

**PAUL'S
VOYAGE**

**From the Fair Havens
to Melita**



AND ITS LESSONS

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In reprinting this little booklet some very slight changes have been made to clarify a few points. It is, I trust, put out again, with a sense of the humility which becomes anyone who speaks of keeping Christ's word and not denying His Name in these last days. (Rev. 3: 8.) One is encouraged, however, by His word to this same assembly, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Rev. 3: 11.

As weakness and failure become more apparent on every hand, it is all too easy to give up the path of obedience and choose the popular positions of the day. But if we are humbly before the Lord we will discover that there is still a path for faith, no matter how the darkness increases, and He will give the grace and power to walk in it. May He keep us for His glory till we hear His voice and see His face. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22: 20.

PAUL'S VOYAGE FROM THE FAIR HAVENS TO MELITA (and its lessons)

As we read what God has recorded for us about Paul's voyage from the Fair Havens to Melita in the twenty-seventh of Acts, we are cheered by this beautiful account of His unflinching care for His own. He who is interested in every detail of our lives, makes even the winds and the waves obey His will. Oh that we might learn to trust Him more, for "He hath done all things well," and is ever worthy of our full confidence. But although this is most blessed in itself, we believe there are also many deeper lessons to be learned from this remarkable voyage. When the Spirit of God enters into detail such as we have here, we may be sure that He is portraying some important picture to our minds, and would have us to profit thereby. Let us then look at the chapter carefully, and prayerfully, seeking grace from the Lord to learn the lessons He has for us in it.

The book of the Acts gives us, historically, the beginning of the church (the assembly). The church of God was formed at Jerusalem on the day

earth, "The kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour unto it

(the heavenly Jerusalem)." Rev. 21: 24.

God has written all these things for our learning, and that we should profit by the mistakes of others, as well as being encouraged by the matchless grace of God which abounds over all our weakness and failure. There are no limits to that grace which has met our need as sinners, and is daily towards us as His dear children, and then "In the ages to come He shall shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." **Ephesians 2: 7.** What a future is ours!

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such a confused state, that there was no voice to all on board as before, but God put it into the heart of the centurion to preserve Paul. Perhaps Luke was on the same broken piece of the vessel as he was. Others might have said that it was useless to find him amid the turmoil, just as many are saying to-day that it is useless to try to find those who are on divine ground now, but we repeat the verse mentioned at the beginning of our little paper, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." **John 7: 17.** We shall add also another verse, "He that seeketh findeth." **Matt. 7: 8.**

How sweet it is nevertheless, to see that they *all* escaped safe to land, and so we know that every true child of God will be safely gathered home to glory, but how much better to walk in the path of His choosing than in our own ways. Some might say that it makes little difference as long as we get to heaven, but this would show an utter indifference to His claims over us. Can it be that, knowing what it cost the Lord to redeem us to Himself, we would not want to please Him in our lives? Then too, there is a day of manifestation coming when God will make known what has been according to His mind, and reward it. The faithful ones at Philadelphia were told that the Lord would make others "come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." **Rev. 3: 9.** Let us then seek grace to be faithful to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, and leave all the results with Him.

The first ten verses of the next chapter give us a very interesting picture of the blessing which will come to the earth after the church is safely home in glory. "The present rain and cold" (the tribulation) being over, Paul is seen again, and so we will come with Christ to the earth when he sets up His kingdom. The people of the island were forced to change their wrong opinion of Paul, and when the Lord Jesus comes with His saints, He shall "be admired in all them that believe." **2 Thess. 1: 10,** even though *now* "the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." **1 John 3: 1.** Then Satan (the viper) shall be bound for a thousand years and shall no longer be able to deceive men. **(Rev. 20: 3).** All those on the island were healed (verse 9), and so all those on the millennial earth shall be healed by the leaves of the tree of life. **(Rev. 22: 2).** The barbarians then honoured them with many honours (verse 10), and we know that in that wondrous day of blessing which is coming for this

