

Paul in the Tempest

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon illustrates how Apostle Paul's unwavering faith and bold proclamation of God's promises in the midst of a storm serve as a powerful example for believers to trust and encourage others with confidence.

Scripture: Acts 27:18-25, 2 Peter 1:19, Hebrews 7:1-3, Romans 4:20-21, Psalm 118:6, Hebrews 11:1

Topics: "Faith", "Encouragement", "God's Promises"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the Apostle Paul's steadfast faith during a perilous sea voyage, highlighting how Paul's trust in God's promises and his bold encouragement to others exemplify true Christian courage. Spurgeon challenges believers to adopt Paul's comprehensive faith, to speak openly of their trust in God, and to comfort those around them in times of trouble. This biographical message inspires Christians to live as faithful witnesses, reflecting Christ's character amid life's storms.

Transcript

"And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. 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. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete, and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you. Therefore, Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." Acts 27:18-25.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon parts of this passage, are as follows—Sermons #1070, Volume 18—WRECKED, BUT NOT RECKLESS; #2952, Volume 51—THE CHURCH—THE WORLD'S HOPE and #1355, Volume 23—A CHEERY WORD IN TROUBLOUS TIMES.]

HERE we see a Believer full of comfort cheering others. The words of good cheer now before us are from a man, but inasmuch as he does but repeat what the Lord had spoken to him, they are none the less precious. And they may be all the more profitable if they move us, by their example, to speak words of cheer to others.

The Believer is sure to come to the front. He may be hidden away in the crowd and his condition and circumstances may put him in the rear rank for a time, but his light will by some means rise out of obscurity. Paul is nothing but a prisoner all the time the ship sails safely. He is courteously entreated, yet he holds rank among others who are being carried to Rome for trial. But the storm comes on and the ship is driven before the tempest—and he who was only a prisoner becomes practically the chief man in the ship! The owner, the captain, the centurion—these are very small figures in the picture. You scarcely notice them in the group huddled together in the laboring boat. Paul is the center of the whole company, the observed of all. He is as much the master of the ship as Caesar was when, in the tempest, he encouraged the mariners with the words, "Fear not, you carry Caesar and all his fortunes." Paul is greater than Caesar, for he says less of himself and more of the Eternal God. He is evidently revered and esteemed even by those who hold him in chains.

Paul on board that vessel was strikingly like the Lord Jesus when He came into the ship upon the Galilean Lake. There are many parallels between every true Believer and his Lord. Albeit that He is great and everything about Him is colossal, we, if we follow Jesus, are like He—and in this world we are as He was—we are miniatures of His life-size portrait, shadows of His glorious Substance! When Paul, on board the ship, sees the fears of those about him and he lovingly cries, "Be of good cheer," his voice has a consoling ring borrowed from his Master's. If you, dear Friend, are thoroughly and strongly a Believer, you will find a place in which you shall illustrate to others the Character of your Lord. If I might so speak, on board that ship Paul was prophet, priest and king. In our text he spoke prophetically, for he declared to them their perfect safety. He acted like a priest in his prayers for them all and I had almost added that in his breaking of bread, he was dimly like Melchizedek—blessing men and refreshing them with bread and wine. As for the kingly office, was not Paul truly royal? No mortal brow was ever more worthy of a crown! Amid that crowded ship he was more imperial than Caesar—and all on board acknowledged it. They felt constrained to obey him, for he stood superlatively above them all—unassuming, modest, gentle, self-denying, sympathetic, yet evidently a superior being. If we had more faith, we would sink in our own esteem, but we would greatly rise in our influence upon others, for we, too, would dwell

among men as prophets, priests and kings! Are not the saints the twice-born of a higher lineage and a nobler race—the excellent of the earth in whom is the delight of holy men?

Let us think for a while of the Apostle's character as set forth in his cheery speech and view him under three aspects. First, let us see in him the avowed believer Secondly, let us consider him as the bold prophet. Thirdly, as the sympathetic comforter. May we, by God's good Spirit, be made to bear each of these characters!

I. First, as we read our text, the Apostle will be seen as THE AVOWED BELIEVER. Hear him as he says, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

He commences his statement of his faith by saying that he believed God. We cannot have a better basis of faith than that! We must settle in our minds that there is a God, that the Word of God must certainly be true, absolutely infallible, and beyond all question. "I believe God"—if a man can say no more than this, it means, in the very mildest sense of it, he is on the way towards faith. But he who can say, "I believe God," in such a sense as the Apostle intended has reached to an eminent height of faith and has obtained the elements of spiritual strength.

