

097 - Safe in a Shipwreck - Acts 27:1-28:10 - 2013-12-22

Call to Worship: Psalm 107:21-22

Scripture Reading: Psalm 107:23-32

Sermon: "Safe in a Shipwreck" Acts 27:1-28:10

Benediction: Psalm 107:1

The servant of Jesus Christ is safe even in a shipwreck!

I. The Servant of Jesus Christ is safe even if unjustly under arrest by a corrupt government (1-2)

A. Remember Paul is in Roman custody because while he innocently was worshiping in the temple, a murderous crowd attacked him; the Roman government arrested him, and despite never finding he had done anything wrong, kept him in chains as a criminal for years. He could not receive justice from first one Roman governor, then another, so he finally appealed to be tried before the emperor in Rome.

B. One of the threats we face in America in this generation is that we will be considered enemies of the officers of a corrupt government simply because we call sin "sin." Those radicals who don't want us to call evil deeds for what they are want the government to arrest us as troublemakers.

C. As such threats loom, and in case they ever become reality, let us observe that even the government, armed with the sword, cannot take us out of our place of safety. We are safe in the arms of Jesus even if unjustly under arrest by a corrupt government.

II. The Servant of Jesus Christ is safe even if the winds are against him (4, 7-8)

A. See how in Paul's journey, he and his party were trying to sail west, but the winds were against them. They made only slow progress with great difficulty.

B. Ever since we sinned in Adam and Eve, this has been the way of things for the human race.

1. We plant corn, and weeds come up with the corn. Then the weather isn't just right for its growth. We work hard for months trying to get that corn to grow.

2. Or we have a car, but the engine breaks down. We go to replace the broken part, but the bolts are rusted on. When we apply more torque, the bolt head breaks off.

3. We go to cook or bake in the kitchen. The cake falls; the gravy is lumpy; the meat is tough

4. A man tries to find a good job or start a profitable business; everything seems against him.

5. A woman conceives a child; there is trouble with the pregnancy; there are complications with the birth; the child has trouble nursing; there is some birth defect

C. As we experience this in all areas of life, let us meditate on this wonderful truth---we are loved by the great love of God in Christ Jesus; we are safe in His care even if the winds are against us

III. The Servant of Jesus Christ is safe even when others ignore wise caution (9-12)

A. This was not Paul's first journey in the treacherous waters of the Mediterranean Sea. He was a very experienced traveler. By the time of this story, as he writes in 2 Corinthians 11:25, he had already been shipwrecked three times; one of those times, he had been afloat in the sea for a whole night and day; he knew very well that it was too late in the year to attempt this sea journey; he gave wise words of caution to the men in charge of the ship, but his wise words were overruled

B. We are surrounded by other people in this life. Their actions affect us. If they are careless or wreckless, they can expose us to the consequences with them.

C. No matter what the foolish do around us, or even if wise men make a foolish decision, we are safe with the Lord, who is all-wise.

IV. The Servant of Jesus Christ is Safe despite being tempest-tossed (14-19)

A. At this point in Paul's journey, a very severe storm blew in. The crew of the ship had to give up control of the ship and be tossed by the storm and blown along at the mercy of the winds.

B. We sometimes find this in our own lives . . .

C. But understand that storms ultimately are of God's making, and serve His purposes. He can calm them whenever He wants to calm them. You are safe in the Lord Jesus who calms the waves.

V. The Servant of Jesus Christ is Safe despite all earthly reasons for hope being gone (20)

A. See how the sailors recognized there was not reasonable hope for their deliverance. Things were too bad.

B. We find ourselves faced with this sometimes.

C. When there is not visible reason to hope, we walk by faith, not by sight. We are safe with the Lord Jesus even when all earthly hopes are gone.

VI. Why so safe? We are safe because God is sovereign (23-25)

A. Look what God can do; in a terrible storm at sea, God has the power to determine who will live and who will die (24); of course, He also has the power to do anything He wills to do

B. Look what our standing is with God, we who trust in Him and serve Him---we belong to Him (23)

C. Whatever happens to us will be just as God has decreed it to be; whatever happens will not harm us ultimately. The forces of nature and the forces of men and the forces of Satan may hurt our bodies for a time, but once they have done that, they can do no more!

But in the Lord Jesus Christ we have eternal life; we have a sure hope of the resurrection of the body on the glorious day when He returns. He has purposed to save us, and He is sovereign over the whole universe. Therefore we are safe!

VII. The Servant of Jesus Christ is safe even when our shipmates are unfaithful (30)

A. Paul was on the ship with the ship's crew; Paul depended on them to work the ship; their work was especially needed during the coming events; but they were unfaithful; they intended to leave their responsibilities; this would be the death of the other people on the ship; but they didn't care much about that; they pretended they were faithful even while planning their desertion

B. We go through this life with people upon whom we depend---family members; co-workers; fellow church members. Being sinners, some of them desert us even while pretending to be faithful. This is a hard thing; it can be very painful for us when it happens. The pain of their unfaithfulness can last the whole lifetime.

C. But when we experience this unfaithfulness from our shipmates, let us consider the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are safe in His company even when all other companions have left us.