of Pentecost, and as we go on in the book we can follow with great interest the energy of the Spirit of God gathering out from among the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles, a people for His Name **(Acts 15: 14.)** As assemblies were formed among them by the Lord adding to the church daily such as should be saved **(Acts 2: 47),** we notice the care God was taking to maintain oneness between them. There *is* only ONE body **(Eph. 4: 4.)** The Samaritans did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter (a Jew) came down and laid his hands on them. The Gentiles too, were brought in through Peter's preaching, but in this case he did not lay hands on them in order for them to receive the Spirit. Peter was thus using the keys of the kingdom of heaven, given him in Matt. 16: 19, to open the door for both Jew and Gentile, and God was working in His perfect wisdom to hinder any thought of having one church for the Jews, and another one for the Gentiles. "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." **1 Cor. 12: 13.** Surely the truth of this has been lost to many dear children of God to-day, for we see National churches, Independent churches, and every other name imaginable, organized by men, and with men at the head of them. The Word of God teaches us very clearly that Christ is the Head of the body, the church **(Eph. 1: 20-23),** and there is only one true church, even as there is only one Head. It is composed of all true children of God who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We do not have to join it, for, the moment a sinner accepts Christ as his Saviour he becomes part of that church by the operation of the Spirit of God. God does the joining!

Seeing then how the Acts give us these things in a historical way, it is not surprising to find at the end of this book that God has given us an accurate prophetic outline, in picture, of the church's history until she is safely home in the glory with Christ. Some might ask why it is given to us in a picture. The answer is simple; God has always kept the hope of Christ's coming as a present hope before His people. It was a present hope to those who lived in the days of the Apostles, and it is a present hope to us to-day, but these pictures in God's Word show us that God knew beforehand about all the failure that would come in. He has told us of how the truth would be lost, and then recovered in these

confusion, and in that city the bride is seen in all her beauty. What a prospect to have before our souls in a day of ruin!

Lord we can see, by faith in Thee,

A prospect bright, unfading;

Where God shall shine, in light divine,

In glory never fading

No more to view Thy chosen few

In selfish strife divided;

But drink in peace the living grace

That gave them hearts united!

Wherever we find man's activity, we shall always find that it has man's will instead of God's behind it, and then there is bound to be a clashing of wills. Such is the heart of man, for even a Christian walking in the flesh will want his *own* way - so the "two seas" meet. "The forpart (the leaders) stuck fast and remained unmovable." (verse 41), causing the hinder part of the ship to be broken by the violence of the waves. Some who have taken the place of leaders have become stubborn and refused to give in, causing the sheep to be scattered by the will of man, instead of being gathered together according to the will of God. Brethren, what a voice to us! Does it not bow our heads, and our hearts as we read about it, knowing only too well that we can apply this to ourselves? Oh that we might humble ourselves under His mighty hand **(1 Peter 5: 6)**, and remain humble too!

Perhaps someone is saying, "Now it is all a question of individual testimony, for the ship has been destroyed!". But pause a moment, and let us notice the fresh glimmer of the grace of God at the close. It was the soldiers (speaking to us of the enemy), who wanted to kill the prisoners and Paul among them, but the enemy's hand was stayed. God overruled, working behind the scenes. Paul did not speak, as he had on previous occasions, but he was spared and undoubtedly God will preserve a testimony to Paul's doctrine even to the end. Things were in

closing days to a few who would, with but a little strength, keep His

Word and not deny His Name. **(Rev. 3: 8.)**

And yet as one pauses to meditate upon, and consider, this account of the church's failure, and on the other hand of God's matchless grace which accomplishes His own purposes in spite of it all, we are led to think of two things. First, like Daniel of old who lived in a somewhat similar time in Israel's history, we must say, "O Lord, righteousness be- longeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are afar off, through,"¹ the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have transgressed against Thee." **Daniel 9: 7.** Surely as we see the divided and scattered condition of the church of God, we cannot, if in communion with the thoughts of God about it, help but put our faces in the dust, owning as Daniel did, our own part in it. In fact it is those who are "near" that should feel it first and most.

The second thing is the bright side of it all. God's grace is unchanging - yea it is magnified and better known because of the failure. Who knew the grace of God like Ezra and Nehemiah, as they saw His wondrous provision and care in restoring them to the true centre-to Jerusalem? How marvellously God undertook for them, enabling them to build the house and the wall in spite of all the opposition of the enemy. God would have us to be confident in Him, and not in anything of man. Man has *always* shown himself to be an utter failure in everything committed. to him in responsibility. Even if the closing testimony were as small as the remnant of Israel when the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem - just the Simeons and the Annas remaining - we can still do as they did, and "speak of *Him* to all them that look for redemption in Jerusalem." **Luke 2: 38.** Their hopes were centered in Christ their Messiah and they were not disappointed. If our hope is in any arm of flesh, we are sure to meet with disappointment; but all will be made good in Christ - the Man of God's counsels.

