

“WHEN YOUR VISION BECOMES OBSCURED”

Text: Acts 27:14 & 20

Subject: God Has It All In Control (or simply) The Voyage That Speaks To Us Today

Key Verse: “All hope that we should be saved was then taken away.” (v. 20)

INTRODUCTION

1. The term “The Voyage of Life” is an expression drawn from ordinary life today.
2. It refers to the analogy between the course of someone’s life and the course of a ship.
3. It’s a picture of our lives (as well as a boat) that travels to a destination.
4. It’s a revelation of real life with its good intentions, smooth beginnings and unknown dangers. (The voyage talks to us today)

Some Questions With Answers

- Why was Paul on a boat in the middle of the storm?
- How does the storm rob us of perspective and faith in the night seasons?
- What’s the danger of verse 20 when hope is taken away?
- What’s the encouraging word when my plans are changed unexpectedly?

I. The Purpose Of The Voyage (v. 1-13)

Verse 1 declares, “*And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus’ band.*”

Question: Why was Paul being transported to Rome as a prisoner?

Answer: Because Paul had stood before Agrippa, shared his testimony and calling and had appealed to have an audience with Caesar.

Fact: Festus determines the time is now to send Paul to appear before Caesar.

Fact: Festus and Agrippa place Paul in the hands of Julius (v. 1) to be taken prisoner to Rome.

Fact: And two purposes are put in gear and go full speed ahead.

1. Paul had been accused, arrested and taken prisoner for preaching the gospel.
 - He was placed under the authority of Julius.
 - He was forced on a ship to sail west for Rome.
2. Paul was also a servant of God and God had a purpose for Paul (as He does for you).
 - In Acts 19:21, Paul said “***I must see Rome.***”
 - In Acts 23:11, the Lord told Paul, “***You must bear witness also at Rome.***”

(In other words)

- Paul was on a boat (a prisoner) because Festus thinks he is in charge, but
- Paul was on a boat (a prisoner) because God is always in charge of those in charge over you.

(In other words)

- The purpose of man is to get rid of Paul the trouble-making preacher.

- But the purpose of God is to use Paul's trouble to fulfill the will of God in Paul's life.

(Paul has no idea that...)

- The arrest, the Roman and Jewish trials, the confinement as a prisoner, a storm, a shipwreck and a snake bite would be used of the Lord to fulfill God's plan!

What a discovery here for us all:

1. That man proposes – but God disposes!
2. That God transforms the plans of man, to suit the plan of God.
3. That God will use the plans of men (and reverse them to be used for His glory.)
4. That no man can keep you from God's ultimate plan, when your life is in His hands.

(Notice Acts V.1) "...They delivered Paul and certain other prisoners."

- The Greek word for "other" means "others of a different kind."
- Paul was going to Rome to stand trial.
- But these "other prisoners" were going to Rome to die.
- And, in the mercy of God, Paul is taken on board with them. **(Why?)**
 1. So that Paul can tell them how to die and go to heaven.
 2. To reveal to us how God will go to any length to save one soul.

(Never forget it)

That God has a divine purpose in your dents, detours, delays and disappointments.

(What a voyage)

1. Paul leaves Caesarea for Sidon (80 miles away) in v. 3.
2. In vs. 4 & 5, Paul goes from Sidon to Myra.
3. At Myra, Julius put Paul and the others on board a large grain ship from Egypt.
4. Strong winds hindered progress and the ship goes from Myra to Cnidus, south to Crete and in v, 8, struggles into Fair Havens.
5. In v. 10, Paul warns Julius not to set sail but to winter at Fair Havens.
6. Paul's counsel is rejected and the boat sets sail for the port of Phoenix (60 miles away).
7. And in v. 13, it looks like Paul was wrong as "the south wind blows softly." (Remember, God has a purpose in your voyage and change of directions.)

II. The Predicament Of The Voyage (vs. 14-20)

Question: What happens in the midst of the deceptive calm?

Answer: *"But not long after, there arose against it a tempestuous wind."* (v. 14)

Fact: Just when all seemed well, a north easterner (a typhoon) blows in.

