

SHIPWRECKED AT SEA!

The Bible says, “Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?” (Ecclesiastes 8:4). When the great Apostle Paul spoke, he was speaking the Word of the King of Kings and Lord Of Lords. Therefore, it is no wonder that the ruling monarchs of that day could not bear up under Paul’s Gospel. In Acts 24: 25, Paul stood before Felix and the Bible tells us, “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” Then a couple of chapters later Paul stood before Agrippa and Acts 26:28 gives us this ruler’s response, “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Because Paul appealed to Caesar, he was sent on the sea voyage to the City of Seven Hills. It is this famous story that we feature in today’s message.

I. THE PEOPLE GOD PUTS INTO OUR LIFE

Acts 27:1, 2. Let’s talk about the three categories of people with whom we associate on our journey through life.

A. The Family

The formation of the family begins with the spouse. It is very important in life that we establish a very close relationship with God before we even begin to show interest in the opposite sex. When we know we have married God’s choice, our marriage becomes empowered. “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD” (Proverbs 18:22). Then let us, by all means, envision our children as a gift from the Lord, as God Himself says, “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Psalm 127:3). Never take the family for granted.

B. The Friends

Here are five Bible verses that illustrate the importance of friends: “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17); “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17); “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Proverbs 27:6); “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel” (Proverbs 27:9); “Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother’s house in the day of

thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off” (Proverbs 27:10).

C. The Foes

The foes are almost always those we do not choose. It is important, however, to accept the fact they may be of God’s choosing. Sometimes the foes can not only surprise us, but devastate us. Jesus told us that if we follow Him, we may expect “...a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10:36). Look at the mature attitude Joseph had when confronted by his brothers who thought for sure Joseph would now seek vengeance for the wrong they did to him some years earlier, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20). I know it may seem like a hard pill to swallow, but we need to follow the admonition of our Lord who taught us, “But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” (Luke 6:35).

II. THE PURPOSE BEHIND THE CHANGE OF WINDS

Acts 27:4-15. Paul, the Centurion and not even the captain of the ship had control over the winds. Proverbs 30:4 reads: “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” No matter how strong the wind blows, always remember: God controls the wind. This is also true in the affairs of mankind, for God’s Word says, “...God hath power to help, and to cast down” (II Chronicles 25:8b). In Exodus 15:10 God took care of Pharaoh’s troops: “Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.” In Daniel 7:2 we read, “Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.” Here we see the prophesy of the rise and fall of Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome. And over it all, God controls.

When finally the mighty hurrnic winds of the Euroclydon hit the ship Paul was travelling in, the Bible tells us the navigators did the only thing plausible: “And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive” (Acts 27:15). It is normal to be surprised, caught off guard and even frightened, but eventually we must please God by trusting Him and what He has chosen to do (Hebrews 11:6). Sometimes when it appears we are blown off track, we are being taken exactly where God wants us to be.

III. THE PRESENCE IN THE PANDEMONIUM

Acts 27:16-33. In the midst of chaos God sometimes reveals Himself most strong. The key to keeping one's sanity in times of greatest storms is found in these words, "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve... Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:24, 25). This brings to mind the promise of Psalm 46:1: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

The story is told of a passenger ship crossing the ocean between the continents. A terrible storm came upon them and the passengers began to panic. One anxious passenger slightly lifted the hatch that led onto the deck and saw the captain. The captain saw the man peering from below and gave him a smile and went back to calmly steering the vessel. The man closed the hatch and went down below. As he looked into the troubled faces of those below, he said, "All shall be well, for I have seen the face of the captain."

IV. THE PRAGMATISM OF THE PRACTICAL

Acts 27: 34-38. Trusting the Lord doesn't mean that we should simply sit back and let God do His miraculous works. God is more than willing to do His miraculous works, but He loves to include men and women in His plans. Sam Jones said, " We should pray for our daily bread with sweat coming down our hoe handle." He has given us creative ability and wisdom to contribute to His mighty plan. What an honor! Paul knew there was going to be deliverance, but the people on the ship needed strength for the next event that was going to require physical stamina, so he commanded the men to eat. The ship needed to be lightened once more so the wheat was thrown overboard. It was time to pack light for things were about to change!

V. THE PROVIDENCE IN THE SHIPWRECK

Acts 27:39-44. The people on the ship did not know they were coming close to the island of Melita; all they knew was that they were approaching an inlet, so they detached themselves from the hold of the anchors and hoisted the mainsail. The front of the ship was run aground while the back of the ship broke apart. The soldiers were prepared to follow the protocol of killing the prisoners, but their centurion was so caught up under the leadership of a man under God's control, i.e., Paul, the centurion spared everyone's life. We see Paul had some ministry to accomplish before he came to Rome, his ultimate destination. God arranges what seems to be detours in His providence. We would all be wise to thank Him for the divinely planned excursions and carry on. What a mighty ministry Paul had in Rome. In this two-year period he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. He even had ministry in the palace of the emperor of Rome, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household" (Philippians 4:22). And although the Bible does not let us know what this encounter was like, the Word of God

declared to Paul, "...Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar..." (Acts 27:24a). It was a long and dangerous journey, even enduring a prolonged storm ending in shipwreck, but God's will was done.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.