

# When facing Shipwreck

In Acts 27 we read about the apostle Paul's trip to Rome. We know that the Lord God wanted Paul in Rome. He had a task for him there (Acts 23:11). But Paul was not travelling as a free man: he was among the prisoners on the ship. Sometimes we do not have the degree of freedom we would like. Perhaps you are young and dependent on your parents. Perhaps you are advanced in years and a number of decisions are taken for you by others. Some unwanted limitations may be caused by working arrangements, church circumstances, health conditions or family responsibilities.

## We doubt and fear

Against Paul's will and better judgment, the boat in which he travelled "weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete" (v.13). Soon a wind of hurricane force swept down from the island, and it persisted for a number of days. The future did not look good. The professional sailors began to despair, throwing the cargo and even the ship's tackle overboard. Shipwreck now looked inevitable. Paul, like all the others, got wet, cold, hungry and afraid. The Lord God saw what was happening and was not unconcerned. He sent an angel with the message, "Do not be afraid, Paul" (v.23) and remind him that there was work to be done in Rome. Echoing this thought, missionary Jim Elliot wrote in his journal, "As your life is in His hands, so are the days of your life. Remember, you are immortal until your work is done." He was killed by Auca Indians in Ecuador, age 28. He was called home. He's work was done.

## A firm base for confidence

With renewed courage, Paul stood up and addressed his fellow travelers. In his short address we can discern three convictions that formed the foundation of his confidence:

- (a) Ownership: "God whose I am" (v.23). He considered himself God's property. If we belong to God, so does our family, our property, our investments, our ministry, our future.
- (b) Purpose: "God... whom I serve" (v.23). He considered himself as fulfilling God's plan. He was not driven by the approval of men, neither by signs of success. His passion was to serve his good and gracious Master. Who or what do you seek to serve?
- (c) Trust: "I have faith in God" (v.25). He considered God and His word worthy of his trust. Has God spoken in your situation? Are there relevant promises you can lean on?

## Conclusion

Sometimes the ship of our life takes us through tranquil waters, where we enjoy the gentle breeze and sunny skies. But sometimes, like the apostle, we may enter periods of hard winds and turbulent waters. Our God does not always calm the storm, but He does provide what His servants need to "keep up your courage" (v.25) even when facing shipwreck. These three apostolic convictions can also be ours.

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