

The Shipwreck

by G.W. North

The sermon explores the metaphor of a shipwreck to illustrate the struggles of the soul and the necessity of faith in God's promises for salvation.

Duration: 1:19:59

Scripture: Acts 27:10, Acts 27:22

Topics: "Deeper Life", "Trust in God", "Salvation"

Description

G.W. North delivers a powerful sermon on Acts 27, illustrating the metaphor of a shipwreck as a representation of the human soul's struggle against sin and the need for salvation. He emphasizes the importance of listening to God's voice over the voices of worldly wisdom, as exemplified by Paul's warnings during the perilous voyage. North highlights that God often allows storms in our lives to bring us to a point of desperation where we must fully trust Him for salvation. The sermon culminates in the assurance that, despite the shipwreck, all souls can be saved if they believe in God's promises. Ultimately, North encourages the congregation to abandon their old ways and trust in God's plan for their lives.

Transcript

...to the Acts of the Apostles. And I want to read to you a whole chapter. Now, that's fairly unusual on these occasions.

I usually start off and skim around. If you want to go to sleep, you can go to sleep for 44 verses. If you want to keep awake, then the Lord bless your soul.

In the 27th, then, of the Acts of the Apostles, there has been much talk tonight among us about the seed. And you will remember that this chapter is the chapter, one of the very famous and dramatic chapters of the Bible, to do with the seed. Here it is.

When it was determined that we, that is, Paul, Luke, and a Macedonian named Aristarchus, all right, and the rest of the people that were on the ship, when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. And entering into a ship of Adramitium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia, one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we touched at Sidon, and Julius courteously entreated Paul and gave him liberty to go under his friends to refresh himself.

And when we had launched from Pence, we sailed under Cyprus because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy, and he put us therein.

And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce would come over against Nidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone. And hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the Fair Havens, nigh whereunto was the city of Lassia. Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

Nevertheless, the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, there to winter, which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south-west and the north-west, and when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclidon, and when the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive, and running under a certain island, which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat, which, when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship, and fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, straight sail, and so were driven.

And we being exceedingly tossed with the tempest, the next day they lightened the ship, and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship, and when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss, and now I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship, for there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Caesar, and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee, wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit, we must be cast upon a certain island, but when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria about midnight, the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country, and sounded, and found it twenty pharaons, and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen pharaons.

Then, fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that we have tarried, and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat, for this is for your health, for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any one of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all.

And when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. And we were in all in the ship two hundred three score and sixteen souls.

And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. And when it was day, they knew not the land, but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground, and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable. But the hindpart was broken with the violence of the waves, and the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that they which could swim, should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land, and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship.

And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land, and when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Malta. Amen. I can remember an occasion in Bradford.

How many years ago now, I don't know. And God laid this great chapter on my heart, to preach one Sunday night. It's memorable in my heart, simply because I've never preached on it since, and two, that my eldest daughter that night reached out to God.

God did something in her, in a very real and wonderful way. I've never preached on this chapter since. It isn't because of any particular reason.

But there it is, this is the way the spirit of the Lord goes, and he blows where he lifts. And so tonight I want to talk to you from this chapter. I can remember now vividly, and I suppose it must be all of 10, 15 years ago, when I spoke on this chapter, I don't know, my wife's got the memory along these lines.

I suppose it must be. But I can remember vividly how God laid on my heart in those days, the truth of salvation that's in this chapter. The great truth of the inward struggles that go on in people's hearts.

The folly of mankind. The stupidity and the stubbornness. And how the last thing people will do is let God save them, with his great and wonderful salvation.

It is fully exhibited in this chapter. And I can remember how, when I got up to speak that night, God at this period was opening up, or had been for some time, deep hidden things of the human personality to me. He'd been making me understand the reasons why people don't really get through with God.

Spiritual reasons, psychological reasons. I can remember that I stood up and announced my subject as the psychological background to salvation. And one little lady in the congregation promptly sort of went, nearly fainted, that I should announce such a subject.

Fancy this, a preacher talking like this in a church like ours. The preacher at death. But this was how, in these days, God had been making revelation upon revelation to me of this.

And it's these kinds of things, beloved, which make me say over and over again, there's only one real textbook on psychology, and God wrote it. And it's this. It's this book.

It's all here. And probably you will be surprised, before you go out of the room tonight, how this chapter reveals so much of the inward workings of the human heart, and the subtleties, and the wickedness, and

the stubbornness, and the hardness, and the underleaf, and everything that lies there. And though it is that it is dealing with this great subject of salvation, and we only think of salvation usually as sort of a time when you were converted or saved, yet, beloved, it is nevertheless true of men's souls when they are faced up with the great things of God.