VIII. The Servant of Jesus Christ is safe even when his best efforts are not working (38-41a)

A. In this episode, the sailors and the others on the ship tried everything they could to save the ship from damage and destruction, but none of their efforts worked; the ship was destroyed

1. they threw everything they could overboard---finally even their food---to make the ship as light as possible (38)

2. they made plans to run the ship onto some safe spot (39)

3. they raise the sail and steered with the rudder (40)

4. all this effort did not produce the desired effect; all the things they tried failed

B. Now understand, if you do not already, that many times our failures are because we have not really tried; we made some half-hearted attempts at something, and it very understandably did not work; what I'm saying here is not at all intended to give anyone an excuse for laziness, for being slack in his work; do not use this doctrine for that purpose!

Yet we need to understand that sometimes in this life; perhaps many times, we try everything there is to try, and we work hard, but what we are trying just doesn't work

C. So in reading this story, take this truth to heart---you certainly are to work for the Lord with all your heart; but your security with God does not depend on the success of your efforts; God grants success when it suits His purposes, and ordains failure when that suits His purposes; whether your plans succeed or whether they fail, the Lord plans to take you to glory, and His plans never fail

IX. The Servant of Jesus Christ is safe even if he is stuck (41b)

A. The prow of Paul's ship stuck fast on the bottom of this shallow place in the sea; the ship was riding high, being empty of cargo, but the water was very shallow there; the sail was up, and the wind was blowing, but the sail could not propel the ship powerfully

enough to move it; Paul and his ship were stuck fast

B. There are numerous ways in which the believer in Christ can be stuck in this life; an example that came to mind is the case of our dear friend Katy Richardson, a member of one of the other churches in our association; she is a brilliant violinist; she majored in music in college, but the last year developed a very painful condition in her arm; whenever she played very long, the arm would become severely painful; the doctors could show her what was wrong, but could offer not relief other than recommending she not do the motion that aggravated the joint. So she couldn't practice to get ready for the required senior recital. For years she was stuck like that!

C. If you are stuck, consider that the Lord Jesus Christ knows you are stuck. You are his, and He is yours. He has you stuck for His purposes; He will leave you stuck as long as is perfect, and will un-stick you at the perfect time, however long from now that may be, whether minutes or years. You are perfectly safe in His loving arms even if presently you are stuck in the mud!

X. The Servant of Jesus Christ is safe even if his ship is being broken to pieces (41c)

A. While the front end of Paul's ship was stuck fast, the rear part, the stern, was exposed to the waves, and was being broken apart by their violence.

B. This is what life can feel like to us at certain times. Normally you are pushed along by the waves---the cause your ship to roll, but not to sink. Hard times, difficult providences have an effect on you, but you are able to bail out the water and keep sailing.

Sometimes, though, it seems that you are going to pieces. This can happen regarding the health of the body. For a long while, sicknesses, arthritis, old injuries, etc., rock you some, but you are able to recover. Eventually, though, a time comes when there's no relief from the battering of the waves. You can't ride on top of the waves anymore---they are swamping you, breaking you up, sinking you. Your cancer went into remission once, but now it is back with a vengeance; other broken bones have healed, but this time you seem to be getting worse rather than better. In the case of my father, he had fought with colon cancer; through medical treatment, the colon cancer was gone. But then melanoma got loose in his body, and it was all over. His body was reduced from relative health to the point of death in just several days.

C. Consider this, dear ones---no matter what kind of beating your ship receives from the waves; your safety ultimately does not depend on that ship, whether that ship is your company, your house, your family, or your own body. Your safety depends on this Lord Jesus Christ. He has overcome death and has victory over the grave. Let the waves roar and do their worst to your ship. You are safe in the Lord Jesus. He is preparing a place for you in the Father's house. When your ship has finally broken up completely, your place there will be ready and waiting for you to move in.

XI. The Servant of Jesus Christ is Safe despite unjust plots against us (42)

A. As if Paul did not have enough trouble, the soldiers on board the sinking ship hatched a plot to kill all the prisoners. I've heard that it was death for a Roman soldier to lose any prisoners entrusted to him. I suppose that was their motivation. Here Paul was in

custody, despite being found innocent of any wrong-doing. Now he will be killed to stop him escaping custody!

B. Certainly this is typical of the Christian experience during this life. We go through life, with the Spirit of the Lord inside us teaching us to be innocent and harmless as doves.

As much as it is in our power, we live at peace with everyone. Then, for some self-serving purpose, those who should be at peace with us plot to do us harm.

C. So, consider that no matter what people hatch plots against us, and no matter what those plots are, ultimately those people and those plots are not a threat to us. We are safe from them all in the care of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## XII. The servant of Jesus Christ is safe even in the sea (44)

A. At the end of this whole ordeal at sea, Paul and his shipmates finally had to abandon their doomed ship and jump into the sea; some swam, others held onto boards and paddled.

B. We try all we can not to be in this position in life. But sometimes we find ourselves unemployed; homeless; bankrupt; alone. Sometimes we have no shelter at all from the rages of the sea, and find ourselves just swimming, trying to keep the head above water, while our strength fades from exhaustion. Or maybe we have the tiniest bit of help, but really it is nothing more than a small scrap to hold onto.

C. But understand and take courage---when all has failed you, when you have nothing left to hold onto, the Lord has hold of you. When you have no strength left to swim, He is your strength. You are safe with Him even when struggling in the sea.