

## Lesson 12 - 14 October 2012

### Paul Suffers Shipwreck

**Lesson Scope:** [Acts 27](#)

#### **Lesson Focus**

Felix, "willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound" for two years. Then Festus replaced Felix as governor. The Jews immediately asked Festus to send Paul back to Jerusalem, intending to ambush him on the way (Acts 25:3). Festus wisely insisted on holding the trial at Caesarea, but then he tried to please the Jews by suggesting yet another trial at Jerusalem. At this, Paul finally appealed to Caesar.

Before the case went to Rome, Agrippa and his wife paid a visit to Caesarea and wanted to hear Paul. All these official hearings reached the same conclusion, "This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds."

Still a prisoner, Paul was placed on a ship for the lengthy journey to Rome. Deceived by soft winds, the shipmen traveled beyond the safe season for sailing and were caught in a violent storm.

God sovereignly controls both the soft south winds and the great tempests. A man's responses to changing circumstances reveal both his concept of God and the true condition of his spiritual life.

"It's not my fault" is a common cry today. "I was overwhelmed by my circumstances/feelings/background/temperament, and I couldn't help myself." Emphasize the clear Bible teaching that God's grace is sufficient for every trial (1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 John 4:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:2-3; Jude 24) and that we can respond like "little Christs" in any crisis. No crisis overwhelms God, and so none can overwhelm us in His care.

**Lesson Aim:** To see how men of faith and men of this world respond in times of crisis.

**Theme Verse:** [Psalm 112:6-7](#). Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.

**Lesson Text:**

**"The More Part Advised to Depart"**

[Acts 27:9-14](#) <sup>9</sup> Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished *them*, <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. <sup>12</sup> 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.* <sup>13</sup> And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* purpose, loosing *thence*, they sailed close by Crete. <sup>14</sup> But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

**"All Hope ... Was Then Taken Away"**

[Acts 27:20-25](#) <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> But 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. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, <sup>24</sup> Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. <sup>25</sup> Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

## **"He Took Bread, and Gave Thanks"**

**Acts 27:30-36** <sup>30</sup> And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, <sup>31</sup> Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. <sup>32</sup> Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. <sup>33</sup> And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. <sup>34</sup> Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. <sup>35</sup> And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat. <sup>36</sup> Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat.

**Acts 27:41-44** <sup>41</sup> And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. <sup>42</sup> And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. <sup>43</sup> But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land: <sup>44</sup> And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

## **Questions for Study**

### **"The More Part Advised to Depart"**

1. What motivated the decision to sail farther under uncertain conditions?
2. What "soft winds" encourage the ungodly to persist in their way?
3. How can we encourage the ungodly to focus on the future storm instead of on the present soft winds?

### **"All Hope ... Was Then Taken Away"**

4. What was the basis for Paul's good cheer?
5. What thoughts cheer the believer as he faces the storms of life? Why does the world's cheer lead to all hope being taken away?

**"He Took Bread, and Gave Thanks"**

6. How did Paul's faithfulness benefit others?
7. Suggest some benefits of giving thanks to God in crisis.
8. The storm blew Paul's ship in the direction he was supposed to go. How do the storms of life do the same to God's children?

**Analyzing the Passage**

The fast (Acts 27:9) was likely the Day of Atonement, observed in late September or early October. Because of unsettled winter weather, navigation was unsafe on the Mediterranean from early October to the middle of March. Since "the fast was now already past," continuing the voyage to Rome was now out of the question. But because Phenice was only fifty miles from Fair Havens, the ship's owner and the centurion believed they could reach better accommodations there. Caught in the storm, the ship ended up nearly six hundred miles west on the island of Melita (modern Malta).

Euroclydon (Acts 27:14) is a compound of two Greek words—euros, meaning "east," and Kludon, meaning "a surge of the sea."

Paul did not claim divine inspiration for his timely warning (Acts 27:21). Apparently he had much sailing experience because he wrote, "Thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep" (2 Corinthians 11:25).

Colour (Acts 27:30) is "an outward show or pretext." This time the centurion heeded Paul's advice. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners because the law said that if they escaped, their guards would have to suffer the punishment intended for the escapees.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **"The More Part Advised to Depart"**

1. The man of faith uses wisdom and common sense to make decisions (Acts 27:9-10). Belief in nature's God brings a better understanding of nature's laws. When Christ clears the mists of ego and ambition from our eyes, we can focus on the real issues and make sensible decisions.

2. Men of this world tend to make decisions based on convenience and popular opinion (Acts 27:11-13). Men who reject the absolutes of God's Word have no solid foundation for reasoning. Instead of asking, "What does the Bible say?" they will ask, "What do I want?" or "What do others say?"

### **"All Hope ... Was Then Taken Away"**

3. Men of this world tend to lose hope when circumstances gyrate out of their control (Acts 27:14, 20). Rejecting God's control leaves one without help. When circumstances slip out of their control, they cannot fall back upon a faith in their loving heavenly Father. So they sink into despair.