The revelation is in this chapter, and you will see that it works out in all things of life. And it can be the reason why some of us, perhaps in this room tonight, I don't know, I'm judging nobody, but I speak because God has put this on my heart, I speak thus, must be real if God has done it. The reason why so many do not, perhaps you perhaps, are not right there where God wants you to be.

Hallelujah. And this I promise you, by the grace of God, that if you will heed and take note of what God says in this chapter, and you will open your heart to it, and receive the Word of God, you may have noticed a statement that this man said, I believe God, I'm looking at verse 25, that it shall be even as it was told me. Amen.

And so far as God is concerned, it shall be. Whenever God tells you anything, it shall be exactly as he says. This is the test in the ultimate of every preacher and every prophet.

Amen. Even as it was the test of the angel, for it was the angel of the Lord that said this, and the angel was tested by it too. Praise God.

Whether or not it comes to pass as God says it will. Amen. But before a thing can come to pass as God says it will, it must be believed without reservation.

But let's examine the chapter shall we. This ship represents man's soul. And you will notice that there were three dominant factors, three dominant features in this ship.

There was the owner of the ship, there was Julius, and there was Paul. And you know, beloved, inside all of us there are always these three great dominant factors. And this is why often in people's experiences they never get through to what God wants them to be.

You see, what happened was this, that Paul represented God, the voice of God in that ship. And you know, inside you, inside every one of us, there is that which represents the voice of God. There was Julius, and he was there and he sort of represents me.

And there is the ship master, the owner of the ship. And it's between these three that the ultimate destiny of that whole ship and its company, it was all resolved. I don't know whether it's like that in you.

That there are often inside you sort of opposing voices that argue one against another. That's right. It is in every one of us until the whole matter is solved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know what happened. Paul is being sent to Italy. He's going there and he's going to lose his life in Italy.

He doesn't mind a little bit about that. He could have pleaded with God, said, oh God, I'm glad this ship is going to sink, I'll escape. Don't you believe that.

He was going to Italy to lay down his life preaching to Nero. Do you remember Nero? Heard about him in history? Don't you ever pity him. Paul preached to him.

Wicked sinner. Deadly man. Paul preached to him.

Think of it. Paul laid down his life to preach to Nero. Glory be to God.

Nero's gone to hell. Because he wouldn't listen to the word of God. Who the greatest man perhaps has ever walked on this earth since Jesus Christ.

Very probably. Now beloved, God speaks to us. And you see, here are these three people.

And Paul is going to Italy. And you know what happens. There's a transshipment.

And you're told this. That there's a man called the master of the ship. Now you have to realize beloved.

That before you ever come to taking any decisions like Julius. In the ship. You've got to realize that the ship into which you've been born and launched on life's sea.

Is under a master and an owner. And it's the devil. Do you understand that? When Adam sold us out in the garden.

He sold us out to Satan and sin. And before you ever received the human personality. It was sin absorbed.

And you were born under a master and not God. If you will understand this. And understand why in every case God has to engineer a shipwreck.

So that he can really save us. The ship's got to be smashed. Hallelujah.

Now we've got some subtle teachings from modernistic preachers and psychological people. To try and avoid all this. That it's the sort of duty of us to sort of save our ship.

And I want to tell you that God's only interested in saving souls. He's not concerned about saving ships. Praise the Lord for that.

And beloved it's simply because often times man doesn't know himself. He's not prepared to recognize what's going on inside him. He cries, he does all sorts of things.

And in this chapter beloved if ever God's got the imprimatur. And got the photograph of what it is of human beings in a chapter. He's got us all in this one.

It's only a sort of a biological incident. But beloved it's a tremendous revelation. Let's examine it shall we.

For you will remember that they put forth. It says this. They launched in verse four.

And so on. And they find another ship in verse six. And they sailed in that ship slowly.

Many days. And scarce would come over against Nidus. The wind not suffering us.

We sailed under Crete over against Salmoni. And hardly passing it came under a place which is called the Fair Havens. Nigh where unto was the city of La Silla.

And when much time was spent. And when sailing was now dangerous. Because the fast was now already passed.

Paul spoke to them. God spoke. And he said, sirs I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and with much damage.

Not only to the lading of the ship but also of our lives. Here then is the tremendous thing that God wants us to understand. What a revelation is here.

Now especially young people. And I warn you that it only takes time to turn you into old people. That's all it takes.

And you young people. I don't think I need especially emphasize this here. But it can be true with us all if we're so foolish.

As to get older without letting God do this great thing for us. There are so many beloved who linger so long in Fair Haven. They linger long there.

They think it's all right here. And they think it's all right there. And things seem all fair.

And all nice. And all wonderful. And we've got some notion of religious things.

You look at this verse 9. What's all this about the fasts being passed? It's just a religious feast. Nobody knows. A religious observation.

It comes in somewhere in life. Religion. But what this fast is, is not explained.

