managed by God.** It is possible for believers to waste a lot of time trying to control the circumstance, when it is best to make every effort to survive the experience. That, to me, is one of the geniuses of spiritual life – learning to live unto the Lord. This will appear to many to be an effort to ignore the circumstance. **However, when something cannot be controlled or managed, it is less than wise to expend a lot of effort thinking about it.** In such a case, it is best to endeavor to pass through the thing with the Lord.



Little Sails

These gigantic ships had a variety of sails. Some of them were very large, and determined the speed with which the craft traveled, and any major directional adjustments that had to be made. Other sails were small, and did not play a major part in either direction of speed. Yet, they allowed for minor adjustments that bore on the ultimate destination of the ship. If they were not set properly, they would cause the ship to gradually be pulled off course. In dangerous storms, such as that of our text, they had to be lowered altogether.

Likewise, in the voyage of life there are matters that, under ordinary circumstances, are rather inconsequential. It is not that such things are wrong, or evil of themselves. However, under certain circumstances – like a severe trial – they can cause the individual to get off course. For example, if, during his trial, Job had insisted

on eating regularly, or carrying out some of his mundane tasks, it would have been spiritually disastrous. Time was better spent in an earnest quest to hear from the Lord.

Many a poor soul has experienced unnecessary hardships, and even spiritual shipwreck, when they were occupied with smaller matters during the

hour of trial. They have, so to speak, left their smaller sails aloft when they should have taken them down. This is because they have overestimated their strength, and have considered themselves to be more in control of their life than they really are.

If the professed believer will allow circumstance to testify to the conscience, it will

discover certain frailties and ineptitude that must be known. It will also identify what is essential and what is not, what should be emphasized, and what should be considered secondary. The things that determine how you live must be carefully and regularly reviewed. There are things that must be put into the background during trials.

THEY LIGHTENED THE SHIP

“¹⁸ And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; ¹⁹ And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.”

The vessel on which Paul and company are sailing to Rome, continues to be buffeted by a fierce storm. They have girded the ship, making its hull more stable against the battering waves. They have also lowered the sails, and taken measures to ensure that the ship is not propelled at an unwarranted pace into the dangerous quicksands of Africa. But it is still not enough.

EXCEEDINGLY TOSSED WITH A TEMPEST

“And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest . . .” Other versions read, *“exceedingly tempest-tossed,”* ^{NKJV} *“being violently storm-tossed,”* ^{NASB} *“we took such a battering from the storm,”* ^{NIV} *“being pounded by the storm so violently,”* ^{NRSV} and *“being dangerously tossed about by the violence of the storm.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

One thing to be noted about a storm of this magnitude: you would not want to be in a small or frail vessel. It is good that they are at least in a ship that is sea-worthy. Now the battering reaches into a second and then third day. The storm is without interruption, and the vessel cannot continue to carry the same weight. The storm will not adapt to the ship, so it must be adapted to handle the storm.

THEY LIGHTENED THE SHIP

“. . . the next day they lightened the ship . . .” Other versions read, *“they began to jettison the cargo,”* ^{NASB} *“began to throw the cargo overboard,”* ^{NIV} *“began to throw the freight overboard,”* ^{ASV} and *“made a start at getting the goods out of the ship.”* ^{BBE}

These were goods they ship was transporting for other people – most likely businesses. **When it came to a wise course of action, the first thing determined was to save the people.** The first thing to go is what did not belong to those people – things that constituted the greatest weight, probably bulk goods. In the interest of preserving the people and the vessel that was carrying them, they began throwing the cargo overboard – casting it into

was apparatus that was unique to the ship, but was not a part of the construction itself. It was used to adapt to various circumstances associated with the sailing and maintenance of the ship. This could be used to raise and lower the sails, secure them, etc. **But now, in the midst of a fierce storm, the equipment that was ordinarily helpful became a hindrance.** Not only was it not required at that time, but its presence jeopardized the lives of the passengers, and

Once again, there is a parallel to spiritual life. In the hour of crisis, when remaining alive unto God is jeopardized, there are some things that must be abandoned. They may be friendships, certain neutral habits or places, forms of entertainment, means of occupying leisurely times, etc.

the raging sea. Perhaps now they will be able to navigate the ship in a more acceptable manner. However, alas, that is not how it all turned out, as the third day will confirm.

THEY CAST OUT THE TACKLING

“. . . And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.” Other versions read, *“the ship’s tackle,”* ^{NKJV} *“the sailing apparatus,”* ^{BBE} *“the ship’s sailing equipment,”* ^{CJB} *“the ship’s gear,”* ^{CSB} *“the ship’s equipment (the tackle and the furniture),”* ^{AMPLIFIED} *“the ship’s spare gear,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *“throwing off all the tackle and provisions.”* ^{MESSAGE}

A ship’s tackling, according to McClintok & Strong’s Cyclopaedia, consists of “the spars, ropes, chains, etc., of a vessel’s furniture.” Easton’s Bible Dictionary says the tackling is “all that could be removed from the ship.” That is, this

the survival of the vessel as well.

THE SPIRITUAL PARALLEL

Once again, there is a parallel to spiritual life. **In the hour of crisis, when remaining alive unto God is jeopardized, there are some things that must be abandoned.** They may be friendships, certain neutral habits or places, forms of entertainment, means of occupying leisurely times, etc. Under ordinary circumstances these things can be integrated into life without any undue distraction.

There is a certain liberty in spiritual life that allows for such things if they are not distracting to the soul. However, in the times of testing, things must be thrown overboard that ordinarily could be kept. To do this, valid priorities must be maintained.

ALL HOPE WAS TAKEN AWAY

“²⁰ And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.”