"I believe God." Sometimes it quite staggers me that it should be difficult for us to believe God. Dear Friend, do you not sympathize with me in my wonder? If our hearts and minds were as they should be, faith in God would be a matter of course! And even now, imperfect as we are, it ought to need a crushing argument to persuade us to entertain the slightest doubt of God. It is most of all surprising that God's children should ever doubt Him—especially those who have been so highly favored as some of us have been. Let preacher and hearer be amazed that we should ever dare to say that we find faith in God to be difficult. It is a grievous imputation upon God when we talk about faith as difficult!

If we were to say of a neighbor, "I find it hard to believe him," I do not know what worse we could say of him. If a child were to say of his father, "You know my father—he is in high repute but I find it quite a struggle to believe him." What rumors would get abroad! What whispers! "That man's own child confesses that he finds it hard to believe him!" Will not this bring forth from us the blush of shame and the tear of repentance, to think that we would ever have spoken thus of God, our Father? Is there any proof of our fall more conclusive than this? Is there any token of the natural depravity of our heart more glaring than that we should be so out of order as to doubt the living God? Why do we not trust Him altogether and implicitly? How is it that when we get a great promise, we begin to say, "And is this true?" When we come into deep trouble, how is it that we mistrust His goodness? How is it that we do not rest in God in all things great or small? He that is true to His Covenant and to His oath will be true in the very jots and tittles of His promises! He that is true to Christ will be true to every member of Christ's body. He cannot lie! It is impossible that He should deny Himself—ought it not to be impossible for us to suspect Him? The Apostle is worthy to be called "the master of the sentences" in this brave utterance, "I believe God." Take this one line to heart, Beloved, and repeat it for yourself full many a time, "I believe God." Whatever else you question, always believe God!

Paul's firm faith was grounded upon Revelation, for he says, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." He believed, then, that God had told him something. He says of a certain, "it," that it was told him. An angel had told him, but we need not envy him the channel of communication, since the written Word of God is a more sure word of testimony than anything else can be! Even the word which came on the holy mount in the Transfiguration, when Peter and James and John saw Christ in His Glory, though it was a true and pure and bright word, yet is it spoken of by Peter as second to the Scriptures! He says, "We have a more sure word of prophecy"—more sure, even, than speech heard by the ear! Nothing is so sure as the Revelation of the Inspired Book! The man who quibbles at the Inspiration of the Word of God has given up the very foundation of faith! You and I, kind Friend, at any rate, are able to say that we believe that God has told us something, for we accept the Bible as His Word to us—even to us! We are not of those who say of a certain Chapter, "That is for the Jews," for in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but all the promises are yes and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us. We are the true Israel who worship God in the spirit and have no confidence in the flesh—and the promises are sure to all the Seed. We believe in Inspiration and Revelation—and we ground our faith thereon, even as Paul did. "I believe that it was told me," is our unmistakable avowal.

Observe carefully that Paul's faith, grounded upon God and the fact of a Revelation, went on to a conviction of the absolute certainty of that Revelation—"it shall be even as it was told me." "It shall be." You can apply this to everything that God has told you. Whatever promise He has made. Whatever declaration He has set forth in His Holy Word, it shall be even as it was told you! Just as when the press comes down upon the paper, the type leaves its own impression

The faith of Paul was most blessedly comprehensive. I want you all to note that fact, for God had told him that He had given him all them that sailed with him—and Paul believed it for their comfort. It is a great thing for faith to make a sweep as wide as God's Word. I have known some to whom God has said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." But they have only gone as far as, "you shall be saved," and according to their faith it has been to them! As yet, they have not believed the other three words, "and your house." And when their children grow up and grieve their hearts by their ill manners, what is the cause of it but the parents' unbelief? If we have not prayed be-lievingly for our children, is it any marvel that they are not saved?