Before proceeding with our chapter, perhaps it should also be mentioned that one feels deeply the truth of a remark made by another who has now gone to be with the Lord. "If anyone speaks of separation

"we know" and "we have" when speaking of our home in heaven. We are only strangers and pilgrims here, on our way to the glory above.

We have followed with sorrow the gradual departure from the time they undertook to number themselves in verse 37; first they cast the wheat into the sea, and then "the certain creek with a shore" filled their minds. While all this was going on, Paul remained silent, and it is not surprising to find that those on board this "ship of testimony", which had so shortly before been (figuratively) the scene of happy fellowship according to the mind of God, soon took another very serious step. When the sense of what it is to be gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus is lacking, and the knowledge of the authority which His presence in the midst gives to those who are thus gathered is gone, confusion is the result. So here "when they had cut the anchors they left them in the sea." (verse 40 margin). The sea speaks of confusion. What a sorrowful picture! The immediate result of all this, was that instead of quietly depending on the Lord, and waiting on Him, there was much activity which according to human wisdom and prudence seemed very good and necessary. First they loosed the rudder bands to make the landing easy, and then they hoisted up the mainsail to the wind. What a splendid appearance to the eye of man! What a fine prospect of making a good landing! Could we not compare much of the busy activity to-day to this? We must learn however, not to judge things by the outward appearance, but by the Word of God. Jannes and Jambres had plenty of fine imitations, but could not by *their* methods produce life, and their folly was made manifest to all men. (**2 Tim. 3: 7-9**). Was it not so with these mariners? And it will *always* be so with any activity which is not according to the truth of God. We delight to see activity according to the mind of God, and only wish there were more devoted servants working for Him, but faith always counts the path of His choosing to be the best - yea the *only safe* path. Moses did exactly what God told him to do, nothing more, and nothing less, and he was unmoved by all the enchantments of Jannes and Jambres. Let us bear in mind too where the four anchors were left. It was in the sea! This would lead us to ask if we can expect a worldwide testimony again. But although the anchors were never brought up again, we can and do rejoice to think of the heavenly Jerusalem where there is "no "more sea" **Rev. 21:1** - no more

from evil without being humiliated, let him take care lest his position becomes simply and only that which at all times has constituted sects, and produced doctrinal heresy." One has no thought of exalting any man, and much less any group of Christians. Christ alone is worthy! We all have our part in the failure, again we say, but we know that the truth which had been lost to the church for centuries has been recovered to us in these last days, and there is a grave danger of our losing it again. Oh that we might tremble at His Word - that there might be more of the spirit of that little company returning from the captivity in Babylon, who fasted and prayed as they sought from the Lord, "a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance." **Ezra 8: 21**. How wonderfully their prayers were answered, because their confidence was in Jehovah, the God of Israel.

The disciples who asked the Lord "Where wilt Thou that we prepare?" were not disappointed for "they went, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover." **Luke 22: 9, 13**. Nor will any true child of God be disappointed, who humbly and confidently asks the Lord the same question to-day. His promise is still true, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." **John 7: 17**. Let us each ask our own hearts if we are truly willing to do His will as revealed in His Word.

With these things in mind, and with a sense (I trust) of our own nothingness, we can approach the subject - confident, nevertheless, in the God of all grace, and praying that this little paper may be used in blessing to His people.

The first part of the journey from Caesarea to the Fair Havens, (verses 1-7) is passed over in a very few words, but it is the journey from the Fair Havens until the safe landing on the island, which is given in such detail, and one feels that this is full of deep instruction for us. We can look at the ship as a picture of the church's outward testimony, the people on board as the true children of God, and Paul himself as standing for the truth called "Paul's doctrine", **2 Tim. 3: 10**, and including all that is properly Christian. When we say "properly Christian" we mean that line of truth which is distinctive and peculiar to this church period, and which connects us with heaven, and with Christ the