There are storms, and there are STORMS. Some are small, some are large, and some reduce men to a state of hopelessness as concerns their own endeavors. The storm in this text was in the latter category. The mariners had done everything they knew to do. They had no doubt been in many storms before, and had gained some expertise in surviving fierce winds upon the sea. But their proficiency was not adequate for this storm.

THE CIRCUMSTANCE

“And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us . . .” Other versions read, *“and the storm continued raging,”*^{NIV} *“a great storm was on us,”*^{BBE} *“the severe storm kept raging,”*^{CSB} *“The storm wouldn’t let up,”*^{GWN} *“the storm held on for many days,”*^{MRD} *“no small storm was assailing us,”*^{NAB} *“The terrible storm raged unabated many day,”*^{LIVING} *“the terrific gale still harassed us,”*^{WEYMOUTH} and *“a great tempest still beat upon us.”*^{MONTGOMERY}

As if the wind itself was not enough, dark clouds had blotted out all light,

The tempest “lay” on the vessel. That is, it did not let up for even a moment. If anything, it kept getting stronger and stronger, and “many days” passed. Prior to this storm, they had sailed slowly for “many days,” finally coming into “The Fair Havens” on the southern part of Crete (Acts 27:7). A little later Paul will speak up “when the fourteenth night was come” (Acts 27:27). That means at the time of this text they had been tossed about in the relentless storm for about two weeks.

ALL HOPE WAS TAKEN AWAY

“ . . . all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.” Other versions read, *“all hope that we would be saved was finally given up,”*^{NKJV} *“all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned,”*^{NASB} *“all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned,”*^{NRSV} *“until gradually all hope of survival vanished,”*^{CJB} and *“all hope of our surviving was wholly cut off.”*^{MRD}

Hope was not instantly taken away, but gradually faded away. **As long as there was something they thought they could do about the situation, hope remained alive.** However, it gradually became apparent that this circumstance was beyond their control. No matter how much they knew about sailing and navigating in storms, it was not adequate for this situation.

Some people do not believe it is

benefits we have already received: the whole armor of God, spiritual weaponry, the fruit of the Spirit, wisdom from above, etc. **However, there are some winds of adversity that are of such strength that all hope of a rescue from them is removed.** Paul spoke of such an experience in his second letter to the Corinthians. *“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were **pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us”*** (2 Cor 1:8-10).

There is a holy rationale in such trials. **They are designed to push us beyond our present capacity in order that we do not trust in ourselves – even though we ourselves have much from the Lord to sustain us.** However, our faith is to be in the Giver, not the gift – and men are prone to place their trust in what has been provided rather than the One who has provided it. Our faith, for example, is not in “the whole armor of God,” but in the God who supplies it.

It is quite true that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability, but will provide way of escape with every temptation that we may be able to bear it. Sometimes, however, that way of escape is not readily apparent, and we are required to wait long for its appearance. Even then the escape may involve the wrecking of a vessel, and a treacherous trip to shore by swimming or hanging on to some plank of grace.

On a more practical note, sometimes hope is held out too soon – before conviction has taken place, or a perception of the real situation. Take, for example, the day of Pentecost and the insightful words of Peter. He first interpreted what was taking place among the disciples (Acts 2:14-21). He then affirmed the guilt of the people in rejecting Christ and having Him slain through the hands of lawless men (Acts 2:22-23). He announced that God has raised Jesus from the dead, and enthroned Him at His own right hand (Acts 2:24-37). Until that point he held out no specific hope to the people, but rather left them in the wake of conviction (Acts 2:39-40).

As if the wind itself was not enough, dark clouds had blotted out all light, so that neither the sun nor the stars, by which men navigated, was not seen for many days. The condition of the sea could be felt, but it could not be seen.

so that neither the sun nor the stars, by which men navigated, was not seen for many days. **The condition of the sea could be felt, but it could not be seen.** They did not know precisely where they were, if they were within range of land, or in the midst of the sea. They could not assess their situation with the aid of vision, which is nearly always essential for evaluating difficult outward situations. **Being in a boat during a fierce and relentless storm is one thing, being in the dark all the while is something else.**

possible to get into such a situation. They cling to the notion that if they can only see more and know more, they will be able to control the situation. However, life will confirm that this is a false assumption.

THE SPIRITUAL PARALLEL

On the strait way that leads to life, there are some difficult experiences that last for a long time. They are like tests to confirm our continual need of a Savior, Intercessor, Captain, Shepherd, and High Priest. Most trials can be safely negotiated with the

It is certainly not in order to develop a procedural manner of preaching in this regard. **However, it is important to have some cogent thought about the state of the people before announcing a remedy for their situation.** Too often,

I fear, people are being told what to do before they have any interest in being saved.

In the text before us, Paul will not announce the revealed answer to the

situation until it becomes apparent that there is no way the mariners can work themselves out of the dilemma of the storm. Further, the mariners themselves will know this.

AFTER LONG ABSTINENCE

“^{21a} But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them . . .”

Throughout this ordeal Paul has apparently maintained silence. I do not doubt that he assisted in any tasks possible. However, now the time has come to speak, for the Lord has spoken to him about this very circumstance.

AFTER A LONG ABSTINENCE

“But after long abstinence . . .” Other versions read, *“when they had gone a long time without food,”*^{NASB} *“as they had been long without food,”*^{NRSV} *“when they had gone a long time without eating,”*^{CJB} *“after they had fasted a long time,”*^{DOUAY} *“Since hardly anyone wanted to eat,”*^{GWN} *“And as no one had taken a meal of food,”*^{MRD} *“When many would no longer eat,”*^{NAB} and *“they had*

eaten nothing for a long time.”^{AMPLIFIED}

“The literal rendering is, *when there was a great (or, general) loss of appetite* among the crew. The terror, the discomfort, the sea-sickness, the constant pressure of danger and labor, the difficulty of cooking, the unpalatableness of the food, combined to take away relish of their food, and they were becoming weak for want of nourishment.”^{PULPIT COMMENTARY}

While men are prone to eat regularly whenever it is possible, a fierce and unrelenting storm can redefine what is deemed necessary or essential. During this hour of trial, the mariners and passengers no doubt lost their appetite for food. When one’s life is in danger, there is a rearranging of priorities.