And we sort of come and say what's all this about? This religion business. People fasting, feasting, praying, going to churches, singing. And I don't know what.

Now listen beloved. There isn't an explanation given because God's not interested in giving explanations about religion. He's not interested very much in fasting, feasting, calendar dates and all this.

That's not the main thing. In any case a soul can't find salvation in those things. Not in those at all.

A man at last has to be brought to a realisation of his own dreadful state. For unless a person knows their dreadful condition, they won't want to be saved from it. If they can last in fair places and find haven for their souls in this, that and the other.

And they do. This book speaks about people who make fair speeches. They make fair talks.

I believe beloved with all my heart. And I'm sorry to have to say it. That there are many that make fair speeches.

Nice little sermonettes. And all this to get people to haven up in them. And find some comfort for their soul.

For God knows life's hard. He listened to what God had to say. But he listened to the ship master.

The owner of the ship. And the owner of every ship that has a voice in every life is the devil. Do you see that? And so many Julius's they believe what the devil says.

And God allows them to. God allows them to. Praise the name of the Lord.

He believed the master and the owner of the ship. More than those things which were spoken by Paul. Amen.

Let's understand this great truth. And because you see his brain came to work now. He wasn't listening to God now.

He was working it out in his mind. The haven was not commodious to winter in. And so he was the more part advised to depart thence also.

If by any means they might attain to Phenicia. There to winter. And when verse 13 the south wind blew softly.

He was absolutely sure that what he was doing was right. Just the soft, warm, gentle blowing of the south wind. Supposing they had obtained their purpose.

Now isn't this true? That deep down in the bottom of every man or woman. Unregenerate. There is a distinct determination to obtain your own purpose.

What you want in life. And what you want out of it. I purpose to do this.

I purpose to go here. I please myself. I'm the captain of my fate.

The master of my destiny. So talks ambitious and atheistic man. And you see it seems that everything set fair for it too.

Hallelujah. And God reveals this great truth. That he wants us to understand.

It's not so long is it beloved. And it won't belong. I don't know whether you've reached this point yet in your life.

But it's not long before there arises a tempestuous wind called Euryclidon. So never heard of that before. No it's always something you've never taken account of.

Never. That's right. It comes.

It's like that man in the far country. Where that, that prodigal. He never expected that to happen to him.

That happened to him. But it did. And bless the Lord for his mercy that he allowed it.

And God has to do these things beloved to so many people. And now look. The ship's caught.

There it is. It's caught. It doesn't believe it's caught.

They believe they're in control still. And they are. So alright.

Caught. Do you know this is the story of drug addicts. It's the story of alcoholics.

It's the story of nicotine smokers. It's the story of sex troubles. It's the story of all this.

They're caught. It's a lovely soft wind that blows first. It's all so nuts.

Do you really think this is going to let you attain your purpose? Amen. Achieve your ideals eh? Now listen beloved. And then they could not bear up into the wind.

And we let her drive. Do you see this? We let her drive. We're still in control.

Yeah we're still in control. But we let her go. Here it is.

And then running under a certain island which is called Claudia. We had much work to come by the boat. At last they're admitting it.

It's almost uncontrollable. Just got it now. We've just been able to come by the boat.

That's all. Hallelujah. And when they're taken up they used helps.

They undergirded the ship. And they feared lest they should fall into the quicksands. And they straight sailed.

And now they've had to admit it. They're driven. The realisation's there.

And the realisation comes in terrible and stark fear. Amen. Gone too far now.

And listen. Here's the great trouble. In verse 21c.

It says that after long abstinence Paul spoke. God ceased to speak. He spoke to you a long time ago.

And now just the time when you want God to speak. He doesn't. And you say oh God.

What's happened? Where has he gone? This loving God that's supposed to speak to me. You see. And not only that beloved.

But see. But see the conditions. In deadly fear.

Verse 18. Exceedingly tossed with a tempest. And here's man.

He's going to do everything to save himself. See what he does. He helps himself.

Verse 17. He makes his ship strong. He does everything.

He now lightens the ship. He gets rid of some things. This is the trouble with so many people.

They try reformation. They start to cast out some things. See if they can ride this storm.

But you can't. It's impossible. Throw this away.

Get rid of that. Cast something else out. But you're in the grip beloved.

And nothing can be done for you. And God's not talking to you. And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

They weren't going to tackle the ship anymore. Talk about abandonment. This is the way it goes.

And neither sun nor stars appeared in many days. And no small tempest was on us. And all hope that we should be saved was taken away.

No hope of salvation. None at all. No control of your vessel.

None at all. You can't direct it or guide it anymore. Living in fear.

Darkness. No sun. Total depression.

Not a star that you can guide your ship by. Nothing. And how dependent you are on the stars.

Nothing. Darkness. Hopelessness.

Despair. Fear. Powerless.

Hallelujah. Glory. And listen beloved.

