

The Protection of God Over Those Who Courageously Multiply

Courageously Multiply: The Final Message from the Book of Acts

November 29, 2020

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Context:

The Apostle Paul's ship was going down during a terrible storm. It seemed hopeless. But by the miraculous hand of God, he lived to fight another day. And because he lived, the church multiplied. He also wrote some of the most important books of the Bible. In the end he was martyred, but only when his mission was complete and God was ready to bring him home. Even in death, he was protected because he was immediately with Christ.

You and I live in troubled times. The world is a frightening place. But be assured that as you make it your life's goal to help build the kingdom, like Paul, you'll be under the umbrella of God's sovereign protection. That's because God shields, guards, and protects those who courageously multiply.

Key Scripture -

Acts 27:13-44:

The Storm at Sea

¹³ Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. ¹⁴ But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. ¹⁵ And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. ¹⁶ Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. ¹⁷ After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along. ¹⁸ Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. ¹⁹ And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. ²⁰ When neither sun

nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

²¹ Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. ²² Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³ For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, ²⁴ and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' ²⁵ So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. ²⁶ But we must run aground on some island."

²⁷ When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. ²⁸ So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. ²⁹ And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. ³⁰ And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, ³¹ Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." ³² Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.

³³ As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. ³⁴ Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." ³⁵ And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) ³⁸ And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

The Shipwreck

³⁹ Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. ⁴⁰ So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. ⁴¹ But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. ⁴² The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. ⁴³ But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, ⁴⁴ and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

Acts 28:17-30:

Paul in Rome

¹⁷After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, “Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. ¹⁹But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. ²⁰For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain.” ²¹And they said to him, “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. ²²But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

²³When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. ²⁴And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. ²⁵And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶ “ ‘Go to this people, and say,
“You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.”

²⁷ For this people’s heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed;
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.’

²⁸Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.”

³⁰He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

DISCUSSION & APPLICATION

- 1. God doesn't always act according to our timeline. In fact, it is often darkest right before he does a miracle. This was certainly the case as Paul's ship was torn apart during a fierce storm. Can you think of a time in your life when you were about to give up hope and God intervened? What did you learn from that experience?**
- 2. An angel visited Paul in order to assure him that his life would be saved. It wasn't the first time that he'd had contact with the supernatural. Jesus, in fact, met him on the road to Damascus and appointed him an Apostle. Sometimes, when life is at its darkest, it's good to remember the wonderful things that God has done for you. Make a list of ten things that God did for you in the past year. Use that as a way of remembering that he is good.**
- 3. As the book of Acts closes, Paul was once again pleading with local Jews to embrace the gospel. But when they declined he turned to the Gentiles because he knew they would be receptive. Courageous multipliers are truth-tellers. Are you? Can you explain the gospel in a clear and concise manner? What's keeping you from doing so? If not, now is the time to learn. Ask a friend or mentor to help you. Pray for wisdom and opportunities. The world is lost and people need Jesus.**

NEXT WEEK'S TOPIC

A Special Illuminate Service

Living the Illuminate Life

2 Corinthians 9:10-15