PAUL STOOD FORTH IN THE MIDST

“Paul stood forth in the midst of them . . .” Other versions read, *“Paul stood up before them,”*^{NIV} *“Paul then stood among them,”*^{NRSV} *“Paul then came forward among them,”*^{RSV} *“Paul stood in front of them,”*^{CJB} and *“Paul came forward into their midst.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

Having been in the background, so far as speaking is concerned, Paul now has something to say – and it is at a time when there was apparently very little being said. Prior to this, there had been speaking and agreement on the matter of whether or not they should make an effort to reach the commodious port in Phenice. It is not likely that there will be an decision on that subject now, for the circumstance in which they found themselves was testimony enough about the folly of the choice they had made.

YOU SHOULD HAVE HEARKENED UNTO ME

“^{21b} . . . and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.”

The manner in which Paul speaks reflects the Divine nature. He is not accommodating to his listeners, as though they had made their choice in the environment of freedom and moral right. **From heaven’s point of view, men never have the right to be wrong.** That is a “right” the Lord does not give to men. Doing wrong is always a result of being deceived. Much more is involved than simply making a foolish choice. This is God’s world, and He is ruling in it. He created and positioned men in order that they might seek Him, and feel after Him in a conscientious effort to find Him (Acts 17:26-27).

That is a hard lesson for some to learn, for they are regularly taught that man is free to do what he wants. Indeed, it may

look that way, but men are not to judge according to appearance. The pilot and owner of this ship had been given sound advice by a man of God. They chose to confer with one another, rather than inquire why Paul issued his warning.

YOU SHOULD HAVE HEARKENED UNTO ME

“. . . and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete . . .” Other versions read, *“Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete”*^{NKJV} *“Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete,”*^{NASB} *“Friends, it would have been better if you had given attention to me and not gone sailing out from Crete,”*^{BBE} *“It behoved you, indeed, O men – having hearkened to me – not to set sail from Crete.”*^{YLT}

For several days, Paul has kept silence, not speaking prematurely. This was not owing to any doubt he had entertained

concerning his advice. **Rather, he did not speak until it was readily apparent that he was correct in his assessment of the situation.**

Now, it was obvious to all that Paul had spoken wisely when he advised them not to sail from Crete. In the midst of the crisis, it is quite probable that those on board had forgotten what Paul said. That, of course, is because they did not value his advice in the first place. Paul, however, will not let them forget what he had said, for he knew that he had spoken the truth. In fact, we have every reason to believe that he had been given wisdom “from above” on this matter. I do not know how you could otherwise account for Paul having confirmed understanding in this matter.

Under any other circumstances, it seems to me that Paul’s words would have counted for nothing in the minds of the hearers. Now, however, the situation is

different, and Paul knows it very well. He will speak now to bring the greatest advantage to the people, reminding them of the wise counsel he had given them several days prior. Now, they have expended much energy, lost much of the cargo, and even threw the ship tackling overboard. Their self-confidence had run out, and it was apparent to them that all of their efforts were for nothing. **No matter what they did, they could not improve their situation.**

Paul does not step forward and command the storm to cease – something Jesus twice did, but only for His disciples (Matt 4:39; 14:32). Even then, He rebuked them for their lack of faith (Matt 14:31; Lk 8:25). **This was not a time to halt the storm,** for more of the working of the Lord had to be seen.

An Application to Spiritual Life

In dealing with people who insist on pursuing a wayward course of life, there does come a time when they must be reminded of any warnings that were issued to them. This is not always easy to do, but it is often necessary to nail wise counsel into their conscience, so they will be less apt to forget it. After duly warning Israel of their unacceptable manners, God said to them, *“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up”* (Hosea 8:7). He then added, *“Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure”* (Hosea 8:8).

Those who recover from the snare of the devil must first be brought to the point where they acknowledge the truth. It is not enough to simply seek deliverance from the trouble brought upon them because of their sin. This is written, *“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will”* (2 Tim 2:24-26).

In our text, Paul is an excellent example of someone who did not *strive*, or be quarrelsome, ^{NASB} with the people. He simply affirmed the truth, and did not enter into an argument with the people. Really, there was nothing to argue about. A

wrong choice had been made, and Paul apprised them of it, doing so gently, and not lingering on the subject.

Although some may **not** consider this to be a wise course of action, it is one

I doubt that very many people on that Alexandrian ship remembered the words of Paul. I say this because they did not value the person who had spoken to them, and therefore it was easier to forget his words. They might not have liked what Paul said, but he said it anyway, because it was the truth.

that allows for the honor of God, speaking a word through which God can work, and inducing people to consider their wayward manners.

THE NEEDLESSNESS OF REALIZING SUCH HARM AND LOSS

“ . . . and to have gained this harm and loss.” Other versions read, *“incurred this disaster and loss,”* ^{NKJV} *“incurred this damage and loss,”* ^{NASB} *“this injury and loss,”* ^{RSV} *“this disastrous loss,”* ^{CJB} *“all this trouble and loss,”* ^{IE} *“hardship and damage,”* ^{ISV} and *“this disaster and harm and misery and loss.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Think of the results that have been experienced because of the decision to sail from Crete to Phenice.