God has to allow this so often in a life. God has to allow it. He has to let people come to the place where they stop trying to undergird themselves.

He has to let them prove that all their own efforts at salvation are as valueless as the froth on the waves. He has to let them see that there's no steerage and there's no way of tackling the problem at all. None.

And all the advice is useless. And you discover at last that the word of the devil is wrong. And all your suppositions have been wrong.

And all your purposes have been wrong. And all your holing up in fair holes has all been wrong. There's only one place of rest beloved.

There's only one place of safety. There's only one place of light. There's only one place of guidance.

There's only one place of strength. There's only one place of tackling life. There's only one way.

And he's not talking to you. Black darkness of despair. Exceedingly tossed to and fro.

No protection from the howling blast. Your soul there? Ever been there? God allows that. Bless him.

Bless him. He allows it. It's a fearful experience.

Absolutely fearful. And you will know that they staggered from fear to fear. For you've got it again in verse 29.

They feared. They went from one fear to another. How dreadful it all is, beloved.

When a life's like that. One fear, another fear. If it's not rocks, it's quicksands.

If it's not quicksands, it's a howling gale. Your very friendly sails have become your enemies. You don't know what to do.

That's right. Right in the midst of it, God starts to talk to you. That's right.

Right in the midst of it. And you're a wise, wise person if you listen to God. You listen to God when he starts to talk to you.

Amen. After long abstinence, verse 21, Paul stands in the midst of them and says, Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me and not have loosed from Crete and to have gained this harm and loss. That's what your life's been, isn't it? Gaining harm and loss.

What a terrible gain. I don't know. That's what you do.

And he says, There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve. And that voice, beloved, that speaks in your heart was put there by God, all that ability, and it swings to God. Amen.

It's there for the service of God. God's put a mouth in your heart so that he can talk to you. Hallelujah.

That's right. And it's there to serve God. But you see, if people will listen, if Julius had only listened to God, it would have been all right, but he didn't.

And I suppose we've all been in this place at some time, and I don't know what voice to listen to until it seems that the voice of the devil and the voice of the howling gale and all the demons out of the pit seem to take the place of God in the love. Many, many people come this way. Many, many.

And he says, Be of good cheer, sirs. Verse 25. I believe God.

It shall be even as it was told to me. Hallelujah. What's the dominant voice in your heart? Are you believing God? You see, beloved, we don't always know the turning point in our life.

It comes often at the deepest, darkest, and most dreadful moments. That's where the turning point comes. The storm didn't stop.

The howling didn't cease. Nobody said they believed Paul. It's just that somehow, gloriously bless his name, this wonderful Lord comes and asserts his power right in our midst, and we find that he's beginning to dominate now.

It's what God says. There's no Julius saying, I don't believe you now, no shipmaster saying, chuck him in irons. Not now.

God asserts, bless his wonderful name, when he works by grace in power. Bless him. He comes and he makes his voice and his word and himself and his power to ascend above everything.

He doesn't pull back the dark clouds from the sky. He doesn't say to Euroclid and cease your howling and sun and moon and stars appear. He starts to talk in your hearts.

You howl out for him to alter nature. Do this. Do something else.

Beloved, do you see, perhaps you haven't realized it yet, God's plan to smash you. Smash you. That's the force of Calvary.

He can only save us properly by smashing us. This is what he said. I perceive this journey is going to be of much harm.

Did you read it? Verse 10. Much damage and hurt, not only of the lady and the ship, but also of our lives. Is that God talking, saying he's going to damage and hurt our lives? Of course.

That's the trouble. We bind our lives up with sin and with Satan and God has to come in sometimes like a battering ram to smash it all up. Of course he does.

God doesn't mind hurting us. How often times we've said this. What he doesn't do is harm us.

He hurts us at times. Why, you've heard it in the testimony of our dear brother David. It wasn't the easiest thing to do what he did.

It cost him three days. It hurt. It hasn't killed him though.

It hasn't damaged him. You see, beloved, this is the thing. We've got silly, stupid, sentimental ideas about a God that didn't hesitate to nail his own son on a cross to save us.

God's not sentimental. He can't stop and dally and dabble about with sentimentality, beloved. He wants to save your soul because you got yourself hitched up in some fair haven when you thought you'd be all right with you for the rest of your life sort of thing until you died.

God's not concerned about that. He's concerned about an eternity. And in some people it takes a tremendous storm and it's not in a teacup either.

It's the whole of life. Everything blasted and ruined. Praise the Lord for this.

He doesn't care as long as he can save us. But he says this. Listen.

He says this. Verse 22. You be of good cheer though.

There won't be any loss of life among you. No, it won't be lost. No, God's going to save that.

He's going to smash up what you think has been life. Everything. Smash your ship up.

Totally. Glory. This is wonderful.

