

Paul a Prisoner: the Voyage Acts 27:1-26

by J.R. Miller

The sermon explores Paul's voyage to Rome, emphasizing faith in God's promises amidst trials and the importance of heeding wise counsel.

Scripture: Acts 27:1

Topics: "Faith in Trials", "Divine Protection"

Description

J.R. Miller discusses Paul's tumultuous voyage to Rome, emphasizing that opposition and storms do not necessarily indicate God's displeasure. He illustrates how trials can lead to spiritual growth and the necessity of sacrificing earthly attachments for eternal salvation. Paul's faith in God's promise during the storm serves as a reminder that divine protection accompanies those who serve Him. Miller highlights the importance of heeding wise counsel and the power of prayer, noting that Paul's intercession saved the lives of many aboard the ship. Ultimately, the sermon encourages believers to trust in God's plans and promises, regardless of the challenges they face.

Transcript

Paul's voyage to Rome was interrupted by a furious storm. It is recorded that "there arose . . . a tempestuous wind." The winds seemed to be fighting against Paul. We must not always decide, however, that opposition, difficulty, or hindrance shows divine displeasure. This ship was carrying God's servant to his destination, and yet this terrible storm arose on the sea. God's people are passing through this world--to heaven, and yet they meet obstacles and hardships in the very path of duty. They must not conclude that these things indicate God's displeasure. There are reasons known to God, why trials are better for us sometimes, than favoring circumstances. If this ship had had smooth sailing right through, we would never have had this wonderful story of Paul's sublime faith and God's wonderful deliverance. This is one of the most remarkable chapters in the annals of Paul's career.

"The next day they lightened the ship." They hoped that by casting out some of the freight they might save the ship and the lives of those on board. Next day, as the storm grew worse, they threw out even the furniture. Valuable and important as these things were, they must be sacrificed that something more important might be saved. It often becomes necessary in life's voyage to lighten the ship--in order to save it. That is one of the blessings of tempests and storms in our lives; they compel us to cast out the things of earth and our sins--in order to save our souls. There are some things we never can take to heaven. If we ever get there we must lighten the ship or it will sink with us in the dark waves of death.

There are too many people, however, who are not willing to make sacrifices of earthly things, even to gain spiritual blessings. There are stories of men who, on sinking ships, have sought to carry off their gold--but have lost their lives in the effort. We ought to be willing to sacrifice anything, in order to gain the favor of God. It is more to be desired than anything else.

If the master of the vessel and the officers in charge of the prisoners had remained in the safe shelter, as Paul had urged, they would have been safe. So Paul said to them, "Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me, and not . . . have gained this harm and loss." Many a trouble in life comes from not taking good advice. No doubt the seamen laughed at Paul's counsel about not leaving Crete. He was only a landsman, and what did he know about seamanship? By and by they learned that if they had only taken his advice--they would have been spared the trouble and loss which the storm cost them. If they had only stayed in the quiet shadow of Crete, instead of putting out to sea, they would have been in no danger during this terrible tempest.

There are young men who refuse to stay in the shadow of the Church, under the influence of parental love and home tenderness, beneath the protection of God's commandments, and who, disregarding all advice, put out to sea, and are caught in wild tempests. Then they learn what a mistake they made when they took their own way, instead of listening to wise counsel.

After rebuking them gently for their failure to hearken to him, Paul spoke encouraging words. "There stood by me this night the angel of God." So there are angels who come to earth with messages and ministries for God's children. God will always find some way to help his children in the dark hours of their earthly experiences. The old sailors on that ship did not know where they were that night--but God knew where his servant was, the angel had no trouble in finding the ship on the sea, and the man he sought amid the ship's company. Not one of God's children need ever have any fear of being lost to God or forgotten by him--in this time of need.

Paul was proud to proclaim himself a follower of him who had sent his angel to speak to him; he said, "Whose I am, and whom I serve." Many people profess to belong to Christ, and yet they do not serve him. They sing consecration prayers--but do not live their hymns and prayers. Their consecration is more a matter of sentiment than of life. Paul really belonged to Christ, and, therefore, served him. At his conversion he relinquished all claim to himself, and all right to the direction and control of his own life. The highest nobleness in heaven or on earth is to serve the Lord Christ, saying from the heart, "I belong to Christ."

The message of the angel was an assurance of safety. "Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar." If he must stand before Caesar in Rome, he could not perish in the sea on the way to Rome. Everyone, doing God's will, is immortal until his work is done. If God has something for us to do next year--he will not allow us to die this year. It ought to be a great comfort to us amid the sickness and danger of this world--that each life is in the care of God, that no disease or accident can reach one of God's children, without his permission. We need never give ourselves any anxiety about anything; our only care should be to be true to God, and faithful in duty. Then God will take care of us, and death cannot touch us until our work on earth is finished.

The angel had a further assurance for Paul's companions: "God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you." This word is very suggestive. Paul had been praying, not only for himself--but for his fellow passengers and for the sailors. We see, therefore, that God answers prayer. If Paul had not been

on that ship and if he had not prayed, all would have been lost in the storm. The men's lives were saved, because there was one man on board who knew God, and who had faith in prayer.

Another suggestion here is how much even wicked people owe to the godly. The lives of two hundred and seventy-five people were carried safely through the storm--for the sake of one godly man, and because of his intercession. We never know how much we owe to the prayers of our friends. The wicked in any community, know not what blessings come to them for the sake of the godly people around them.

Probably those to whom Paul told these things, looked as if they did not believe. Paul was content to rebuke them by making the assertion of his own faith.

"I believe God that it shall be, even as it was told me." Paul's faith was very sublime. There was no human reason to expect anything but the foundering of the ship, and the perishing of all on board. The angel of God had come to Paul with the assurance of his deliverance, and Paul simply believed his word. It was against all probability, yet Paul said quietly, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." That is faith--the laying hold of a Word of God--and absolutely believing it, believing it so really as to venture everything upon it. Any Word of God--is a word that we may take hold of. Those who cling to God's promises, shall never perish.

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