

## How God Brings His Promises to Pass

Acts 27:27-44; John 6:39

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God uses remarkable and vastly different means to bring His promises to pass in the lives of His people.

The Lord saved **Noah** from a universal flood by means of him building a huge ship that took over 100 years to complete. He delivered **Gideon** by whittling down his army to 300 men with weapons of pitchers, torches, and trumpets. He rescued **Israel and Judah** at times by means of warring against their enemy and at other times by prayer, fasting, and singing of psalms. He preserved **Daniel** by closing the mouths of the lions. Jesus healed **the deaf and mute man** by putting his fingers in the deaf man's ears and by spitting on the tongue of the same man. He waited to go to **Lazarus** until after sick Lazarus had died so that He might raise him from the dead. He sent **His disciples** into a vicious storm on the Sea of Galilee that He might calm the winds and the waves. And He delivered **many of His saints** out of the jaws of their enemies by way of their death into the glorious presence of God in heaven (Hebrews 11:36-38).

Dear ones, God has promised you who trust alone in Jesus that you will reach the other side of whatever you are facing—you will be rescued by the Lord now or later, in this life or in the life to come. The enemies that seek to destroy you will not be the victors, but will be defeated in each and every case. You may not have smooth sailing, but God has promised you, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

Likewise, God promised Paul that all 276 souls on that ship that was near destruction would all be preserved; and yet the means God used to realize that promise were not pleasant, comfortable, or easy, but rather dangerous, painstaking, and slow in coming to pass.

The main points from our text are these: (1) The Means God Used to Keep His Promise (Acts 27:27-43); (2) God's Promise Is Always Realized (Acts 27:44).

### I. The Means God Used to Keep His Promise (Acts 27:27-43).

A. In the midst of the typhoon that threatened to destroy Paul, Luke, Aristarchus, and all who were on that prisoner ship that was headed for Rome, God sent His angel to deliver a promise to Paul in Acts 27:22-26. This was a specific divine promise made to Paul that had a specific end in sight—preservation of all who were aboard that ship. It was that promise that dispelled the hopelessness that even attacked Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus (Acts 27:20). Without God's promise of help and deliverance, there is no reason to hope. But with God's promise, there is every reason to hope and not with a worldly hope that wishes upon a star, but with a biblical hope that is certain (Psalm 23:1,4).

B. What the Holy Spirit would teach us from our text today is that though God determined the end of His promise to rescue all who were on that ship, God also determined all the means (or ways) that He would use to bring that promise to pass. In other words, God not only ordains the WHAT, He also ordains the HOW to get to the WHAT. God not only ordained that David slay Goliath, but also ordained that he slay the giant with a small stone without sword, spear, or armor hurled to an uncovered place in Goliath's helmet (that God might receive the glory). Look with me today at how many ways death might have come to one or more of those on that ship, and how the Lord preserved them to bring about the realization of His promise that not one person would be lost.

#### 1. The storm might have violently driven the ship upon rocks and crushed them all (Acts

**27:27-29).** It had been two weeks since they embarked from the safety of Fair Havens to set sail (contrary to the advice of Paul) for Phenice (about 35 miles northwest of Fair Havens on the Island of Crete). Last Lord's Day we saw all of the steps that were taken to preserve the ship as it was driven by this enormous and vicious typhoon (Euroclydon). The crew knew they were now drawing near to land, but how did they know this when it was midnight and there was no visible moon to shed light on the situation? They could hear the crashing of waves against the rocks of an approaching shore line. They measured the depth with a rope and lead weight to find out that they were 20 fathoms (120 feet) deep, and then shortly thereafter they measured once again and found they were 15 fathoms (90 feet) deep. They immediately cast four anchors out of the stern (back part of the ship) to prevent the ship from being dashed against the rocks. This was a natural means God used to preserve them, but had they not heard and anchored the ship, many if not all would have perished as a result, and God's promise would not have been realized. But God prevented it, because He had promised not one soul would perish. Was this all an accident or was it God's providential means to realize His promise?

2. **The crew tried to escape in a dinghy (or lifeboat) that was towed by ship (Acts 27:30-32).** In this case, the crew had conspired to abandon the ship and attempt to make it to shore by means of the smaller lifeboat the ship was towing alongside it. Paul somehow realized the plot and informed Julius, the Roman centurion, as to what was happening (Acts 27:31). The ropes to the lifeboat were cut, and no one escaped. Now this plot threatened the loss of life in two ways: (1) the crew would likely have perished in that lifeboat in the midst of such a hurricane-like storm; (2) those on board would have likely perished because there would have been no crew aboard to man the ship. In either case, the promise of God would not have been realized. But God prevented it, because He had promised not one soul would perish. Was this all an accident or God's providential means to realize His promise?

