

Message Series: Famous Shipwrecks

Today's Message: "Paul's Famous Shipwreck"



A SouthPointe Message

Further Study

Leading up to the events of Acts 27 and 28, the Apostle Paul had been arrested after preaching the gospel to the people in Jerusalem. After spending some time in prison, he is turned over to a centurion named Julius. They then set sail for Rome so that Paul can appear before Caesar himself to answer the charges. During the voyage, Paul was well treated, but the journey itself was filled with many threats to his life. After visiting several ports and changing ships, the weather begins to worsen. It becomes so dangerous, that the crew and passengers begin to despair for their very lives. The situation only worsens. Finally, they lose all hope of being saved with the ship.

While in the middle of the storm, Paul informs the passengers (Acts 27:21) that they should have listened to him earlier and followed his advice not to sail from Crete. Yet, at the same time, Paul offered hope and encouragement to all on the ship by telling them there was really no need to worry about the present storm because an angel had appeared to him assuring him that there would be no loss of life (Acts 27:22-24). He also added that God would spare his own life so he could appear before Caesar in Rome.

At this point in the account, Paul does a strange and unusual thing after he had averted a scheme by some of the sailors to escape from the ship using some of the lifeboats. Paul encourages everyone to eat and to offer thanksgiving to God in the midst of the storm. The following morning, the anchors are cast off; the ship runs aground and begins to break up. The passengers and crew end up on the Island of Malta where they remain for about three months.

In last week's message, we compared the sinking of the Titanic to America. In the message this week, we will make application of Paul's shipwreck to the daily storms and trials that we all will face at one time or another during our lifetime. While most of us have never been involved with a shipwreck, you have probably encountered some spiritual shipwrecks and stormy seas during the years. All of us faced hardships - some more than others. Unfortunately, many people believe that when you give your life to Christ, there will be only clear skies and smooth sailing ahead for the rest of our lives. That simply is not true. Note what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:25: "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep." Paul was telling his fellow Christians at Corinth; Look! If you think you've got it bad, think of what I have gone through. Whatever you have been through, I've been through more. I know more about shipwrecks than I want to know.

John said in John 16:33: "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye might have peace. In the world ye will have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world". How much clearer can the Word of God be in this matter? Life is tough. Life is not fair. Storms will come and shipwrecks will happen. Paul went on to say: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed: we are perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

As I was preparing for this message, I could not help from thinking about a movie I had seen several years ago entitled "The Perfect Storm". The movie was a true account of a fishing boat called "The Andrea Gail". The crew was fishing off the coast of North Carolina in October of 1991 when they found themselves fighting for their lives when suddenly and unexpectedly, three different storm fronts collided at the same time. Hurricane Grace was formed out of this storm. All lives were lost on the vessel.

More info on the "perfect storm" can be found here:

<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/satellite/satelliteseye/cyclones/pfctstorm91/pfctstorm.html>

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT STORMS AND SHIPWRECKS:

1. Everyone will face storms and shipwrecks in their life time, even if you are doing God's will. They are a natural part of life on this planet. I read a tremendous article by Pastor Greg Laurie recently entitled, "When God's Will Includes Shipwrecks". Greg lost his 32 year old son in an auto accident last July. He was also a member of his church staff.
2. Shipwrecks and storms are not for punishment but for improvement. God's doesn't punish those who are walking according to His will and orderly way. The hardest thing we will ever do in life is try to determine what God is saying to us in the midst of a storm of life. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).
3. Shipwrecks and storms mold and shape us into vessels fit for service to God.
4. Shipwrecks and storms are times of great despair. Note the following verses of Scripture in the text:
 - Verse 13- Calm seas may deceive us into believing everything's alright. The night Titanic went down, the sea was calm.
 - Verses 14-17- Storms can result in disaster. You may feel like your life is out of control.
 - Verses 18-19- Storms cause us to make hard decisions. We may need to take inventory of our lives and discard anything that may be hindering our relationship with God (see also Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:7).
 - Verse 20- Things got so bad that even Luke was ready to give up. The cloud cover was so heavy that the stars and the sun had not been seen for days. All hope for survival was quickly fading. All they felt was despair.
5. Shipwrecks and storms are times of great danger. Storms in life will either make us or break us. They will either drive us to Christ or they will drive us from Christ. Job is a perfect example of a man responding correctly during a storm: "Then Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down on the ground, and worshipped. And said, naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly (Job 1:20-22). Peter was an example of how we should not respond (see Luke 22:31-32; Matthew 26:69-75). Storms will either make you stronger or cause you to crash upon the rocks. Peter was made stronger because of the storms he went through.
6. Shipwrecks and storms are opportunities for great deliverance. The record of Acts 27 reveals that on several occasions, the passengers and crew tried to save themselves. They threw everything overboard, they tried to escape using the lifeboats, and they attempted to use the anchors - all to no avail. All of us need anchors in life, but we must make certain that we are trusting in the right kind of anchors:

ANCHORS TO TRUST

A. Trust the anchor of the Omnipresence of God (Acts 27:23). No matter what is happening around us, God has promised never to leave us or to forsake us. "...and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen"(Matthew 28:20). "...I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). See also John 6:16-21.

B. Trust the anchor of the promises of God (Acts 27:24-25). God gave Paul several promises in the midst of the storm. The angel of the Lord declared that there would be no loss of life and that Paul would later stand before Caesar. "And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:21). One writer has said that there are 8,810 promises in the Bible. 7,487 were promises God

made to man; 991 were person to person promises; 290 were promises man made to God; 29 were made by angels; 9 by the devil; two by evil spirits, and two made by God the Father to the Son. Interestingly, none are found in Titus, and only six are in Ephesians. On the other hand, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel contain more than 1000 each. Psalm 37 is said to be the single greatest promise chapter in the Bible.

C. Trust the anchor of the overruling, overriding providence of God (Acts 27:24). God made it clear to Paul that he would be a better man because of what he was going through. The storm was part of God's will for Paul's life. In other words, as hard as it is for us to comprehend, being in the middle of the storm was the safest place that Paul could be (see James 1:17; Mark 6:45-50; Isaiah 25:4; Psalm 57:1). The amazing thing about this account is the crew of the ship trusted their own abilities to save themselves more than they did the providence of God.

D. Trust the anchor of the performance of God (Acts 27:44). The vivid details of this account makes it clear that God performed exactly what He said He would do. They all survived and Paul later stood before Caesar in Rome.

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOUR STORM AND SHIPWRECK WERE OVER

In Acts 28, after the passengers and crew members had found themselves safe on the Island of Malta, Paul immediately faces another real crisis when he is bitten by a poisonous snake as he was gathering fire wood and placing it on the fire. Why would such a crisis come so quickly after what they had just gone through? Interestingly, this crisis came when Paul was doing something good. The crisis came after saving every soul alive on the ship. All of us need to remember that faithfulness to God is not a shield from storms. We also need to remember that when the end of a storm comes, that doesn't mean clear sailing for the rest of our lives. Let's look at several snakes that may attack us from time to time from our text:

The Snake of Criticism: (verse 4) After Paul was bitten, the people thought he was being punished for something he had done. They also expected him to die (Acts 28:3-4). As Christians, we need to be very careful about offering criticism to others so quickly. Sadly, even the Christian community is not immune from such. People are eager to criticize other churches and even pastors that they do not agree with. When people criticize you, remember they also criticized Moses, Joshua, and even Jesus Christ himself. That's pretty good company. When the snakes of criticism strike, as in Paul's case, God will always provide a way out (Acts 28:5).

The Snake of Cynicism: (verse 6) These friends Paul actually expected him to die immediately. No faith and no trust in God. Maybe you've had people say to you that nothing good will ever come from your life, or you'll never make it, or a multitude of other hurtful words. The fact is, with God, you will make it! He will see you through to victory each and every time.

Tough times never last, but tough people do.