It's not pleasant when it's happening. But bless God. He doesn't hold back the knife just because he knows it's going to hurt.

Praise him. Praise him. He's very faithful.

I shall never forget one of my daughters once coming to me one day and she lifted up her little finger and it was hurting her. She wasn't very old. She was just a few years old.

Perhaps she was six or seven. I can't tell. But she showed me her finger and it was all yellow with pus.

And it was hurting her terribly. And Daddy saw there was a thorn in it. And I was always the expert thorn remover in our family.

It's right. And I said, Oh dear, it's got a thorn in it, lovey. Let Daddy do that.

I'll just go and get a needle, lovey. You just hold it there. I promise you.

Now it will hurt you, dear. It will hurt you. You must never tell a child it won't hurt.

If it will, you know. I said it will hurt you, dear. But it'll soon be over.

She said, No. No. No, she said.

No. I said, It won't hurt you, lovey. I'll just get a needle quick and I'll hold it tight.

And I told her everything I was going to do and I said I'll go and it'll soon be out. Ever so easy. Look, it's only just.

Look, you can see it yourself. And it's that that's causing all that pain and all that yellow stuff. It's gone bad in there.

It must come out. She said, No. No.

I said, All right. So I let her go. I let her go.

About half a day after I think it was, she came to me and said, Take it out, Daddy. Did you? Did you mean to tell me you left it there to hurt her for another six hours? Yes, I did. Till she came to her senses.

I knew it wouldn't kill her. There wouldn't be any loss of life about it. That's right.

So she came back and I said, No, I'll show you. And I held it tight like that in one hand and I went like that below her and it was out. And before she could say, Oh! It was all over.

I didn't mind hurting her. I knew I'd have to. I knew I'd have to.

But I got it out. She's still alive today. She's got all her fingers too.

But here's the tremendous truth. I want to tell you, beloved, that God doesn't mind hurting you. And do you know, He won't hurt you half as much as you've been hurting Him.

Trying to get your own way. Superimposing it on everybody. Thinking you're going to obtain your purpose in this and that and the other.

You know, you might be able to twist a lot of people around your finger but you can't twist God. You can't twist Him. And He's built you on certain laws that a psychologist might call psychological laws.

But I'm telling you that God made you and He knows how to deal with you. He knows how to deal with us all. Hallelujah.

Praise Him. And He says, He says, No loss of life. But listen, your ship's got to be smashed up.

The ship's going to be smashed up. Praise God. And it shall be as God told me.

Verse 25. You see, there came a time when old Paul had a shipwreck and he was on a ship of the desert called a camel I expect. He was going to Damascus but God wrecked his ship for him.

Smashed it. Absolutely smashed it. Got his master's certificate too in his breast pocket.

Didn't make any difference. God smashed it. Amen.

Isn't that marvelous? Didn't do Paul any harm. Struck him blind for three days. God didn't mind that.

God didn't mind him being struck blind for three days. Showed him the spiritual darkness he'd been moving in trying to guide other people's lives. When God does it, He does it.

It's not what the devil does. And here's the tragedy that there are times when we get God and the devil mixed up. We're so confused.

We don't know which way we're going. It says here they were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea. They were just driven up and down, tossed to and fro.

They didn't know where they were. Do you know where you are? Listen to what God says. Verse 26.

You must be cast upon a certain island. Amen. That's right.

Now God's taking a hand. Hallelujah. Yeah.

You know, I'm not a great lover of Whittier's poetry because he was a universalist. He didn't know the salvation of God. And if you sort of love O Sabbath Rest by Galilee and all that, that was written by a universalist that didn't believe in the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Isn't it amazing what lovely stuff unbelievers can write? Just to twist you off, you stick to Wesley and people like that. You'll do a lot better. You see? But this is what he did right.

There are some things that he wrote that are very nice. Somebody had a little chat with me today and said, do you know, I've discovered lots of things that psychologists write are very near to things you say. Yeah, they are.

They're very nice. They've got no blood in them, no atonement in them, no salvation in them. None at all.

But this is what Whittier says. He says, I know not where thy islands lift their fronded palms in the air. I only know I cannot drift beyond thy love and care.

That's right. And this is right. You've got to be cast upon a certain island.

Yeah, glory. You've got to come right off that mainland. You've got to be put on the one island in the sea of life that can save you.

And that's Jesus Christ. You understand? You've got to be shipwrecked there. Hallelujah.

Glory be to God. You've got to be so shipwrecked that you can't sail out again. We'll come to that.

Here's the wonder of it. And here we go. And it says in verse 27 that when the fourteenth night was come and we were driven up and down in Adria about midnight, the worst time of all, in the deepest gloom of all, after all that God spoke me, I've been in deeper gloom since.

Yeah, that's right. This is the psychological background of salvation. You wonder I preached it.

This is how God taught me to deal with souls. And this is how I knew. It's in the Bible.