4. Men of faith trust in God and His message in times of crisis (Acts 27: 20-25). Godly men choose to live by faith and not by sight. This daily choice of focus on eternity becomes a habitual attitude. When a storm comes, they respond as usual with trust in their loving God. Job said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

### **"He Took Bread, and Gave Thanks"**

5. Men of this world act selfishly in times of crisis (Acts 27:30). Men who normally live for themselves will save themselves first in a crisis. This is the reason why looting and violence must be restrained after severe floods or earthquakes.

6. Men of faith seek the good of all in times of crisis (Acts 27:31-33). Paul was not responsible for the safety of his fellow passengers. But he was a servant of Christ, who gave His life for the good of all. In this crisis, Paul followed the motto of his life—help as many people as possible.

7. Men of faith maintain a thankful attitude in difficult times (Acts 27:35). They see God's hand in every experience. Instead

of looking at what they have lost, they are thankful for what they have left. They acknowledge God's moderating hand when they say, "It could have been worse." They echo the words of Job, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? (Job 2:10).

8. Men of faith gain the confidence of worldly men by their responses in crisis (Acts 27:43-44). Worldly men expect to see responses of rage or despair in calamities. When they see cheer or trust instead, they recognize the divine power involved. The forgiveness of the Amish community at Nickel Mines left a worldwide witness of the power of Christ.

### **Important Teachings**

1. The man of faith uses wisdom and common sense to make decisions (Acts 27:9-10).

2. Men of this world tend to make decisions based on convenience and popular opinion (Acts 27:11-13).

3. Men of this world tend to lose hope when circumstances gyrate out of their control (Acts 27:14, 20).

4. Men of faith trust in God and His message in times of crisis (Acts 27:20-25).

5. Men of this world act selfishly in times of crisis (Acts 27:30).

6. Men of faith seek the good of all in times of crisis (Acts 27:31-33).

7. Men of faith maintain a thankful attitude in difficult times (Acts 27:35).

8. Men of faith gain the confidence of worldly men by their responses in crisis (Acts 27:43-44).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. What motivated the decision to sail farther under uncertain conditions?

A more commodious wintering place was only fifty miles away, and "the south wind blew softly." Perhaps the previous

frustration of contrary winds and slow sailing clouded their judgment.

2. What "soft winds" encourage the ungodly to persist in their way?

They are following the instincts of their carnal nature (Proverbs 14:12). Seemingly, "everyone else is doing it" (see Matthew 7:13). In business, corruption seems to pay (Psalm 73:7-8, 12). Judgment is delayed (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

3. How can we encourage the ungodly to focus on the future storm instead of on the present soft winds?

We can distribute literature and display Gospel signs that warn of coming judgment. We can live separated lives that prove not everybody is doing it. We can live as strangers and pilgrims and thus prove that we are not of this world. When they tell us of their retirement plans, we can ask, "What then?"

4. What was the basis for Paul's good cheer?

Paul believed God and His promises. He knew his real treasure was safe in heaven regardless of what happened on earth.

5. What thoughts cheer the believer as he faces the storms of life? Why does the world's cheer lead to all hope being taken away?

The believer knows that a loving God allowed the storm for his good. He understands that his real treasure is safe in heaven regardless of what happens on earth. He reminds himself, "Nothing can separate me from the love of Christ." He realizes that the trials of the faithful are temporary, but the rewards are eternal.

The world offers solutions and control only for time. Since judgment and eternity come to all men, the temporary cheer of the world inevitably ends in outer darkness.

6. How did Paul's faithfulness benefit others?

God preserved the lives of his shipmates for his sake (Acts 27:24). He saved their lives by exposing the escape plan of the shipmen and giving good cheer and good advice. Finally the prisoners were spared because the centurion wanted to save Paul.

7. Suggest some benefits of giving thanks to God in crisis.

Giving thanks reminds us who is in control and that He is good. This knowledge brings a peace that helps us to not only avoid panic but also make the right decisions.

8. The storm blew Paul's ship in the direction he was supposed to go.

How do the storms of life do the same to God's children?

Peace and prosperity tend to make us love this world and forget God and the next life. Storms in life remind us of the insecurity of this world and make us long for eternal peace. When our world is shaking, we turn to God and cling to Him more tightly.

Reverses in our lives encourage humility and sympathy for the troubles of others. "But should the surges rise, / And rest delay to come, / Blest be the tempest, / Kind the storm, / Which drives us nearer home."

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

The stress of a crisis strips away the veneer of politeness and exposes the underlying character. Our little, everyday choices set the pattern for our response to a calamity. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16: 10).

### **Research Guide**

1. Study the crisis responses of some men of God (Job, Joseph, Caleb, David, Daniel) and of some men who lacked faith (Cain, the ten spies, Judas).
2. Read the chapter titled "Life Insurance" in *Doctrines of the Bible*.