- ⇒ The ship has suffered damage.
- ⇒ Time had to be spent undergirding the ship.
- ⇒ An extraordinary amount of labor had to be exerted by the mariners.
- ⇒ Cargo which was being transported for other people was lost.
- ⇒ The tackling of the ship was thrown overboard.
- ⇒ Misery had been experienced that could easily have been avoided.

Now Paul reminds them that all of this could have been avoided if they would hearkened to his words and not have said from Crete. This is not an expression of pride, but one of wisdom.

Failing to heed wise counsel is always attended by some form of loss. Furthermore, it is good to remind those who

ignored good counsel that **this is why** they are having such difficulty. I doubt that very many people on that Alexandrian ship remembered the words of Paul. I say this because they did not value the person who had spoken to them, and therefore it was

easier to forget his words. They might not have liked what Paul said, but he said it anyway, because it was the truth.

Of course, all of this postulates that wise counsel is spoken, and men are not left to their own devices without due warning. Solemnly the church is told, *“warn them that are unruly”* (1 Thess 5:14). Other versions read *“disorderly,”* ^{ASV} *“not well ordered,”* ^{BBE} *“lazy,”* ^{CJB} *“not living right,”* ^{GWN} *“undisciplined,”* ^{NET} and *“admonish (warn and seriously advise) those who are out of line [the loafers, the disorderly, and the unruly].”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

It ought to be noted that all of this postulates a fellowship with Christ Jesus on the part of the speaker. **Effective warnings are not the expressions of mere human opinion, but of a person who has received wisdom from above.** Time will prove that the expression of such wisdom precisely accorded with the truth. Most of us have at some time spoken warnings that did not prove to be on target. Our aim must be to reduce such occurrences, which reduction will take place to the degree that we walk in the light as He is in the light, always judging *“righteous judgment”* (John 7:24). Those who live in aloofness from the Lord forfeit their usefulness to Him.

May the Lord so work in those who walk with Him as to enable them to be expert in the issuance of warnings, and faithful in drawing attention to their fulfillment, doing so with humility and without a spirit of vindictiveness.

BE OF GOOD CHEER, ONLY THE SHIP WILL BE LOST

“²² And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship.”

Good ministers do not take delight in delivering bad news. When speaking of the demise of Jerusalem under the besieging of the Romans, Jesus *“wept over it”* (Lk 19:41). By the same token, good news from heaven is always cheerful news to such an individual, as Paul will now confirm.

BE OF GOOD CHEER

“And now I exhort you to be of good cheer. . . .” Other versions read, *“I urge you to take heart,”*^{NKJV} *“I urge you to keep up your courage,”*^{NASB} *“I counsel you to be without anxiety,”*^{MRD} *“I ask you not to give way to despair,”*^{NJB} *“I am telling you to cheer up,”*^{IE} and *“I beg you to be in good spirits and take heart.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul is speaking to a body of people

good cheer, take heart, and be courageous. He is affirming that things are not as bad as they seem, and, at this point, they have nothing more than his word on the matter. **Yet, now, after spending nearly two solid weeks in the grip of an unrelenting and life-threatening storm, they can assign a greater value to Paul’s words than they did before.** They have experienced precisely what he said they would experience. Now, they will listen with an attentiveness they did not have before, even though they are standing at the door of death.

NO LOSS OF LIFE

“ . . . for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you . . .” Other versions read, *“not one of you will be lost,”*^{NIV} *“there will be no loss of life among you,”*^{NRSV} *“Not one of us will lose our lives,”*^{LIVING} and *“None of you will die!”*^{IE}

How utterly contradictory of their experience this must have sounded. **They**

“ . . . but of the ship.” Other versions read, *“but only of the ship,”*^{NKJV} *“only the ship will be destroyed,”*^{NIV} and *“only the ship will be lost.”*^{CJB}

Under the circumstances, this would call for some kind of miraculous intervention. **If a great ship could not survive the storm, how could frail persons survive the storm in the midst of the sea?** At this point they are in the open sea, nearly 500 miles away from Clauda. They are enveloped by darkness, and can only feel and hear the crashing waves and roaring wind. Yet, Paul stands boldly before them and says not a single soul will perish, even though the ship will be lost.

A SPIRITUAL PARALLEL

We are also in a tenuous situation. The storms of life confirm that the world is going down, and our present bodies are destined for corruption. We can pour ourselves into efforts to keep the world here, and ensure that our bodies are in the best state of health possible. But they will both finally give way to the storm of mortality.

But there is no need for any soul to perish. **Provision has been made to survive the demise of both the world and our bodies, and do so safely.** In the process of the storm, insightful souls are learning what they can throw overboard, dispensing with it in order to their survival. Those who have formed an inordinate attachment to the cargo and tackling of life will find this most difficult to do. **But once a person has settled it in his mind that his own survival depends upon such decisive action, he will throw certain things out of his life.** The desire to survive, attaining to the resurrection of the dead, causes everything to be seen differently, and with greater clarity.

How utterly contradictory of their experience this must have sounded. They were thinking everyone was going to die! They were miles from any shore, and to this point their only protection was the ship in which they were being tossed about. Now Paul boldly announces that not so much as a single life will be lost as a result of this storm.

who have lost all hope. They have lost hope after doing everything they could possibly do under the circumstances, and yet their condition was no better. They were being driven by a ferocious storm over which they had no power. Their condition was complicated by the fact that they had been duly warned, and yet had chosen to ignore the warning. Now Paul boldly tells them to be of

were thinking everyone was going to die! They were miles from any shore, and to this point their only protection was the ship in which they were being tossed about. Now Paul boldly announces that not so much as a single life will be lost as a result of this storm.

THE LOSS OF THE SHIP

FOR THERE STOOD BY ME THIS NIGHT

“²³ For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,²⁴ Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.”