Here it is. Many a person says, it's been worse with me since you said so and so. Yeah, that's all right.

I'll do it with a little smile up my sleeve. Don't let them see that. I know what God's doing.

That's right. Praise God. I'm very loving and sympathetic with them because I've been in their boat, you see.

I know. But I know what God's doing. Let a man or a woman come to believe God.

And that's why God leaves them in the darkness to make sure they do believe Him. That they're not fiddling just to get bright skies over them again. Bright skies will soon be on me.

You know. They're not fiddling with God. It's got to be real, beloved.

Absolutely real. It's got to be a fusion of your spirit and life with Jesus Christ or it's nothing. Understand it so far as God's concerned.

That bloody Calvary means God at desperation point to win you. And you have to come to desperation point before you'll get there. You understand that? Look at that shipwrecked man there.

Absolutely shattered. Everybody left him and fled. Didn't they? That's right.

You've not been forsaken all the time God is starting to speak to you. If God has said anything to you, He's going to do it. Amen.

Hallelujah. And though you still might say, Oh, well, I'm not dead. Yeah, I know.

All the arguments. About midnight, the shipmen redeemed that they drew near to some country and sounded and found it 20 fathoms. And when they'd gone a little further, they sounded again, found it 15 fathoms.

And fearing, still in fear, deadly, Oh, give anything if we could have some life. Oh, if only we could see. That's the cry.

Let's put a halt to this mad rush. They cast four anchors out of the stern and, Lord, they go to it all. Have mercy upon me.

Lord, forgive us. Lord. That's right.

It's a terrible state. It's right. They don't know.

They've been so dark and deadened. Listened so much to their own arguments and reasons and the voice of Satan. Their compass has been fiddled with by the devil.

Your compass was fiddled with before you were born. You understand that? Hallelujah. Get it right.

That's why you've got to be smashed. Broken up. It's useless.

God sees it. I trust that you see it. And here they are, wishing for the day.

Now listen. You'd never think this, would you? But here's the subtlety of the human heart. As the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship when they had let down the boat into the sea under color as though they would have cast anxiety before the ship.

Now listen. God brings you to the place where you come out in your true colors. What you really are.

He makes sure he brings everybody to that place. He gives you respite, you might say. Four anchors out of the stern.

Oh, hanging on now. Got some hope at last that we'll be able to do something. Yeah, that's just right.

You're going to do something. You've got to come out in your true colors. And when you do, how rotten and deceitful you are.

How vile and really not worth saving, are you? This is the grace of God. This is his love. The shipmen, they're the only people, the rest were soldiers and Paul, university student, he didn't know anything about

sailing ships.

None of them do. Well, all right. He didn't know anything about sailing ships.

And you see that? At the very last moment the whole thing was going to be shipwrecked. See? By man. That's it.

That's why God allows people to come into extremities, to see what's in you. And it's horrible when it comes out. And Paul comes right up, straight away, says to Julius, come on, except these abide in the ship, you can't be saved.

Because you know why? God has planned to save you in toto. Everything. Complete.

It's a complete salvation. Everything has to be tried, tested, everything that's in your mind. God will give you opportunities to let you reveal what you're really like.

I remember when God did this to me at one period in my life, it was horrible. Horrible. What I was really like.

Amen. You'll even try to deceive God and slip off and get some salvation of your own. And there's a part salvation you can get salvation by slipping up on the glory stream, you know, missing out all this.

Yeah. Oh. No, no.

No. That's not God's way. Paul says, cut it off.

And they never hesitated. Never hesitated. Glory be to the name of Julius here.

He just acted immediately. Praise his wonderful name. The soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat and that's that.

Hallelujah. Now you've got to stop there and see what God does. Amen.

This is a marvelous thing. God hasn't planned a part salvation. Not a part salvation at all.

And moreover now, my beloved, instead of you trying to slip out something of your own, you've got to come to absolute trust and full cooperation. Here it is. While the day was coming on, glory be to God, the day you wished for is coming.

Amen. The light you wanted, it's dawning, beloved. Let it dawn on you now.

Here it is. He says this. It says this.

Paul besought them all to take me, saying, this day is the fourteenth day that you have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat, for this is for your salvation. That's the word translated health.

This is for your salvation, for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you. Glory. It's marvellous what God's going to do.

It's marvellous what God does. The most hair-raising experiences it's possible for a human being to have gone through. Not one here is going to be lost.

I've been through the deadliest, darkest things. Here, that's how these fair havens all turn out in the end. God lets you see to the end of them.

Praise the name of the Lord. All your suppositions have gone by the board. Amen.

You're on the sure way of God. Here it is. When he thus spoke, and he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all, and when he had broken it, he began to eat, and they were all of good cheer, and they also took some meat, and they were all in the ship.

276 souls. 276 souls. God wanted all, all of it.

