

Who is at the Helm of your Vessel?

Acts 27: 9-25

We have read a familiar portion of Scripture concerning Paul's trip to Rome. He has appealed unto Caesar and is making his way by ship to stand trial in Rome. We can tell by the writing that Luke is making the journey with Paul, but apart from them, there are likely no other believers on the ship. The lives and decisions of those who were in charge offer insight and benefit to those of us who are navigating the sea of life. It is apparent that Paul warned them of the dangers of this voyage at that particular time, but they would not heed his words. They were determined to make the voyage as they had planned.

As I look upon the lives of individuals today, I see the same determination of those who choose to journey through life, making their own way and disregarding the warnings that they encounter. There are believers who are on a journey that will end in defeat and despair if they don't change their course. I trust that the lessons revealed in the text will help us as we travel this journey of life. The only way to ensure a safe arrival is to have the Captain in charge of the vessel. I want to examine the details of the journey as we consider: [Who is at the Helm of your Vessel?](#)

I. The Problems with the Journey (9-12) – Here we see some early warning signs that this journey would be one of great difficulty. It was:

A. A Delayed Journey (9a) – [Now when much time was now spent.](#) Luke reveals to us the journey had been delayed. They missed their opportunity for sailing in fair weather. The delay would be very costly.

- There is a great lesson to be learned as we navigate the sea of life: timing is essential! We must be close enough to the Lord to discern His will for our lives. There are times when we are unsure what to do. If we have no word from the Lord then we must continue the course He has called us to until we get direction otherwise. Many times folks get ahead of God and move before it is time. If you are unsure, keep doing what you've been doing until you hear from the Lord.
- On the other hand, when you know God has spoken and it is time to move, go! Many are missing what the Lord has for them because they are unwilling to move as God leads. Folks want to delay their response to the call of God. If He has confirmed it in your heart, it is time to get busy!

B. A Dangerous Journey (9) – [Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past...](#) Because of their delay, the season for safe travel had passed. They missed their opportunity and now the journey would be dangerous. The word

dangerous means “*prone to fall.*” This trip was in peril from the start. It was destined for trouble from the beginning.

- That is usually what happens when we delay or refuse to heed the voice of God. Many are traveling on a perilous journey. They are outside the will of God, choosing to direct their own course. You are always on dangerous ground when you are walking contrary to the will of God.

C. A Defiant Journey (10-12) – It is clear they refused to listen to godly counsel. They were determined to set sail regardless of the cost. I want to consider a couple of aspects regarding their defiance. Notice:

1. The Admonition (10) – Paul warned that a journey at this time was ill advised. He was certain the time for safe travel had passed. It would be dangerous for the ship as well as all who traveled to set sail. They would have done well to have listened to the man of God. A church that has a pastor is blessed to have a man of God to lead them and give godly counsel. The church would do well to listen to the man of God.

2. The Arrogance (11-12) – These refused to heed the words of Paul. They were determined to travel regardless of the dangers involved. They thought they knew better than Paul. Who was he to offer them counsel?

- That same arrogant and rebellious attitude is prevalent in our day. Many who attend the house of God will not listen to the man of God. They refuse to admit he has anything of value to offer. Who is he to tell me how to live? I’ll tell you, he is God’s man. He has been called of God and ordained to lead you in the ways of the Lord! Many have found themselves in trouble because they refused to listen to the man of God.

II. The Peril of the Journey (13-20)

A. The Deception (13) – These fellows thought they had it all figured out. They had plotted their course and **supposed that they had obtained their purpose**. They were unconcerned about the dangers involved and were determined to set their own course regardless of the consequences. They likely believed the south wind was an indication of good travel. The problem was that they ignored the facts and the reason associated with traveling during that particular season.

- Many today find themselves deceived as they journey through life. They ignore the warning signs and rush headlong into a dangerous situation. They give no thought to the will of God in their lives and simply assume that if everyone else is doing it then it must be all right. Folks are always looking for a “sign” to point them in the right direction, but ignore the Word of God. We had better pray and seek the Lord concerning His will for our lives.

B. The Direction (15) – It didn’t take long for things to get out of hand. Very soon they found themselves in a situation beyond their control. The winds began to blow contrary and they were at the mercy of the sea. Now rather than charting their own course, they were driven by the winds.

