

“LAND HO!”

Acts 27:27-37

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INTRODUCTION

Sounds like a typical winter in Buffalo New York—two weeks without seeing either the sun or the stars! Driven about by the storms of life and heading for a disastrous crash – that’s the way many people live! But just as these sailors, many attempt to solve life’s dilemmas through their own strategies, and not through a careful search of the will of God as found in Scripture and as made known by the Holy Spirit. Trying to solve our problems with human ingenuity often leads to even greater tragedy just as it would have with the sailors on this ship if Paul had not intervened.

Once again we see Paul, the chained prisoner on his way to a trial before the Emperor in Rome, showing more dignity, wisdom, and graciousness than all the freemen surrounding him. So it is with those who live their lives in the will of God and not according to the dictates of the flesh.

This is now the third time that God has used Paul to speak good counsel out of wisdom to the Centurion, the ship’s captain and pilot, the sailors, the passengers, and even to the other prisoners.

- 1) He had advised those in charge not to leave Fair Havens-- his advice had been ignored (10).
- 2) He had attempted to encourage the crew and passengers with the assurance that no-one’s life would be lost and that he would safely arrive in Rome before Caesar (vv. 21-26). This was true because God had sent his angel with a special message; Paul believed God, and knew that the matter would turn out just the way God had said (v. 25).
- 3) Now Paul warns them not to plan an escape route and encourages everyone to eat food so they would have strength for the next day’s challenges (31-36).

In the midst of this amazing maritime account of a storm at sea on Paul’s “fourth missionary journey” Luke, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gives us some wonderful practical points of wisdom for daily Christian living. We will look at these together. One of the key facts about this event is that *Paul never lost his composure even in the midst of the most severe circumstances.*

YOU MUST NOT LOSE YOUR SPIRITUAL BALANCE IN THE MIDST OF LIFE’S TRIALS.

- I. LIFE OUT OF CONTROL IN A DEVASTATING STORM (27:27-30)
 - A. Driven by a Powerful storm and heading for a dramatic crash (27) [*danger of the storm itself*]
 - B. Signs of ruin ahead [*danger of the approaching land—27b-28*]
 - C. Governed by fear (29; normally finding solid ground after being adrift at sea would be a welcome thing – but not when that involves a violent crash on rocks) [*the danger of fear*]
 - D. Selfish and deceptive behavior – seeking to save one’s own skin and ignoring the needs of others (30). [*the danger of human depravity*]

- II. A LIFE UNDER CONTROL DUE TO THE INDWELLING PRESENCE OF CHRIST (31-37)
- A. Thinking of the needs of others will save everyone's life-- including their own (31). Selfishness is the ultimate destruction of everyone. [*Note Paul's only use of "salvation" for physical safety and well-being*]
- B. Reacting to good counsel with carelessness—cutting away the ropes that held the small boat that could have been used for rescue (32)
- C. Encouraging others to take food and build up their strength (33-34)
- *Sometimes the most spiritual advice is practical advice on taking care of your own health.*
 - You can only burn the candle at both ends until the candle is gone!
 - Also notice that Paul was concerned for the happiness and well-being even of the unsaved.
 - God cares for his creatures and gives them an opportunity to come to him for salvation.
 - Jesus tells His children that the hairs on their head are all numbered (Mt. 10:30).
- D. Maintaining spiritual devotion even in the midst of the heathen (35-36)
1. Paul led by example – he took bread and ate; then others followed his example.
 2. Paul was unashamed and un-intimidated to pray openly in the presence of the ungodly.
 3. Paul was not celebrating the Lord's Supper here!
 4. Paul likely hoped that emotional and physical strengthening might eventually lead to the spiritual conversion of this ungodly and motley crew.
 - Do you subordinate **every normal earthly activity and behavior** to the higher goal of bringing people under the sound of the gospel and to the experience of salvation in Jesus Christ?
 - Can you picture this scene with Paul, chains still attached, in the midst of a horrific storm, calmly lifting up his hands to heaven and offering praise and thanksgiving?
 - This scene likely imprinted an indelible image in the minds of all aboard that ship that night; it was something they probably never forgot.
 - Who knows whether God used it with some of them to bring eternal salvation?
- E. God, Luke, and Paul knew the number of those on that ship (37). Do we have that kind of care and knowledge?

CONCLUSION

When we look beneath the surface we see some amazing spiritual applications in this brief passage of storm and shipwreck. I challenge you to look below the surface of the storms in your life and discern the spiritual realities and see what God really intends to accomplish through your problems in both your life and in the lives of others around you. **It is not about you!** It is about God, and about the people whom God has given to you for ministry.

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