He wasn't going to let anybody slip out. No, everything. You're really precious to him, beloved.

Really precious. Do you see? He's got to separate you from this old ship business. That's got to go.

When they finally left Morta, they left on a new ship. They never travelled in the old ship on life's sea anymore. Do you see that? Glory be to the name of the Lord.

And when they'd eaten enough, they did the last thing. They, at least along this line, they did the last thing. You know what they did? They actually threw their life away.

They cast the wheat into the sea. They knew it was now or never. They starved.

They knew it now. Finished. They did it with their own hands, man.

They got down, and they never tried to deceive God. They never left one grain for the rats to eat. They cast it into the sea.

They believed God was going to do something. They staked their life. For wheat, you know, is the star of life.

They cast it away. They finished with it. No sustenance.

No help. No anything. And God has to wait until he sees you mean it because you show him that you're mean it.

Your salvation is not from just the panic of the moment. It's for an eternity. God's got everlastingness in mind.

We cry out because of local circumstances. He's meeting you for an eternal purpose. Hallelujah.

Wonderful thing. Here, we'll go on, shall we? They cast the wheat into the sea. And when the light had really dawned, when it was day, they didn't know where they were.

They didn't know the land. But they discovered a certain creek with a shore. You know, they did it.

That's it. Well, after all this driving up and down, topsy-turvy, in and out, upside down, and right at the very place, they dropped four anchors in the midnight. Didn't know where they were.

It was so dark. And there it is. They were just poised, ready.

After all this terrible battering by the devil, after all this driving and depression and hopelessness, when God starts to work, you're right on the spot. It's amazing, isn't it? With all your foolishness and fiddling around. When it comes to it, God's had his hand on everything.

I tell you, though, there's a master of the ship I want to tell you, there's a master of the elements. And in the elements of life, God is there. Hallelujah.

And he's bringing you right to the exact place. And they didn't know where they were. They saw a creek with a shore in which they were minded.

They had a real repentance, for repentance means a change of mind. Their mind, I was right. If it were possible to thrust in the ship, and you can imagine them saying, I wonder if I can.

I wonder if it's possible. All hope of salvation had been taken out of their hearts and God had put it back. They saw a possibility.

If only I could be. If only I, that I can see it. It's salvation's ahead.

It's right there. If I could only get there. Amen.

They wanted to thrust the ship in. Oh, glory. They didn't know where they were.

But they saw a beach there, a shore. If only they could get there. They weren't investigating anything about heaven or anything like that when they died.

They wanted to live. They wanted to get there. Amen.

Amen. This is it. And when they'd taken up the anchors, they committed themselves.

Now there has to come this time of utter committal to the sea. Oh, hallelujah. They loosed the rubber bands.

They'd had that all tied down. They were fixed in one direction. They thought they were fixed for the abyss.

A watery grave, never to come up again. They'd had it tied. So they loosed the rubber bands.

And somebody got hold of that rudder. And they hoist up the mainsail to the wind. And they made towards shore.

And the very seas that had seemed to be against them now were helping them. All the elements that seemed to be fighting and howling like the very fiends of hell now were helping them. You see, you've heard me say this.

God uses the devil. The devil has to do as he's told in the end. Amen.

The devil that tries to divide you from God ultimately drives you into his hands. That's right. This is it.

Glory. He tried to damn your life, but I tell you that God won't have it. No fear.

Praise his wonderful name. And they hoist up the mainsail. None of this little sort of paper handkerchief.

The mainsail. We're going for God. Hallelujah.

Amen. The wind they tried to dodge before they tried to catch. The thing that was their enemy has become their friend.

The batterings of things now are going to help them. So the waves come lashing. And here it is.

They make for the shore. They fall into a place where two seas meet. Hallelujah.

You'll always fall into that place. One says, I'll damn you. And the other one says, I'll save you.

That's right. The devil says, I'll stream against you to smash you and send you to hell. And God says, I'll beat against you and drive you into my haven.

Hallelujah. Wasn't a fair haven this, but boy, it was heaven to them. They dallied in the fair havens.

Poor fools. But now they could see it. It was a windswept shore.

It was a storm-tossed beach. If ever there was one, the mighty combers combed it. But blessed be the name of the Lord, it was going to bear in the ship that bore the soul that God was going to save.

Amen. Here it is. And they run the ship aground.

And they fall past sticks fast and remains unmovable. Now, unless you've got that about you, you'll never get anywhere. If you're one of these drifters in, you want nice, so you can drift in and drift out.

You've got bows to your ship, beloved. You've ploughed through many a thing, haven't you? You've ploughed people under. You've rowed the seas in a proud stem on you, haven't you? Now listen.

There it is. And you've got to set your sail for it. And you've got to drive in.

