



Repentance Tabernacle Church

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A Storm and a Snake!

Focus Verses: Acts 27:23-25 - ²³For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, ²⁴Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. ²⁵Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

Lesson Text: Acts 27-28:5

Truth About God: God will sustain us because of His plan.

Truth For My Life: I will trust God's plan.

When danger threatens our safety, our survival instincts kick in—"everyone for themselves" becomes our rally cry. This proved to be the case on board the ship on which Paul was traveling. When it appeared the ship would be crushed on the rocks, the crew prepared to escape. They lowered a lifeboat as if they were going to lower the anchors, but Paul recognized their true intentions and warned the centurion: *"Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved"* (Acts 27:31).

While the crew members were thinking only of saving themselves. Paul was looking out for the good of all those around him. He encouraged everyone to eat because they had gone two weeks without food. He promised: *"There shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you"* (Acts 27:34). Having made this promise, he offered a prayer of thanksgiving and began to eat. His attitude of calm assurance proved to be contagious, for Luke wrote: *"Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat"* (Acts 27:36).

Before this fateful voyage, the centurion ignored Paul's counsel, but watching him maintain calm and peace like caused him to respect and listen to Paul. There was certainly something special about him. The soldiers heeded the centurion's order, and Paul and all the prisoners with him were spared. Because of Paul's faith, all 276 people aboard the ship were spared. Acts 27:44 opens up with the beginning to a happy ending: *"And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land."*

Disaster struck again, this time in the form of a venomous viper. Paul was gathering sticks for a fire, when the heat from the flames caused a snake to lash out, which happened to be Paul's hand. They watched and waited for Paul to drop dead at any moment. But once again, God had a plan. Paul shook the viper off and remained unharmed. God used this seeming disaster to bring revival to the island of Melita. They started to worship Paul as a god. Obviously, he rejected their worship, but he did pray for the father of a man named Publius, and God healed him. Then God healed many more on the island of Melita.

Only God can turn a shipwreck and a snakebite into an opportunity for miraculous healing. After a while Paul and his traveling companions left Melita with everything they needed for the remainder of their journey, as well as "many honours" (Acts 28:10). More importantly, they left the island with increased confidence that the God who had saved them from a shipwreck and had delivered Paul from a venomous viper's bite would surely fulfill His purpose in them and bring His plans to completion.

In times of uncertainty and fear, the world needs to hear from those who have heard from God (2 Corinthians 1:4). With this outlook, trials and tests become opportunities for ministry, not reasons to despair. With Paul, we can face the storm and declare to others: *"Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me"* (Acts 27:25).

We do not always see the immediate benefits of faithfulness, but trusting God does pay off in the long run. More is riding on our response to adversity than just our own future. The moment of crisis is often our greatest opportunity to minister to others. When we allow God to call the shots in our lives, we can expect to face the unexpected. We also can expect He will work all things for our good (Romans 8:28).

God sometimes allows storms to blow into our lives, not to sweep us off course but to push us in the direction He has planned for our lives. When storms arise, we must look to God and submit to His purpose and plan. If we do, we may find the storm is the turning point in the story He is writing for our lives.