THERE STOOD BY ME

“For there stood by me this night. . . .” Other versions read, *“this very night,”*^{NASB} and *“last night.”*^{NIV}

While the storm was raging, and the ship was being lightened, and all hope

had faded away, special attention had been given to Paul by heaven. When the hearts of others were failing them for fear, someone greater than the storm stood by Paul. Something was vouchsafed to him that was not given to others. **An insight was ministered to him exclusively, and the**

only way others would hear of it was for Paul to tell it.

There is a sense in which God does not treat all men alike. There are times when everyone who needs help does not hear from the Lord. There are times when the destiny of people absolutely depends upon someone being among them who is reconciled to God, and to whom He makes known His will.

Away with the spirit of independence, when men think they do not need the interposition of others – others who know the Lord, and are walking in the light!

THE ANGEL OF GOD

“... the angel of God . . .” Other versions read, “the angel of God,”^{GENEVA} and “the angel of that God.”^{MRD}

This was a heavenly messenger, for an angel is “a messenger, envoy, one who is sent”^{THAYER} by God from heaven. They bring a word to men that could not otherwise be known. **It is not possible to deduce with the human mind the word that is delivered by angels** – “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14). Angels have appeared to the following.

- ⇒ Abraham (Gen 18:2; 11:11-18)
- ⇒ Hagar (Gen 16:7)
- ⇒ Lot (Gen 19:1-17)
- ⇒ Jacob (Gen 28:12)
- ⇒ Moses (Ex 3:2)
- ⇒ The Israelites (Ex 14:19; Judges 2:1-4)
- ⇒ Balaam (Num 22:31)
- ⇒ Joshua (Josh 5:15)
- ⇒ Gideon (Judges 6:11-22)
- ⇒ Manoah (Judges 13:6, 15-20)
- ⇒ David (2 Sam 24:16-17; 1 Chron 21:15-16)
- ⇒ Elijah (1 Kgs 19:5)
- ⇒ Elisha (2 Kgs 6:16-17)
- ⇒ Daniel (Dan 6:22; 8:16; 9:21; 10:5-10, 16-18; 12:5-7)
- ⇒ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan 3:25,28)
- ⇒ Zechariah (Zech 2:3; 3:1-2; 4:1)
- ⇒ Joseph, Mary’s husband (Matt 1:20; 2:13,19)
- ⇒ Mary (Lk 1:26-38)
- ⇒ Zecharias (Lk 1:11-38)
- ⇒ Certain shepherds (Lk 2:9-14)
- ⇒ Jesus (Matt 4:11; Lk 22:43)
- ⇒ At the sepulcher of Jesus (Matt 28:2-5; Mk 16:5-7; Lk 24:23; John 20:12)
- ⇒ At the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:10-11)
- ⇒ The apostles John (Acts 5:18-19)
- ⇒ Philip (Acts 8:26)
- ⇒ Cornelius (Acts 10:3, 30-32)

- ⇒ Peter (Acts 12:7-11)
- ⇒ Paul (Acts 27:23)
- ⇒ John (Rev 1:1; 5:2; 7:11; 10:9; 11:1; 17:7; 19:10; 22:8)

None of the above cases involved the appropriation of information that could have been obtained from an earthly resource or natural aptitude. These incidents, along with our text, are examples of heavenly government – of God doing His will among the inhabitants of the earth.

It ought to be noted, that mariners of old were sometimes noted for calling upon their gods when in the midst of a storm. It is written of those manning the ship on which Jonah was fleeing from the Lord, “*Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them*” (Jonah 1:5). The prophets of Baal vainly called upon Baal, but heard nothing from him (1 Kgs 18:28). Isaiah said men other than the Israelites “*maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god*” (Isa 44:17). Later he said they “*pray unto a god that cannot save*” (Isa 45:20). Jeremiah chided Israel for creating false gods: “*But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the*

Here Paul encapsulates true discipleship. It involves discernment: “*whose I am.*” It also involves total commitment: “*whom I serve.*”

“Whose I Am”

As one who has been purchased, or “*bought with a price,*” Paul belonged God, through the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 6:19-20). He was “*redeemed*” (Gal 3:13; Tit 2:14), “*created in Christ Jesus*” (Eph 2:10), and “*delivered from the power of darkness*” (Col 1:13). Those are the facts of the case. However, Paul **perceived** this, and that is what made the difference. This was not merely a creedal statement, but a confession from the heart.

“Whom I Serve”

This is the confession lived out. Elsewhere Paul states it this way: “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*” (Gal 2:20). The very “*life of Jesus*” was made manifest in his “*mortal flesh*” (2 Cor 4:11). Peter referred to this as living “*to the will of God*” (1 Pet 4:2).

Here is the weakness of modern Christianity. There is too much of self in it, and too little of Christ.

However, this was not the case with Paul. The reason for his life was obvious, and that is precisely why he could speak so candidly about it. When he said, “I labored more abundantly than they all” (1 Cor 15:10), no one stepped forward to dispute the statement.

time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah” (Jer 2:28). But none of those gods answered or delivered the oppressed.

Therefore, Paul will further identify the God of whom he speaks, lest there be any doubts among the listeners.

WHOSE I AM AND WHOM I SERVE

“... *whose I am, and whom I serve* ...” Other versions read, “*to whom I belong and whom I serve,*”^{NKJV} “*to whom I belong and whom I worship,*”^{NRSV} “*who is my Master and whose servant I am,*”^{BBE} and “*to Whom I belong and Whom I serve and worship.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

Underlying much of the teaching that is being offered in the name of the Lord is the sanctity of the human will, and God’s desire to grant people what they want. In other words there is a strong appeal to covetousness, just as Peter foretold: “*And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not*” (2 Pet 2:3).