It often comes to pass that by clipping a promise, we shear off a blessing which we might have had if our faith had accepted the Sacred Word in its entirety. Oh, for a comprehensive faith as to all that is in the gracious Covenant! Have you looked long enough at the promise to see all that is in it? What sheaves of blessing are tied up in a single promise, though it may only consist of a dozen words! I like to make up my troubles into bundles. Do you ever do that? If a man has nine, ten, twelve, 14 parcels to carry, they may be all little ones, but what a worry they are to him! Here are some in this pocket, and some in that—and they are more than he can manage, for they drop about everywhere! If he is a wise man, he finds a bag and puts the separate items together. True, they are no lighter, but they are much easier to carry! Bind your troubles into one burden and then roll it upon the Lord! With your mercies, do just the opposite—cut the string and open the package—they will be no more, but they will give you more joy as you count them and examine them one by one. Take care that your faith grasps the whole mass of blessing stored away in the promise—and mind that you believe that it shall be even as God has told you.

Further, note that Paul believed this when, to outward appearances, "all hope that they should be saved was taken away." Paul's faith hoped against hope. When Hope mourns, "I cannot find rest for the sole of my feet," Faith cries, "Use your wings." When there seems nothing for Faith to rest on but the bare Word of God, then Faith is glad, for now she can commune with her Creator without being entangled by outward means and instrumentalities! Did not the Lord hang the world upon nothing but His Word? And cannot we hang our souls there, too? It is grand to stand like the arch of Heaven, unpillared and yet unmoved, resting only upon the invisible God! Did I say, only?. Is not that resting upon everything that is worth trusting since God is All-in-All?

Before we leave this point we ought to notice that while Paul thus believed God, that it would be as it was told him, he very plainly and boldly expressed this faith He did not conceal his confidence, but he proclaimed it even before those who did not share his belief. No matter whether they could sympathize with him or not, he spoke out boldly. He did not cast pearls before swine by needlessly parading his faith, but as it was necessary to speak of it for the comfort of others, he did not hesitate for a single moment, but confessed, in the hearing of soldiers and sailors, "I believe God."

Nowadays, people are so dreadfully modest that they are afraid to glorify God. God save us from such cowardice! Infidelity brawls in every street—shall faith be dumb? If you believe, there is at this time a grave necessity that you should declare your faith, for unbelief is rampant. Look at the high-class reviews, look at popular literature—these things reek with unbelief of the worst kind! Alas that it should ever come to this—that men who call themselves Christians should lend their pens to suggest and spread infidel principles and even enter into pulpits to insinuate mistrust of the Truths of God which they were ordained to preach! Honesty seems to have fled from the earth and men have lost all conscience. Let us who believe in God speak out at once, though men will call us narrow-minded, destitute of culture, incapable of enlarged views and other pretty things! What does it matter what they say? All that they say or insinuate

should only make us the more vehemently declare, "I believe God." Why it has become a rare thing to meet a man who believes anything now, for the reputed wise man of the period is he who says, "I do not believe in anything in particular. I hold certain views, but I am quite prepared to change them, for there is a great deal to be said on the other side." This is not after the manner of Christ, nor according to the ways of the faithful in the olden time, who held fast the form of sound words and were ready to die for the Truths of God which had taken possession of their souls. It is time now, if ever in the world's history, for those who are Believers to speak with all confidence. Fear nothing! Can there be anything to fear in believing God? Can there be any shame in avowing an implicit faith in the God of Truth? For my own part, I had rather be ridiculed for bigotry than be applauded for "advanced and liberal views." I would sooner be despised with the orthodox than reign with "the intellectual."

II. We have thus gone over Paul's words as an avowed Believer. And now we may turn to look at him AS A BOLD

PROPHET.

Far be it from any one of us to set ourselves up as prophets, for thereunto we are not called. Yet every truly-instructed Christian is in some sense a prophet and may prophesy according to the proportion of faith, if he will follow the true method. Paul was not rash in his prophecies. He confined himself to revelation. He said, "It shall be." But what shall be? "It shall be as it was told me." You may always go that length—and you will be to many men a wonderful personage. If you go only as far as that, they will marvel that you dare say, "It shall be even as it was told me." We speak positively where they can only guess and dream. We cannot see behind that veil which hides the future, but we know what is to come as to some matters, for God has told us and we can, therefore, prophesy that it shall be according to His declaration. Learn from Paul not to be a presumptuous dreamer, but a prudent speaker.

On what he foretold he staked the honor of God, for he said, "It shall be as it was told me." But why? Because "I believe God." If God is not worthy of belief, then it may not be as it was told me—but His Word must be fulfilled and His promise kept since He is a faithful God. Never recklessly compromise the honor of God by any rash assertion of your own! But you may always challenge the veracity of God as to His own promises or threats and be quite sure that He will vindicate both Himself and His servant by making it to be as He told you.