And all the powers with God, it's not your person. It's not your personality anymore. If you haven't been in the world long enough to learn that with all your personality, you can do nothing.

Nothing at all. And you're the devil's tool. And you're the spawn of hell.

And nothing can stop you. You're going to a lost and shattered, hopeless, irretrievable eternity. If you haven't learned that yet, God will leave you yet, till you do.

And then there comes a time when he opens a creep right in front of you. Yeah. And you can go right in.

Hallelujah. Stick your forepart in and stay there. And don't you worry about the hind apart.

God's going to smash it. God's going to smash everything. Glory.

Let him. It's a clean sweep when he does it. Hear it and say amen.

The hind apart was broken with the violence of the waves. You say, what? These waves have been my friends to bear me and you told me it was God. Now they're going to smash it all up.

Hallelujah. Yes. That's right.

There's no escaping when God really gets hold of you. He's going to make sure you don't get out anymore. He's going to smash up the old life completely.

It's all done. Amen. God beats it to pieces.

And even then, there are some of these, we'll hold them the very last minute. The devil fights to the last ditch. But it is the last one.

Hallelujah. And here it is. They say, kill them.

Don't let anybody escape, says the devil. Kill them. God will not have them.

But God's willing to save you. Willing to save Paul. Kept them from their purpose.

And commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea and get to land. And the rest, some on boards, some on broken pieces of the ship. Thank God it smashed up.

It saved you. And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land. God does that.

It's God who's brought you to his island. It's God that's cut you off from everything else. It's God that's had mercy on you.

It's God that's had his hand over everything in your life. Ordered it all, you see, really. And yet, when you thought you were at the mercy of every woman, fancy of any crank, or crook, or the serpent, or anything.

Well, God's brought you there. You're in, man. You're in.

Is that right? And when they were on the land, they knew. You'll know when you're safe. You'll know when you're safe.

You'll know. Glory. Hallelujah.

You're where God has always wanted you. Smashed, but safe. Do you agree that God smashed you up in the old ship? Everything.

Yeah. Aren't you glad? It happened when you started to listen to what God said. When there was something in you that said, I believe that God will do what he said.

You know, this takes me back to a time in my life. My beloved will remember this. When we knelt together one Saturday night by our bed.

We hadn't long been married. We hadn't long been married. We knelt.

It was during the war a long time ago now. And we knelt by our bed. And the next day was a Sunday.

We just prayed. And we sought God. And the next day, I shall never forget that Sunday, we had a woman come to sing and it was dreadful.

It was a memorable Sunday. And I want these people to suffer from two musical ears. It was dreadful.

I wanted to get under the thorn. But anyway, we got through the day all right. I managed it all right.

And we walked home. And I said to my wife, do you know, I believe God's heard our prayer of last night. Just as I said it, he said to me, nothing doubted.

I believed. I said, I believe. And I did, you know.

I believe. And I'm here. I'm here.

I believe God. That's what Paul said. I believe God.

There's something in you that wants to say, I believe God. Who are you going to listen to? Your ancient slave master? Who was in possession before you were old enough to know anything about it? Who are you going to listen to? Your own reasoning? Your own suppositions? Your own working things out? Are you going to listen to God? I believe God. And glory, that's all he wants you to tell him.

He wants to know you believe him. You've been hurt. It doesn't matter.

Glory be to God. It's mythical, this teaching, that you should never be hurt. It's mythical.

Comes from fairy stories. Romances. The truth is, beloved, you couldn't be saved until Jesus shed his blood.

You couldn't be. And you're being reached by the power of God. And this I say to you, it matters not whether it be in some initial step or whether in some farther step.

And we don't all have to go through such terrible tempests of tossings. Sometimes it's all according to what the kind of life we've lived and the way we've gone and all sorts of things. There are lots of other governing factors.

But the fact, the real truth of it is, beloved, that there comes a time when God gets you into a position in your life when you've got no hope at all, saving what God says. That's all. When you listen to him, you say, Lord, I believe you.

It shall be as you have said. Glory. That's when it happens.

Are you there? Right there? Hope you're not trying to reconstruct the old ship. Hope you're finished with it. I hope so, beloved.

May the Lord lead you right in and every one of us all safe to land. Not a hair of our head lost. No life lost.

Some damage done, well, that doesn't matter, does it? Hurt a bit, that doesn't matter. Glory be to the Lord. We're his.

Amen. And what's been hurt after all? Your pride. What's been hurt after all? Eh? Let the Lord now build your life all over again.

Let him do it. Take your own planning mind off it. That's right.

Stop your suppositions. These things are all built on certainties. You can't anticipate anything.

God speaks and does it with his word. He creates things that just aren't there. He just creates them.

And he says, there you are. Weren't you foolish to try and plan it out? He just does it. And he leads you on in a glorious newness of life that he wants you to discover.

Live and walk in forever. I suggest we talk to God.

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