- It is dangerous to take life’s journey into your own hands, charting your own course. If you aren’t careful you will find yourself in a situation beyond your control. You will find yourself driven by the winds of this life rather than the will of God. Many have found themselves in that situation.
- Sin will take you farther than you wanted to go; it will keep you longer than you intended to stay, and cost you more than you expected to pay. Countless people never intended for things to get so out of hand. It started with just one drink, just one word to a co-worker, just one time of missing a service, and before they even realized, they were in over their heads. We had better make sure the Lord is at the helm of our vessel or we will be at the mercy of the world, driven where sin leads!

C. The Damage (16-19) – Things soon got desperate. The storm continued to get worse and they had to make some hard decisions. They were doing all they could just to keep the vessel together and afloat. It wasn’t long until they were throwing things overboard.

- This is what usually happens when we choose to chart our own course. Things quickly get out of hand and people begin to make rash decisions. They begin to try everything imaginable just to hold life together. The winds of adversity are beating against them and it seems as if life itself is falling apart around them. Before you know it they begin to throw things overboard, and usually it is the things that they need the most.
- Often when folks get in trouble they distance themselves from the things they need most. They will abandon relationships they desperately need. They will abandon the house of God and the people of God. They will forsake reading their Bibles and praying. Before long, they are no longer in fellowship with the Lord. In times of storms we need those things close by instead of throwing them overboard.

D. The Despair (20) – The situation around them continued to deteriorate. There was no sun to shine by day or moon and stars at night. The storm was unrelenting. Every day they woke to the same difficulty. Those onboard felt as if all hope was lost. They felt they would die in the storm.

- Sin and rebellion are never pretty. It always leads to despair. Many today have found themselves in a hopeless situation. Satan never reveals the other side of the coin. He never shows the devastation associated with sin. When we choose to make the journey our own way, according to our desires, we can count on desperation.
- Sin always brings consequences. It is possible to find forgiveness in the Lord, but many times the consequences of our choices remain. Many are in a hopeless situation because they chose to chart their own course. Please don't continue on a course that will only lead to despair. Turn to the Lord and seek Him before it is too late.

III. The Providence in the Journey (21-25) – Things were bad, but all hope wasn't lost as it appeared. God was in control of their situation. He fully intended for Paul to make it to Rome so that he might share the gospel. You may feel as if hope is lost, but there is hope in the Lord. He is in control of your situation. You may be there because of bad decisions, but the Lord will help you if you will turn to Him. Notice Paul's response to the storm.

A. His Abstinence (21) – Paul had spent much time alone with God during this difficult storm. The word **abstinence** has the idea of "*abstinence from food.*" We get the idea that Paul had spent his time in fasting and prayer. Rather than focusing on the storm and pouting about his dire situation, Paul chose to get in touch with the Lord.

- That is always the best approach when we find ourselves away from God and on a course contrary to His will. The first thing we need to do is get ourselves before the Lord in prayer and supplication. There is help for the believer, but we must seek the Lord to receive it.
- Why is it that we have such power available to us and yet many times we fail to use it? God knows where we are in the journey and He wants to help us, but we must admit our need and seek Him.

B. His Association (23) – God sent an angel to minister to Paul in his time of need. He was reminded to whom he belonged and whom it was he served. Paul realized he had a relationship with the Lord that a storm could not hinder. He may have faced adversity, but he wasn't forsaken.

- If we are saved, we would do well to be reminded to whom we belong and whom it is we serve. I may be faced with a storm in life, and it may be a storm I have brought upon myself, but I belong to God. I am His and He has never forsaken me. There is hope for the child of God!

C. His Assurance (24-25) – God assured Paul he would survive the storm. He was destined to make it to Rome. The storm was still raging, but Paul knew One who was bigger than the storm. Paul determined in his heart to believe God and trust in Him. He found comfort in the midst of the storm.

- You may be in the midst of a difficult storm right now. Your life may be headed in a direction contrary to God's will, but if you belong to Him hope remains. The children of God are going to make it home. Storms will come our way, but we are secure in Jesus. I don't know about you, but I am going to believe God and trust in Him. He is greater than any storm I may face. He has the ability to either calm the storm or calm me in the midst of the storm. If we could see Him as He is, we would find peace and refuge.

Conclusion: Is Jesus at the helm of your vessel? Are you following His direction or have you chosen to chart your own course? Going contrary to the will of God is never a good decision. The Lord stands ready to restore you, but you must seek Him. If you are going your own way, things will soon get out of hand if they haven't already.

If you are not part of the family of God, you are charting your own course. As of yet you have failed to admit your need for the Lord or His guidance in your life. He stands ready to save and direct your life as well. Why not come to the Lord and receive the peace that only He can give?