The Apostle uttered this prophecy of his before all that were in the ship. Most of them were unbelievers, but he boldly said to them, "It shall be even as God has told me." Some of them were his superiors in station—officers of the Roman army—but he told them, "It shall be even as it was told me." It is sometimes hard to confess Christ in polite society, in the presence of those who are considered to be superior persons, but let not any believer in Him yield to fear. Say with David—

"I'll speak Your Word, though kings should hear, Nor yield to sinful shame."

Paul made his avowal of faith in the presence of very rough men—selfish sailors, cruel soldiers and criminal prisoners, but what of that? An avowal of faith in God might be made before all the fiends of Hell and you could not say a better thing before the angels of Heaven! In no place and in no company can the testimony of faith in the living God and His Son, Jesus Christ, be out of place. Therefore fear not to make it. My Friend, make the world conscious of your solemn conviction that God is to be believed. Protest and so act as a true Protestant! Confess Christ and so be His disciple, indeed! Speak that which He has told you in His Word like a prophet in the name of the Lord, and fear no man! Let the fear of God forbid all

other fear.

Paul so truly, so practically believed God that the power of his faith told on all that were around him. If they did not themselves believe, yet that calm face amid the storm, that practical action in bidding them take bread and eat, that common-sense proceeding in cutting away the boat that the sailors might remain to manage the ship—all this made them see that he was not a man who merely talked of faith, but one to whom believing was part and parcel of his life, the fountain of the common sense which fitted him to be a leader! He acted like a man who believed in God in a business-like way. Faith was real in him and, therefore, practical. Many Christians appear to hold their religion as a pious fiction—regarding the promises of God as pretty things for sentimentalism to play with—and His Providence as a poetical idea. We must get out of that evil fashion and make God to be the greatest factor in our daily calculations—the chief force and fact of our lives! We must, each one, boldly act on the conviction that "it shall be even as He has told me."

Paul was all this while in trouble, for he was in the ship with those whom he comforted, suffering the same discomforts and yet he said, "I believe God." It is all very fine for one who has a good income, enjoys good health and is in excel-

lent spirits to sit down by the side of some poor half-starved woman who is full of disease and near to death, and say, "My good woman, you should have faith in God." Do you hear that landsman teaching sailors how to go to sea? That is true faith which believes God when it is in the sinking ship, in the same peril and trouble with others and yet unmoved where they are filled with alarm! How I wish that each of you may be able to believe this!

May God make you to be so far a prophet that you may be prophetic on several points! In the first place, always declaring that God will hear believing prayer and, next, that a wrong thing cannot have the Divine blessing resting upon it. Be prophet enough to say these two things and act upon them as downright matters of fact. You can also foretell that if the Gospel is faithfully and simply preached, with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, it will win souls. You may prophesy that and never fail! And you may prophesy, also, that if the biggest sinner in the world will come to Christ, he shall be forgiven! That if the vilest heart will yield itself to the Savior, it shall be renewed! That if the most rebellious and obstinate man that ever lived is touched by the finger of God and is led to repentance and faith, he is capable of becoming one of the brightest of the sons of God! No one shall ever shame you by proving that you spoke falsely if you speak for God in this fashion! Speak out, then, and banish guilty silence.

III. The Apostle may be viewed in a third character, as A SYMPATHETIC COMFORTER.

They were all in trouble, for they were all in danger of drowning. The ship was going to pieces, death stared them in the face, dismay was written on every countenance, but Paul says to them, "Sirs, be of good cheer." Doubtless, his cheerful tones and manly voice helped to banish their fears and to prevent a panic. Beloved Christian Friend, should it not be our effort, wherever we are, to make troubled ones happy? Next to loving God, the first duty of a Christian is to spread peace on earth and goodwill to men. Whenever we meet with a person in trouble—I do not mean only spiritual trouble—we should administer relief. Even when we meet with a child who has lost a penny, or has broken a jug, we should take pleasure in soothing its grief. His mother will scold him, so buy him another jug, if you can, and try and cheer his little heart. What a mass of happiness you can buy for a few pence, if you will spend them on poor children.