However, this was not the case with Paul. The reason for his life was obvious, and that is precisely why he could speak so candidly about it. When he said, “*I labored*

more abundantly than they all" (1 Cor 15:10), no one stepped forward to dispute the statement.

He no doubt states this because it accounts for why an angel of God stood by him instead of the pilot of the vessel, or the owner of the ship. The word was actually for them all, but it was given to the one who was being conducted to Rome for the work of the Lord.

FEAR NOT, PAUL

"Saying, Fear not, Paul. . . "Other versions read, "Do not be afraid, Paul" ^{NKJV} "Have no fear, Paul," ^{BBE} "Dismiss all fear, Paul," ^{WEYMOUTH} "Stop being afraid, Paul!" ^{WILLIAMS} "Do not be frightened, Paul!" ^{AMPLIFIED} and "Don't give up, Paul." ^{MESSAGE}

Notice how personal this messenger is. He addresses his words to Paul, the spokesman that has been chosen by heaven for this occasion. **Now Paul speaks so when deliverance is realized, the people will know its cause.** It will not come by the storm

Paul does not provide the details of his trip to Rome. Jesus had told him, "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (Acts 23:11). It would not have been appropriate, however, for Paul to relate this to the crowd before him. They would not be able to understand why a person called to witness for their Lord had been arrested, and was to be tried before Casesar. It was enough to limit his remarks to the known reason why he was going to Rome – he had appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar he was going.

However, Paul now adds something that had not been revealed before the prior night. The angel had divulged a heavenly decision that had not been known before.

GOD HAS GIVEN YOU ALL WHO ARE SAILING WITH YOU

". . . and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Other versions read, "indeed, God has granted you all those who sail with you," ^{NKJV} God has graciously

said, I will give it you: **come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel**" (Num 10:29). The people of the world might consider this a proud statement, and yet it was the truth. Even though they eventually rebelled against the Lord, there was a "mixed multitude" that came out of Egypt with Israel (Ex 12:38). At the time of their departure, these people no doubt sought to gain the advantage of being with the Israelites, whom God had singularly blessed.

There is a kind of circumference that surrounds those who are approved and blessed by the Lord. One of the more obvious manifestations of this are godly parents. There is a sense in which young children are protected and advanced because of the faith of their parents – like Timothy in his youth. Paul said of him, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim 1:5). Timothy took advantage of the environment in which raised, appropriating the faith that first dwelt in his grandmother and mother.

This is the kind of thing that men cannot capitalize on for personal gain, but it is a truth upon which we can reckon. **Of course, if a person is not living by faith and walking in the Spirit, there is no circumference of blessing around him.** Also, a statement such as this must not be uttered hastily, and without some obvious support. It is not something that takes place automatically, so that anywhere a child of God is found, those about that person are guaranteed safety. All of those around Noah, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord, were destroyed except for his wife, his sons, and their wives. Sodom was not spared because Lot, "that righteous man" (2 Pet 2:8), was there. However, in the text before us, those onboard the ship in which Paul was traveling, were guaranteed safety because of him. **As the passage will verify, this involved following his counsel, and not violating what he told them to do. By heaven's decree, their lives were in his hands.**

Now Paul speaks so when deliverance is realized, the people will know its cause. It will not come by the storm ceasing, but by a miraculous deliverance while in the very midst of it. They will not suddenly and peacefully land on a convenient shore with everything kept in tact.

ceasing, but by a miraculous deliverance while in the very midst of it. **They will not suddenly and peacefully land on a convenient shore with everything kept in tact.**

THOU MUST BE BROUGHT BEFORE CAESAR

". . . thou must be brought before Caesar. . ." Other versions read, "you must stand before Caesar," ^{NASB} "you must stand trial before Caesar," ^{NIV} "you must stand before the emperor," ^{NRSV} "you have to stand before the emperor," ^{CJB} "You must present your case to the emperor," ^{GWN} "You are destined to stand before Caesar," ^{NAB} "you will surely stand trial before Caesar," ^{NLT} and "It is necessary for you to stand before Caesar." ^{AMPLIFIED}

given you the lives of all who sail with you," ^{NIV} "God has granted safety to those who are sailing with you," ^{NRSV} "God has granted your request and will save the lives of all those sailing with you," ^{LIVING} "And God to give you something good: He will save the lives of all those sailing with you," ^{IE} "because of you, God will save the lives of everyone on the ship," ^{CEV} "God in his goodness to you has spared the lives of all those who are sailing with you," ^{GNB} and "and everyone sailing with you is also going to make it." ^{MESSAGE}

Here is an arresting revelation: some people are spared because of those with whom they are traveling. This is a Divine manner, and is to be duly noted. Moses once said to the son of his father-in-law, "We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD

BE OF GOOD CHEER, FOR I BELIEVE GOD

²⁵ **Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."**

It is imperative that believers know what to do with what is made known to

them. Here Paul expresses a word that is designed to conquer despair. He speaks it in the midst of a devastating storm, when blackness is hiding the sun by day and the stars by night. Yet he speaks with the confidence of faith.

BE OF GOOD CHEER

"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer . . ."

Other versions read, *"take heart,"*^{NKJV} *"keep up your courage,"*^{NASB} *"be of good courage,"*^{GENEVA} *"be ye courageous,"*^{MRD} *"cheer up,"*^{IE} and *"be cheered."*^{LITV}

The word translated *"cheer"* (εὐθυμεῖτε) is lexically defined as, "to put in good spirits, gladden, make cheerful . . . to be joyful, be of good cheer, of good courage."^{THAYER} It is used four times in Scripture, three of which are in this chapter (Acts 27:22,25,36), and one in James 5:13, where it is translated *"merry."*

This was spoken to people of whom it was said, *"all hope that we should be saved was taken away"* (Acts 27:20). A fierce, protracted, and unrelenting storm caused that despair. Can a mere word from a prisoner enable the emotions of the people to change so radically and so suddenly? Yes, it can, depending upon the reliability of the word, and the enablement of the people to believe it. It is in this sense that Solomon wrote, *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver"* (Prov 25:11).