effect of this numbering of themselves, is that they become quite self-satisfied, and there is a Laodicean indifference which is apparent at once. They "have need of nothing." **Rev. 3: 17.** They have "eaten enough" (verse 38). It is a bad thing when we lose our appetite for the things of God when we think we have "eaten enough." Is there any wonder that after this "they threw the wheat into the sea"? And at this point we may well ask ourselves what we are doing with the truth of God. Are we walking according to it, and feeding upon Christ, or are we throwing the truth overboard" "lightening the ship" - as though we could make sailing easier in that way? True, it may make things easier for a time, but like the ship in our picture there is sure to be a wreck ahead if we do. One cannot pass on without making a special appeal to our dear young people here. Those who have gone before us have "bought the truth." **Prov. 23: 33.** It has cost them a great deal, but we have received it very easily. Can it be that we do not value these precious things, and are willing to let them go? Let us remind ourselves of those returning from Babylon who had the holy vessels "weighed" out to them, in order that they might "weigh them in again" when they arrived at Jerusalem. (**Ezra 8: 29**). "And when it was day they knew not the land." (verse 39): Spiritual perception was gone, and they were not conscious of their danger. If we settle down as earth-dwellers we are acting as though it were "the day", but the Lord would have us to remember that it is still the night of His absence, though we ourselves are the "children of the day." **1 Thess. 5: 5.** How much happier the state of those on board when they were quietly waiting, with the four anchors out, just wishing for the day. We *know* the land to which we are going, and should be waiting for that blessed moment when the Lord Jesus will come to take us to be with Himself in the Father's house above. Too often we are like these weary mariners who "knew not the land," and are satisfied with some "creek with a shore" - a home down here, forgetting that "Our rest is in heaven, our rest is not here." The "if" which they attached to their plans only showed that since they were earthly-minded nothing was sure. How different the words of Scripture which bring us perfect assurance as to our heavenly portion, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." **2 Cor. 5: 1.** It is all

Head of the church up there. Those on board the ship decided to start out from the Fair Havens - not, however, at the advice of Paul, but of the others. The Fair Havens would speak to us of the beginning - of the happy oneness seen in the "fair" days of the church's history. All was well while they walked in the truth, and in the fear of God (**Acts 9: 31**), but such a position is never pleasing to the flesh, and can only be maintained as we walk with God. "Time" is always a great tester, and so we read, "Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them." (verse 9). It is always comparatively easy to start on the path of faith, but the flesh can never *continue* in it. "Sailing" according to human wisdom is always "dangerous", and we need the Word of God to guide us. We should have our consciences guided by the Scriptures at all times, for only in such a path can we claim His promise, "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble." **Proverbs 3: 23.**

There is something very sad in the words, "the fast was now already past." That early devotedness, that "fasting and prayer" which characterized the church at the beginning (**Acts 13: 3**) was past, and one is reminded of the remark of another, "There is no substitute for communion." When there is not the quiet communion with God and waiting in His presence, we may be sure that trouble is ahead. May these things exercise each of our hearts, so that we may seek to walk in obedience and in the power of the Spirit of God, rather than in paths of human prudence.

This state of things called forth the admonition from Paul, "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." (verse 10). This would remind us of his charge to the elders of Ephesus, warning of the grievous wolves which would enter in, and foretelling the ruin of the testimony "after his departure." **Acts 20: 29,30.** Do we realize, dear saints of God, that if we give up Paul's doctrine, if we refuse to walk in the truth which God gave to the church through him, then we too are heading for trouble just as the ship in our picture? Let us remember the exhortation, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast

When we observe it in the way God has given it to us in His Word, we know that it has no value *in itself*, but if we ourselves are in communion with the Lord while we partake together, we see that the loaf speaks of His body given in death for us, and that the cup tells us of His blood shed on Calvary to put away our sins. It is thus a blessed privilege, and we should meet in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ *alone* (**Matt. 18: 20**), and on the ground of the one body. The loaf has this added significance when partaken of according to the mind of God, "For we being many are one bread (loaf), and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread (loaf)." **1 Cor. 10: 17**. The one loaf is in contrast with the twelve loaves on the table in Israel's day, which represented the twelve tribes. Now there is "*one* flock, and one Shepherd" **John 10: 16** N.T., and the *one* body includes all believers whether Jews or Gentiles. (**1 Cor. 12: 13**).