Where money is not needed, you may give sympathy and consolation, and these will be much valued. Do not reply that you are unable to act as a comforter. Learn the art. If you cannot speak well, there is a better way than speech. A little child once said to her mother, "Mother, I stopped with Widow Brown, for she said that I comforted her so." "Well, I daresay you did, my Dear," the mother replied. "But, Mother, I do not see that I am of any use to her, for I cannot tell her anything—but I put my cheek against hers and when she cries, I cry too—and she says that it comforts her." Exactly so. This little child shall lead us. Herein is wisdom. "Weep with them that weep." You cannot more effectually console them. Comfort others with the comfort with which you yourself are comforted of God, for Paul said, "Be of good cheer. I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." He had been comforted of the Lord and with this consolation he could cheer others. The Lord grant us Grace to be looking out for those who are in any sort of affliction, that we may cheer their hearts. But let us be doubly watchful over those in spiritual distress. Let no one in our neighborhood ever complain, "No man cares for my soul." Comfort God's people and labor at the same time to win sinners to Jesus—and the love of your heart shall bring untold blessings into your own bosom! Happiness is contagious and the cheerfulness of your piety will be so attractive that the careless and indifferent will be allured to the ways of piety. Do not run about with ill news, but make your communications joyous by mixing up the glad tidings of salvation with your cheerful daily talk! So shall you imitate your Lord and His Apostle by saying "Be of good cheer."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 90; ACTS 27:1-26.

Psalms 90 is entitled "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God," and it furnishes a suitable prayer for every man of God. Any men of God who have had experience as deep, trying and varied as that of Moses will be the better able to enter into the spirit of the Psalm.

Psalms 90:1. LORD You have been our dwelling place in all generations. [See Sermon #46, Volume 1—the glorious habitation.] "This world in which we live is no home for our immortal

spirits. You give us habitations for our bodies, but there are no dwelling places for our spirits that are of a nobler order. We dwell in You, O Lord; You are our home. Beneath Your wide wings we find blessed shelter and in communion with

You our hearts are kept in perfect peace. Lord, You are the home of Your people in all generations—not only in the generations that are past, when Noah, and Abraham and Moses, and David, and all Your ancient servants found a refuge in You, but even to this day You are still our strong castle and our high tower, our refuge and place of defense, our dwelling place even in this generation."

2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. When compared with God, those hoary hills are but as infants of a day, and the whole round world itself is but as a new-born child. "From everlasting" has He existed—when all created things slept in His Infinite mind like unborn forests sleep in an acorn cup and so on forever, "to everlasting"—when all created things shall have dissolved, when back to nothing this fair world shall have gone—God shall still be the same. He is a rock that cannot be removed. There is no terra firma upon this earth, but while all things are whirling around us, we find a firm dwelling place beyond the stars in the ever-living and Immutable Jehovah. No man's home is safe unless it is built on something more stable than this poor trembling earth, but he who rests on God and lives in God has the best of all habitations wherein to dwell in safety forever.

3. You turn man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men. Man is mortal, conspicuously so. As we walk about our streets, how we miss our old companions, one by one! They have returned to the bosom of mother earth from where they first sprang. The inhabitants of this world seem to pass in procession before our eyes—those who were here a few minutes ago are gone and another rank has come, and another, and another and they will soon all be gone—and we shall be gone too. He, then, who hopes to find a home among the sons of men will miss it, but he who makes the eternal God his habitation shall still be at home in the Lord even when wife, and child, and brother, and friend all sleep in the silence of the sepulcher.

4. For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Our measurements of time are nothing to God. There is nothing past and nothing future with Him—all things are present in the eternal NOW of God. What a wonderful Truth this is of the eternal existence of God—and what boundless comfort it brings to the man who feels that this God is his God, his Father, his Friend and his All-in-All!

5. 6. You carry them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep in the morning; they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down, and withers. Such is the best estate of man—a field bedecked with daisies, kingcups and other frail flowers, but the mower's scythe is near—you may hear him sharpening it! And soon along the sward, all the sons of men shall fall—and you who have found your hope, your Heaven, your confidence here—how poor will you be in the end thereof! But O you who have sent all your heart's desires upwards to your God, you who are living in the future, living in the infinite, how secure are you, for no rust shall fret your gold, no moth consume your garments! You are blessed indeed.

7. For we are consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath are we trouble. Yes, if the Lord lets even a little of His wrath out for a while against His servants, how greatly do we suffer! Blessed be His name, it never is real anger against His own chosen people. He does but hide His love under the form of wrath, just as a father never really hates his child, and even though he is angry with him for his faults, and chastises him, yet there is more love than wrath in every blow of the rod. Still, it is a sad thing to lose the sense of God's love in the heart—it consumes us and troubles us. We could bear sickness, we could bear slander or persecution, or almost anything but the absence of the Light of God's Countenance! That is the worst of trials to His children.

