

[R4506 : page 328]

## "FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM"

– ACTS 27:27; 28:10. – NOVEMBER 7. –

**Golden Text:** – "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate." – Psa. 34:22.

OUR studies show us St. Paul from various standpoints – a bigoted persecutor; a humble penitent crying, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" a courageous witness to the Truth amongst his own people; a self-sacrificing missionary in foreign lands; we have noted his conduct in the presence of mobs and in the presence of kings and nobles; and his courage in the presence of danger while on his voyage as a prisoner to Rome. To-day we view him as a man amongst men in contact with the duties of life and in the midst of a great disaster – a shipwreck. His deportment from the time he became a follower of Jesus was noble, humble, reverential, faithful, devout, saintly: worthy of emulation by all the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The transformation wrought in St. Paul is possible in all who have the hearing ear and who receive the Gospel message into good and honest hearts. Such a transformation is of itself a witness to the power of God – to the reality of the religion [R4506 : page 329] of the Bible. What a changed world we should be in, if all mankind underwent such transformation! But all are not in condition of heart to be thus influenced, thus "drawn" by the Gospel. Some will need the strong arm of Messiah, will need the authority and force of the Millennial Kingdom to bring them to subjection and to show them the advantages of right over wrong. Thank God that we may pray with faith, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

## SHIPWRECKED ON MALTA

Fourteen days and nights scudding before a terrific storm brought St. Paul and the ship's company of two hundred and seventy-six souls to where the trained ears of the seamen in the night caught the sounds of the surf, they knew not where. Four anchors were cast out of the stern of the vessel and they waited for morning. St. Paul, the Jew Prisoner, by this time had risen in the estimation of all on board the ship – "For God was with him." Throughout the storm all had lost courage and hope but him, and his was due to his submission to God's will and partly to the fact that in a vision the Lord showed him that he should yet preach the Gospel at Rome and that, for his sake, Divine Providence would care for every life on board the ship. A heart at peace with God and instructed through his Word is prepared for what may come, of joy or sorrow. The Apostle exhorted his dejected companions to be of good cheer. He reminded them of his vision and assured them of his absolute faith therein. He urged them to take food that they might be strengthened for the strenuous exertions of the coming day. His cheerfulness and example were contagious. As the light of the Lord was his peace and joy, so he in turn was the light of that ship and its comfort. He illustrated what he taught – that God's people should do good unto all men as they have opportunity, especially to the household of faith. He exemplified his own words of II Corinthians 1:4 – "God comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

With the morning light they discerned the shore and a little bay which now is known as St. Paul's Bay in the Island of Malta, then called Melita. The pilot cut loose from his anchors, hoisted sail and sought to beach the boat; but, before reaching shore, grounded on a mud bank; the forepart holding fast, the rear began to go to pieces with the force of the waves, as it was a meeting

place for two sea currents. The life boat had been cut adrift in the night, because the seamen had attempted to desert the ship. St. Paul advised this course, realizing the need of the seamen to bring the boat to land. His confidence in God's promise did not lead him to be slack as respects the proper use of earthly means. There is a lesson here for God's people. While praying and trusting, let us not slack our hands.

Seeing that only by swimming or floating on wreckage could the shore be reached, the soldiers proposed to kill the prisoners because under Roman law they were answerable for their security with their own lives. But the centurion had learned to esteem the Apostle, and for his sake spared all the prisoners, doubtless remembering the vision which had inspired them all with the hope and courage which brought them thus far towards safety. It turned out as St. Paul had foretold, that every human life was spared and the ship alone was lost with her cargo.

On the shore we get a new picture of the Apostle. He stood not on any dignity or assumed superiority to be served, but promptly assisted in serving the interests of the entire company. We find him gathering sticks for a fire, at which the company might be warmed and dried. The barbarians of the Island (so called because they did not speak Greek but Phoenician) showed them various kindnesses. But when they saw a viper, warmed to life by the heat of the fire, fasten itself upon the Apostle's hand, they reasoned that this prisoner was doubtless a murderer who, having escaped the [R4507 : page 329] perils of shipwreck, Justice still pursued, and had caused him to be bitten that he might die. They supposed that the arm would swell with the poison from the viper and that soon St. Paul would be writhing in agony and die in torture. But when he shook off the serpent and suffered no injury, they esteemed that he must be a God.

A fresh opportunity here offered for the honoring of the Gospel message, for St. Paul found that the father of the governor was sick and he miraculously healed him and other sick people of the island. Thus was the knowledge of Christ and his minister to a considerable extent shed abroad, although so far as we have any information the Apostle did not attempt to preach the Gospel message, either to his companions on shipboard, or to the people of the island. Evidently he did not consider them to be "good ground" in which to sow the seed of the Kingdom – evidently he did not consider them to be of those whom the Lord our God has called to be of the Bride class now being "called" and tested. Their experiences, doubtless, will prove profitable to them "in due time," when the glorified Christ shall draw all men unto himself – "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32), granting them blessed opportunities for knowledge and blessing and restitution. – Acts 3:19-21.

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