It is worthy of note here that it does not say in our chapter that they all broke bread, but that Paul broke bread, and that the others were "all of good cheer, and they also took some meat." (verse 36). We know that all have benefited, and still benefit, by the "meat" which God has recovered for the household of faith in these last days, but all do not "break bread" on divine ground. Let us repeat the question asked by the disciples of old in the light of His presence, and of His Word, "Where wilt *Thou* that we prepare?" **Luke 22: 9**. After such a wondrous restoration to the place of His appointment, can it be that failure has come in? Yes, man has always failed in whatever God has committed to him in responsibility. So here, the greatest of all evils came in to mar this bright scene. Why should they number themselves? To be occupied with numbers leads to pride - the same thing which caused Satan's downfall, and it has been the ruination of more men and women who have been placed in a position of favour, than anything else. "God resisteth the proud." **1 Peter 5: 5**. He hates "a proud look". **Prov. 6: 17**. When David in pride numbered the people to see how many had been added during his reign (**2 Sam. 24: 3, 10**), God sent a plague among them and 70,000 men fell. Could we expect anything different when they undertook to number themselves on this ship of testimony? No, for we see that their action marks another turning point in our picture, and we have to trace with sorrow the sad results which follow. The first

heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." **2 Timothy 1: 13**. We are not only to hold these things as doctrines - though a most necessary thing in itself - but "in faith and love"; for the truth which we know should have its power over our lives to the Lord's glory.

However, in spite of the warning, Paul's word was set aside (verse 11) and the ship or testimony was guided by its "master and owner." Thus men took things into their own hands, and like those of Asia, they turned away from Paul (**2 Tim. 1: 15**) to follow their own ideas. How true this was after the death of the Apostles, and even in a large measure before their death. The haven was not considered to be commodious (spacious and convenient), for we can never expect the truth of God to be spacious and convenient enough to suit the crowd, and so we find that "the more part advised to depart thence." If we trace through the Scriptures we can see clearly that the majority have never chosen to walk in the path of obedience. Is it not true that there were always but few who chose the narrow path? Let us beware of following the crowd, but rather with a single eye, let us make Christ the Object of our hearts, and His Word the guide for our feet. We will have sweet peace in such a path, though the company may be small.

For some time after his word of admonition, Paul remained silent, and history shows us that "Paul's doctrine" and the heavenly calling of the church were lost for many centuries after the death of the apostle. But Paul was still on board, and so the precious truths of which we have been speaking, were hidden within God's blessed Word for many a long year, quite unnoticed and unheeded. The ship, in the meantime started out for Phenice - that spacious and convenient port - the centre of commerce! Such is the desire of many a true Christian-a Phenice church, a worldly church. This is the attempt to make Christianity acceptable to the world, and fit it in with the scheme of world improvement. Strangely enough, the south wind blew softly. God *seemed* to be giving them what they desired, and do we not hear many Christians, walking in paths of disobedience, telling of "the south wind blowing softly" - of the blessing they are having? It may *seem* that way, just as when the early church was drifting into the world, but as we remarked previously, time is a great tester, and so it was in our picture. It was *their* purpose which they *supposed* they had obtained. Let us ask

ourselves, do we want our own plans and purposes, or God's? Do we

know that we have the truth because we have God's Word for what we believe, or do we just *impose* we are right when in reality we are following our own ideas? How good to be able to say, "Thus saith the Lord," and to walk in the path of His choosing.

Oh what a great deal is bound up in those words "loosing thence:" What a sad day it was in the history of the early church when they left the Fair

Havens to attain to Phenice. Notice too how they sailed "close by Crete." All the truth is not given up at once. Christians will say there is hardly any difference between one company and another, but let us ask the question, have they "loosed thence"? Whether it is a foot, or a mile, it is the path of departure. Geographically, Phenice is not far from the Fair Havens, and often it seems only a step from the truth into looseness, but what a dangerous step, just as this proved to be a dangerous journey. Nor did they ever get to Phenice, for the Lord hindered them; and so the Lord loves His own too much to allow them to settle down in this poor world.

The soft-blowing south wind did not continue very long, and then what a change! It was followed by a "tempestuous wind called Euroclydon" (verse 14). Such is the way when we follow "the master and owner's" advice, and set aside the truth of God to accomplish our own purposes. Nor could the ship "bear up under the wind" (verse 15). Thus history shows us that one bad doctrine after another came into the early church and those who chose to remain in a position where the "vessels to honour and dishonour" were all together (2 Tim. 2:20, 21), soon found themselves utterly powerless to do anything - they had to "let her drive." Although there were many attempts made to repair the ship, they found it was all of no avail as the place was filled with quicksands. (verses 16, 17). Even the godly ones in those early days after the death of the apostles, could not repair the damage that had been done. Should this not be a voice to us to-day? If we allow a little evil, it will only be a question of time, till there will be so much damage to the ship of testimony that it cannot be repaired. (1 Cor. 5: 6). However now that the old ship has been allowed to get into such a condition, are we called

and giveth grace to the humble." 1 Peter 5: 5.