Fact: God documents it well to teach us some valuable lessons in the journey.
(It's a storm that was devastating in its affect.)

1. In v. 17, the crew wrapped ropes around the hull so the boat wouldn't come apart.
2. In v. 18, the crew threw the grain overboard to lighten the ship.
3. In v. 19, the crew threw off the tackling (or the furniture and sailing equipment).
4. In v. 20, no sun or stars appeared (which were used to direct the ship because there were no compasses or radar in Paul's day.)

5. The boat was driven over 500 miles off course (ending up in the Adrian Sea.)

(And it is impossible to determine their position.)

Question: What can happen to the heart in times like these?

Question: What's the human emotion that takes over when there is no sun or stars?

(V. 20 explains it all.)

*"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.**"*

- This describes the heart of many people!
- This describes the result of strong winds against your soul.

(Why did the storm obscure the vision?)

1. The storm was **unexpected**.

- Have you encountered something unexpected that has toppled your enthusiasm?

2. The storm was **course-changing**

- Have any of your plans been changed and superseded by a higher plan?

3. The storm was **exhausting**

(The lifeboat was hoisted on deck, the ropes wrapped around the boat, tackle thrown overboard and 276 people are left exhausted.)

- Is there something going on in your life that has left you exhausted and drained?

4. The storm was **an opportunity to make a choice**.

- Become a **victim** (because of anger, bitterness and outrage toward God) or,
- Become a **victor** (because of faith in the integrity of a holy and intelligent God).

(I hear your heart speaking.)

- "I had plans to get to a certain place."
- "I've been driven off course by things outside of my control."
- "The storm has eroded my hope and joy for my tomorrows."
- "The unexpected has thrown me for a loop, and I can't see beyond the immediate."

(God has a word for you...I call it...)

III. The Promise Of the Voyage (vs. 21-26)

Question: What's the word from the Lord to Paul, to the 276 on board and to your heart?

(It's vs. 22-26)

(v. 22) *"Be of good cheer, no one will be lost."*

(v. 23) *"There stood by me this night the angel of God."*

(v. 24) *"Fear not, you must get to where you are going (before Caesar)."*

(v. 25) *"Be of good cheer, for I believe God."*

(v. 26) *"We must end up on a certain island."*

Question: Why this word of hope and encouragement from God?

Answer: Because violent winds can affect our thinking.

1. They can obscure our vision for the future.
2. They can topple our world.
3. They can reduce us down to hopelessness.
4. They can do what they did to Paul's crewmen:
 - In v. 18, the crew "threw off the cargo". **(In other words)**
 - Storms can cause you to forget why you're on board in the first place.
 - They can cause you to "throw off" your tomorrows because of immediate pressures today.
 - They can cause you to quit, resign and bail out when you're not in control.

(But God has a word for you)

1. The darker the night, the brighter the light will shine.
2. Believe the promise that you hear, not the clouds that you see.
3. Don't lose sight of the destination, or you'll "throw off" the very purpose that God is after to accomplish.
4. Let patience have her perfect work, and only "throw off" the things that hinder you I the journey!

IV. The Perfection Of The Voyage (vs. 27,28)

Question: Is it worth it to practice James 1:4?

"Let patience have her perfect work." (Or do not run from difficulty.)

Answer: Because Paul's advice was followed in Acts 27:31 "Don't jump ship, but stay on board here."

(v. 44 was fulfilled)" *And they all escaped safe to land."*

Question: What good can come out of a terrible storm in my life?

Answer: The 276 on board were blown onto an island called Melita. (Acts 28:1)

(What's the result of this storm in Chapter 28?)

1. Paul was miraculously spared when bitten by a poisonous snake. (v. 5)
2. The father of Publius was healed when Paul prayed for him. (v. 8)
3. Many others were touched by God in v. 9.

(In other words)

1. Something is going on in your life today, **but God is also doing something else!**
2. When God blesses you, **He never has only you in mind.**
3. God will do everything possible to get our attention (He goes to great lengths) so that we will know beyond doubt that we are saved.
4. When your vision is obscured, that's the very time to understand that God has something good in store if you'll stay on board and believe in the Word of the Lord!!!

Altar Call

Amen
Bill Kirk