8-10. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the Light of Your Countenance. For all our days are passed away in Your wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away. A long life or a short life, what a little difference it makes when the last hour comes! The patriarch as well as the child descends to the grave and all, as they sleep in their separate graves, seem only to have lived for a little moment and then to have passed away.

11. Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath. God grant that none of us may ever know experimentally the power of His anger! But may we know it, as a matter of faith, so as to tremble concerning it, and so as to flee to Christ to be delivered from it! But what must it really be to feel the power of God's anger? I implore you never to believe any teaching that seems to make God's anger less terrible than you thought it to be. It is not

possible to exaggerate here—the power of God's anger is immeasurable, and that is why the power of Christ's Atonement is infinite!

12. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. That is the great matter, after all, to get the heart applied to wisdom, to learn what is the right way and to walk in it in the practical actions of daily life. It is of little use for us to learn to number our days if it merely enables us to sit down in self-confidence and carnal security! But if our hearts are applied to true wisdom, the Lord's teaching has been effectual.

13, 14. Return, O LORD, how long? And let it repent You concerning Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your

mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. [See Sermons #513, Volume 9—THE YOUNG MAN'S PRAYER and #2987, Volume 52—THE "BEAU IDEAL" OF LIFE.] Dear young people, here is a suitable

prayer for you to present to God—"O satisfy us early with Your mercy." Believe me, there is no joy for a lad like that of loving the Lord Jesus Christ while he is yet young! And O you maidens—there is no fairer jewel that you can ever wear than that of love to Jesus Christ—

"'Twill save us from a thousand snares To mind religion young! Grace will preserve our following years, And make our virtues strong."

And each one of us may pray this prayer. "Lord, now give us Your mercy! If we are unsaved, let us not remain so! If we have lost the comfort of Your Presence for a while, restore it to us now! Leave us not long in darkness, but satisfy us early with Your mercy!"

15. Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evi. [See

Sermon #1701, Volume 29—GLADNESS FOR SADNESS.] It is right, then, to

pray for joy. Indeed, joy is so conspicuous a blessing to a Christian—it is so closely connected with the healthfulness of all his virtues that he should seek after it until he finds it!

16. Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children. "Lord, let us see Your work here! Oh, for Your name's sake, take Your right hand and work mightily in our midst! Withdraw not the working of the Holy Spirit from us, Your people! Let Your work of conversion, Your work of edification, Your work of the conquest of the world appear unto Your servants!"

17. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hand. "Let not what we do for You fall to the ground like a badly-built wall! Let not our work be consumed in the great testing fire, 'but establish the work of our hands!'"

Acts 27:1-3. And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself Even a Roman centurion could see that

Paul was no ordinary prisoner and that it was quite safe to allow him privileges which others might have abused.

4-12. And when we had launched from there, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarcely were come over against Cnidus, the wind not allowing us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone and, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the Fair Havens; near whereunto was the city of Lasia. Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart there also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete and lies toward the south west and north west. It was quite natural that the centurion should think that the master and the owner of the ship knew more

about seafaring matters than Paul did, but the sequel proved that the Apostle knew more than they did, for he had access to information that was hidden from them.

13. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete. That was not the only voyage that commenced favorably and ended disastrously.

14. But not long after that arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. Apparently that was the only thing they could do. And, at times we may find that it will be well to follow their example. When we have done our best and can make no headway, we had better commit our vessel to the care of God and "let her drive" wherever He wills.

16-19. And running under a certain island which is called Claudia, we had much work to come by the boat: 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. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. They used all the means in their power and evidently Paul and his companions took their full share of the work that had to be done— "we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship."

20-22. 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. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete, and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. Paul might well remind the officers of the wise advice he gave them in Crete, but he did not rest content with that, but went on to cheer them as far as he dared, though he again warned them that they would lose their ship. To prove that he was not speaking without due authority, he added—

23-20. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you. Therefore, Sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we

must be cast upon a certain island. The next Chapter tells us that the "certain island was Melita, or Malta, as it is now called. In that respect, as in all others, Paul's prophecy was literally fulfilled, for the ship was lost, but all on board were saved.

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