

“CLAIM THIS PROMISE WHEN YOUR SHIP IS SINKING”

TEXT: Acts 27:22-25

INTRO: A. 70+ miles from shore off Cape May, 30 ft. waves, in a 53 ft. boat, darkness, powerful wind and waves battering us – 8 fishermen (5 preachers!) and 2 crew members. It was very quiet as we huddled inside the cramped cabin, except for a large ice-filled chest sliding and slamming back and forth across the deck, the creaking of the hull as it was first lifted high on the crest of the wave and then slammed down into the valley, the whining of the engines as the props cleared the water...Nearby another ship would sink. It seemed an eternity but our ordeal only lasted a few hours.

B. In our text for 14 long days and nights, the wind howled, the waves crashed, the chilling rain beat the bodies of the 276 passengers, no doubt fearful and huddled together into small groups; even the seasoned sailors and captain were helpless and probably hopeless. Day after long day they were brutally battered...silence prevailed, hope of survival was fading...then Paul breaks the silence.

TRANS: Paul’s words of hope shone like a lighthouse from an otherwise dark coastline. They still give hope to those whose ship seems to be sinking...

I. GOD ISN’T FINISHED WITH US YET: v.24

ILLUS: You say: “How do you know?” Because we are still here!

A. An Unfinished Ministry:

1. Paul was given a promise by God that he would stand “before Caesar.”
2. Paul knew he could safely trust in God’s promise as long as he stayed with in God’s will.

ILLUS: Every believer is immortal as long as God hasn’t finished with him or her and they stay with in His will. Are YOU in His will? Has He given you a ministry? It may not be “full time service” – it could be just raising your family! Teaching your S.S. class. Captaining your bus route... Your ship may go down, but you won’t go down with it! You can only fall into the protection of the everlasting arms of God’s tender love. Many live as prodigals and only remember God in times of extreme circumstances, but it was not desperation that caused Paul to pray, it was total dependence upon his heavenly Father.

B. Unfinished Lives:

1. We don’t have a record of the others getting saved, but I believe there is sufficient evidence that they may have trusted Paul’s Savior.
2. In any event they were given another chance and an opportunity to trust Him.

ILLUS: It is beneficial for unsaved people to “hang out” with God’s people! Their lives were spared because of Paul and Luke. (Cf. I Cor. 7:13-16)

Scripture teaches that our lives have an outer limit set by God, beyond which we cannot live, but that we can set the inner limit by stupid things we do (drugs, booze, etc.), sins we commit, etc.

II. GOD’S PROMISES SHINE IN THE DARKNESS: v.25

A. A Beacon of Hope:

1. Talk about good news! Paul’s annmt. of God’s promise raised the hopes of everyone on board – at least those who believed that Paul wasn’t lying.
2. Note the irony in Paul’s initial statement of “I told you so” in v.21.
 - a. Though he doesn’t “rub their noses in it” – he basically is asking “Have you had enough yet...will you trust me now?”
 - b. While the others were despairing, Paul was praying.
 - c. Paul believed that God even held the wind and waves in His hand and that even if the ship did sink, God could still save whomever He pleased.

ILLUS: Every believer needs to trust his heavenly Father and be assured that He is concerned about the details of his life! Not only concerned about those details, but in control of them!

B. A Haven of Rest:

1. After being on the restless sea, there is nothing like the feeling of stability the dry land can instantly give.
2. So it is with the promises of God; claiming His promises provide stability.
3. The world is like the restless sea and though the believer may be on the same sinking ship, he has a resource that the unsaved don’t have, that provide stability they cannot otherwise know.

III. GOD’S PURPOSES MUST BE FULFILLED: v.24a,26

A. The Completion of an Unfinished Journey:

1. Note that there are steps along the plan of God for each believer's life and though it may appear that things are going awry, that step too may be necessary.
2. It seemed that Paul was taking a very circuitous route to get to Rome, but he was nonetheless destined to finish his journey. Cf. v.11-14, v.16
3. When Paul finally arrives in Rome he is put under house arrest for 2 yrs.
 - a. Remember that Paul had appealed to Caesar previously.
 - b. The entire Roman Govt. was put on hold so Paul could get to Rome!
 - c. God's plan for his servant would be fulfilled regardless of the cost to the world!

B. A Temporary Port in a Storm:

1. An old Scottish woman said: "If you thatch your house in the summer, you need not fear in the winter."
2. There is a great difference between trust and terror.
 - a. All on board, except Paul and Luke, became terrified and had no resource for help or guidance.
 - b. He who often visits the mercy seat can find the way there even in the dark.
 - c. Paul knew that circumstances could never change the compassion of God for His servant.
 - d. This 3 month "detour" to the island of Melita resulted in miracles and in many trusting the Lord.

IV. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE SAFE and SECURE: v.24-25

A. Within His Will:

1. God had revealed His will to Paul and Paul trusted God!
2. Paul simply stayed where he belonged and God was obliged to care for him.

B. Doing His Work:

1. Paul found that even in the midst of being arrested, being a prisoner, on board a ship that was doomed, and in the middle of a horrendous storm, that he could continue to do the work God called him to.
2. In fact the entire episode was only part of a greater plan to reach people.

ILLUS: Every saint is immortal while in the center of God's will and doing His work!

CONCL: "WHEN YOUR SHIP IS SINKING, CLAIM THIS PROMISE!" Never give up on God even when things are looking bleak and even hopeless!