FOR I BELIEVE GOD

" . . . for I believe God . . ." Other versions read, *"I have faith in God,"*^{NIV} *"I trust God and believe,"*^{CJB} *"I trust God,"*^{GWN} *"I confide in God,"*^{MRD} *"I have confidence in my God,"*^{WILLIAMS} *"I have faith (complete confidence) in God,"*^{AMPLIFIED} and *"I am sure."*^{CEV}

See, *"faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Heb 11:1). Faith is convinced of the truth of what God has said, and proceeds in life upon the basis of that persuasion. When men falter, it is because of unbelief. When they doubt, it can be traced back to not

When men falter, it is because of unbelief. When they doubt, it can be traced back to not believing. There can be no true confidence or trust where there is no faith, and there can be no wavering or doubt where there is faith.

believing. **There can be no true confidence or trust where there is no faith, and there can be no wavering or doubt where there is faith.** Keep in mind, that Paul said these words when there was not the slightest bit of visible evidence that they were true. It was in the midst of the storm that he expressed his confidence in God – a confidence that was based upon what God said.

The *"good fight of faith"* has to do with extending effort to keep the faith, and not lose trust in the Lord. This requires the use of spiritual weaponry designed to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. It also necessitates bringing into captivity every thought, making it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). Other versions read, *"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,"*^{NASB} *"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ,"*^{NIV} and *"refute arguments and theories and reasonings and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One)."*^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul had used these weapons to throw down the contrary thoughts of the pilot and owner of the ship, and the suggestions that were thrown at him by the

sight and sound of the storm in which they found themselves. He placed a greater value on what the angel of the Lord said than upon what men and nature were declaring. I am going to wax bold and affirm that much of modern Christianity does not encourage such determination. It is too humanistic.

IT SHALL BE EVEN AS IT WAS TOLD ME

" . . . that it shall be even as it was told me." Other versions read, *"it will be just as it was told me,"*^{NKJV} *"exactly as I have been told,"*^{NASB} *"what I have been told will come true,"*^{CJB} *"it will turn out exactly as I have been told,"*^{NAS} and *"Everything will happen just as His angel told me."*^{LIVING}

Paul does not take a portion of what the angel said, but accepts every word declared to him. There is no generality in his faith. He has confidence that things will turn out precisely as the angel has said. That is how faith reasons: whatever is declared by the Lord is accepted without reservation or staggering. Even though the storm shouts "No!" faith responds, "It shall be so!"

How must such an outburst of confidence have sounded to those mariners and passengers? The details of their response are not made known, but I have no doubt that Paul's word was the best word they had heard in a long time. It is apparent that his conduct during the voyage in no way contradicted what he has now declared to them. **Some testimonies are rejected because of the life of the one testifying.**

WE MUST BE CAST UPON A CERTAIN ISLAND

"²⁶ Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island."

Paul now reveals, something that was apparently revealed to him, even though he previously made no reference to it. He introduces what may, to the shallow thinker,

appear on the surface to be a contradiction of what he just said.

HOWBEIT

"Howbeit . . ." Other versions read, *"However,"*^{NKJV} *"But,"*^{NASB} *"Nevertheless,"*^{NIV} and *"Yet."*^{MRD} As used in this text,

"Howbeit" means "by way of opposition and distinction; it is added to statements opposed to a preceding statement,"^{THAYER} "to emphasize contrast; as a correlative with (on the one hand) . . . but (on the other hand)."^{FRIBERG}

This is an elaboration of the testimony he has given, which involved more

Having set sail for the next port, and against the godly advise of Paul, the vessel encounters a fierce wind through which the pilot is unable to navigate – by Given O. Blakely

than the loss of the ship, yet the saving of the lives of all who were aboard it. Paul now testifies to the fact that there will be a difficult end to this experience, yet the lives of none will be lost because of it.

WE MUST BE CAST UPON A CERTAIN ISLAND

“ . . . we must be cast upon a certain island.” Other versions read, “we must run aground on a certain island,”^{NKJV} “we shall have to run on some island,”^{RSV} “we will be sent on a certain island,”^{BBE} “we

^{NJB} “we will be shipwrecked on an island,”^{NLT} “on a certain island it behoveth us to be cast,”^{YLT} “we shall have to be stranded on some island,”^{AMPLIFIED} “we will first be shipwrecked on some island,”^{CEV} and “It is necessary for us to run aground on a certain island.”^{EMTV}

At the time of this word, they appeared to be in the open sea, having no knowledge at all concerning the location. The island on which they will be stranded is later identified as Melita. It was about five