3. **One or more may have suffered and died from a lack of nourishment or injured himself and died from lack of strength without finally stopping to eat a meal after two weeks (Acts 27:33-37).** Paul says to those aboard that they had fasted for two weeks—not a voluntary religious fast, but a fast out of necessity due to the life-threatening storm that required 24-hour vigilance to keep the ship afloat.

a. One can only image how drenched, cold, weak, and near physical and emotional exhaustion they must have been. Paul no doubt saw how close they all were to perishing—not in the sea, but on the boat from no nutrition and strength. As a new day was upon them, Paul takes the lead to encourage them all to take food for their "health" (or literally, "safety" Acts 27:34). Paul encourages them once again with the promise of God that no life shall be lost ("for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you" Acts 27:34). And then Paul sets the example by taking bread, giving thanks to the Lord for it, and eating it with confidence in God's promise (Acts 27:35). Rather than rebelling against the man of God (which rough sailors would normally do), they joined Paul with "good cheer" (Acts 27:36).

b. O, dear ones, the power of a good example in word and deed. Paul demonstrated his care not only for the souls of these men, but also for the needs of their body. There was need to eat if they were to avoid death, and Paul's actions spoke volumes about his hope in the promise of God—God would preserve every one of them. But God would do so through the ordinary means of food and nutrition. God could have miraculously preserved them all, but He chose to use ordinary means to keep them alive. Once again, the promise of God would not have been realized if they had gone without nourishment. But God prevented illness, injury, or death to some through the words and action of Paul, because God had promised not one person would perish. Was this an accident or God's providential means to realize His promise?

4. **Those on the ship were preserved when they saw from the ship a creek that emptied into the sea where there was a sandy shore without huge rocks to where they would guide the ship (Acts 27:39-41).** They had just the previous night heard the waves crashing against the rocks, but now that it is day they see a beach area that is free of dangerous rocks. They lighten the ship once again. They take up (or more accurately cast away) the anchors. They cut loose the side rudders on the ship in seeking to guide the ship to

that sandy cove. And they hoist the main sail to provide the power to get them to that beach. But as they are driven to the shore, the bow (front part of the ship) becomes lodged likely in a sandbar where it is stuck. The ship is now in a position of death and destruction, for the mighty force of those waves beat against the back part of the ship, breaking it into pieces. God prevented the ship from being destroyed against the rocky coastline, and guided the crew to see a place without rocks in order to beach the ship, because God had promised not one person would perish. But would there be those who perished from the destruction of the ship by the typhoon? Was this all an accident or God's providential means to realize His promise?

5. **The soldiers, realizing that if any prisoners survived and escaped alive from the ship they would suffer the same punishment that their prisoners were condemned to suffer, determined to kill them all before they could escape (Acts 27:42-43a).** Why weren't the prisoners slain? The centurion would not allow it in order to preserve Paul alive. Not a single prisoner was killed, though ordinarily the lives of all the prisoners in such a situation would have been taken. Why? God prevented the soldiers from taking even one prisoner's life (let alone all of them), because God had promised not one person would perish. Was this all an accident or God's providential means to realize His promise?

6. **Finally, in the destruction of the ship the centurion commanded all who were aboard (prisoners included) to swim to shore or to grab pieces of the ship (if they could not swim) and make it as best as they could to shore in this hurricane (Acts 27:43b-44a).** Now what are the odds that all 276 persons on board would be able to safely swim or float on pieces of the ship to shore? In the midst of those crashing waves, God prevented the waves or the wind from taking one person's life, because God had promised not one person would perish. Was this all an accident or God's providential means to realize His promise?

## II. **God's Promise Is Always Realized (Acts 27:44).**

A. Regardless of all the dangers and life-threatening perils to the lives of all those on that ship that was being tossed around like a match box in the surf, God kept His promise—"And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." Just as Jesus had said to His disciples, "Let us pass over to the other side" (even though the disciples feared for their lives); so likewise Paul and all those that were given to Paul were rescued and saved even though they passed through the valley of the shadow of death. What were the chances of being driven by a hurricane for about 500 miles (from Fair Havens to Malta) and beaching that ship on this small island in the midst of the Mediterranean Sea just as the Lord promised Paul (Acts 27:26)? This was not an accident, and neither is what you are facing right now in your life. It is just as much appointed by the Lord as was that storm. God has not failed you. God has not failed to keep His promise. He is just keeping His promise to you by way of stormy seas that cause you to always look to the promise rather than being overwhelmed with hopelessness at the severity of that hurricane.

B. Dear ones, the present storm that you may be going through that seems hopeless, that seems to crush you, that seems relentless with no end in sight, that storm with all of its force will not destroy you or your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has promised that none of you who trust in Him for your eternal salvation shall be lost (John 6:39). Paul is a picture of Jesus Christ. God had given to Paul the physical lives of all who were on that ship (Acts 27:24). So God has given to Jesus Christ from eternity the bodies and souls of all who will trust alone in Christ alone (without exception). God will use many means and many ways to preserve each and every child of God, and He will even take them through severe, threatening storms that would seek to destroy their faith in and love for Jesus Christ and His truth, and yet God will preserve His elect in Christ Jesus—not one shall perish.

C. Dear ones, let not the threats of the enemy against your life, against your faith and hope in Christ, against the gospel of Jesus Christ, against the truth of God's doctrine, worship, and commandments, let not any sin which you have committed, let not any friend or family member that would seek to dissuade you

from that narrow path, let not any affliction or trial, let not any pleasure or prosperity, let not death or life rob you of the unfailing promise of your God and Savior, who cannot lie: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). God not only ordains the end of eternal salvation, but also ordains the means to that end through many trials, tribulations, afflictions, and heartaches. But child of God, cling every day to the truth that Jesus has already promised, "Let us go over to the other side." And He will bring it to pass, for Jesus will not lose one of you regardless of the storm you face. He has not abandoned you. He is there in the boat with you. Not one of you shall perish in hell. All of you will safely arrive at the shore of His heavenly kingdom. Dear friend who is without Christ, the Lord Jesus calls you to look to Him in faith, for if you don't, you will be dashed against the rocks and will perish in hell forever.

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