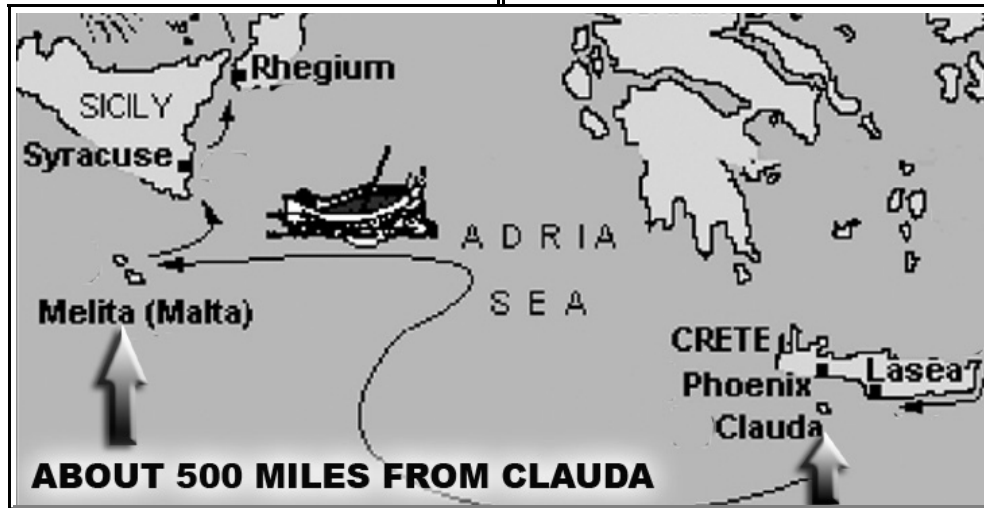
slightly to the north.

Paul’s language suggests that this was more than the foretelling of an event. **There was a Divine purpose that was driving this matter.** God intended all along that people disembark from the boat and go to this island. The purpose of it all will be made known in the narrative that follows.

The English word “*must*” is certainly a proper word here. It is translated from the Greek word *δεῖ* which means, “it is necessary, there is need of, it behooves, is right and proper,”^{THAYER} “as expressing compulsion, necessity, or inevitability in an event it is necessary, one must, one has to,”^{FRIBERG} and “as expressing compulsion, necessity, or inevitability in an event it is necessary, one must, one has to”^{LOUW-NIDA}

Here is a classic fulfillment of the following description of God, “*the LORD hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet*” (Nahum 1:3). It might be argued that this was a necessary consequence of the bad decision of the pilot and the owner of the ship. However, the word is too certain to express such a generality. They will not simply be cast upon a island, but “*a certain island.*”

Whether it is readily apparent to the reader or not, this whole event was being controlled and orchestrated by God. **An aspect of His purpose will be fulfilled that just a few days earlier would have seemed impossible.**



have to run aground on some island,”^{CJB} “we are destined to run aground on some island,”^{NAB} “we are to be stranded on some island,”

hundred miles from Clauda, which gives some idea of the strength and duration of the wind that was pushing them westward, and

CONCLUSION

This text has confirmed the practicality of faith: how diagnosis and awareness of circumstances are integral to living by faith and walking in the Spirit. This is an aspect of spiritual life that is not common among professing believers of our time. Instead of living by faith, Christians are often taught to live by routine and fleshly regimen. Key aspects of living in the flesh – marriage, the home, etc. – are represented as best lived out within the context of a systematic plan. This is also carried over into the maintenance of spiritual life and the activities of the assembly of the saints. It is even projected into the realm of witnessing for Christ and seeking to constrain others to come to Him. Who is able to estimate the volumes of books, the number of workshops, and the development of sure-fire plans that

have flooded the Christian world on these matters?

From a business point of view, we are speaking of a religious financial empire that is staggering in size. **Rather than faith being associated with one’s identity with God Himself, His great salvation, and the procurement of an eternal inheritance, it is confined to temporal life.** This approach has satisfied the religious multitudes, and they have poured their money and devotion into it. In terms of Scripture, this fulfills the word of Paul: “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and*

shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim 4:3-4).

Thus the people have defined what they want to hear, and have given their allegiance to those who meet their wishes. Jesus defined such a generation in these words: “*Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept*” (Luke 7:31-32). After hearing some word from God, such a generation might reply, “What has this got to do with us today?” Or, “We want something that is more practical.” Or “We need something that is relevant to everyday life.”

It all has a sound of wisdom, and has thus snared many a immature soul. But who has been able to work up a system for encountering a sudden storm, or a sinking ship, or being lost in the midst of the sea? Everyone who is familiar with these canned systems knows there are situations that arise that cannot be resolved by such an approach. **So, those who market them to the people are really the people who are dealing with things that are not relevant.**

Right here is where our text takes on special meaning. It confirms that faith can adapt to any circumstance, enabling its possessor to keep afloat, so to speak and adapt to the circumstance in an effective manner. There simply is no situation for which faith – real faith – is unequal. No person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God can get into a situation where such a posture has no applicability. In confirmation of this it is written, *“For whatsoever is born*

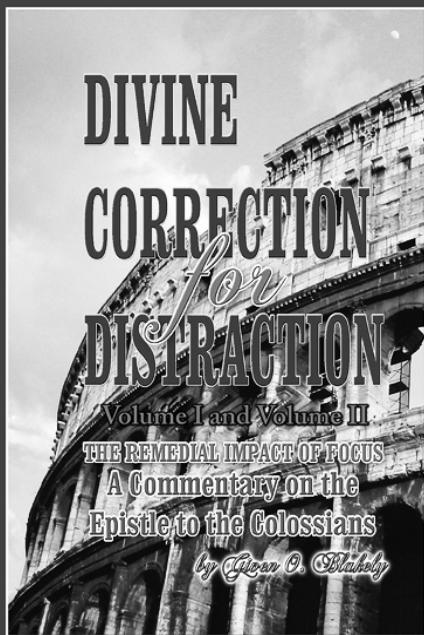
of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5).

That is what is being lived out in this text. **It is the faith of Paul that is both being tried and put on display.** Its versatility can be seen, as well as its calming and stabilizing impact upon those who possess it.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 9/24/10. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The one hundredth and fourth lesson will cover verses 27 through 44 of the twenty-seventh chapter: “SHIPWRECKED, BUT ALL SAVED ALIVE.” Having encountered an storm of great fierceness, the ship is finally destroyed, and everyone has to make it to shore during the storm. According as Paul had declared, they all made it safely, with no lives being lost. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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