The next few verses are very interesting indeed, as Paul besought them all to take meat. With the recovery of the truth in these last days, what a precious supply of "meat" has been made available to Christendom, for as we remarked before, those on board typify to us all the true children of God. This "meat" was not anything new. It was on the ship all through the journey, but in spite of the rich supply that was there, they had "continued fasting;" (verse 33). So now the truth which God has recovered to us is not anything new, but it is, and has been since the days of the Apostles, contained in God's blessed unchanging Word. Yet the church of God had "continued fasting" ever since Paul's doctrine was given up.

Truly, partaking of this rich ministry is for our spiritual "health" (verse 34), and has been a great blessing to all those who have shared in it. Dear reader, are you and I giving attendance to the reading of the many precious volumes of truth which are now available to us? We ought to be most thankful to the Lord for allowing us to obtain these things so easily, and be more diligent as the days grow darker. Even the truth of the security of the believer, and our present standing "in Christ", had been lost for many centuries, but no doubt this is what the Spirit of God would teach us from Paul's words to these men, "There shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you." If the reader of these lines has any doubt as to his eternal security, let us give you the Words of the Lord Jesus on which to rest your soul "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never -perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." John 10: 28. How could we perish when we are "in Christ" before God? (Romans 8: 1.)

After this Paul "took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat." (verse 35). We need hardly comment on this verse! Here we see, in figure, the Lord's supper commemorated once again according to the mind of God. While there had been a "communion service" (so-called) for many years before the recovery of the sweet truth of the breaking of bread in the simplicity of the Apostles' days, they did not gather to the Name of Christ alone, and in many cases it was looked upon as a means of grace.

of God, to follow paths of their own choosing. Independency is not of God. We are members one of another, and the one loaf on the table at the Lord's supper, speaks of the one body of Christ composed of all true children of God. (**1 Cor. 10: 17**). The Lord Jesus prayed for oneness in testimony, in His beautiful prayer in **John 17: 21**. "That they all may be one; as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." This oneness was seen on the day of Pentecost when "they were all with one accord in one place" Acts 2: 1, but how soon failure came in and spoiled everything. But are His thoughts about the church which He loved, and for which He gave Himself, altered by man's failure? No, never! "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." **Hebrews 13: 8**.

Notice that the attempt to flee out of the ship - to go off in independency - was "under colour" of casting anchors. Such pleas are used by those who take independent ground even to-day. They tell us they are working toward the same end, preaching the same gospel, using the same Anchor (Christ) as those who would remain in the ship of testimony, but let us not forget the words of the Lord, "He that gathereth not with Me scattereth." **Matthew 12: 30**.

If we are not gathering with Christ, and to Christ, we are but scattering the sheep-how solemn! We cannot expect the Lord to reward such activities, for His Word declares that "if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." **2 Tim. 2: 5**. Dear reader, are you striving according to the rules - the Word of God?

Their plan to escape brought forth a special word from Paul, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." (verse 31). Happily these men were hindered in their purpose by this word of warning, and at this point we may ask our own hearts if we are willing to abandon our course, when the Word of God shows us we are in the wrong. How good it would be if we were willing to follow the Scriptures in all things, and at all times. Undoubtedly we, as individuals, as well as the church of God as a whole, would be spared many a sorrow if such were the case. Too often pride comes in, and we refuse to hearken to the Word when it shows us our mistakes. Truly "God resisteth the proud,

upon to repair it? No, *the ruin exists*, and we should be on our faces before God and own it, but the Word of God calls upon us rather to purge ourselves from the vessels to dishonour in the great house of professing Christendom, and to "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." **2 Tim. 2: 22**.

The attempts made to repair the ship were useless, as we have remarked, and instead of things improving, they became gradually worse. "The next day they lightened the ship." The so-called non-essentials were thrown overboard. Oh, let us beware of those who want us to throw those "non-essentials" overboard, and what is sadder still, the so-called non-essentials are often those things that concern the glory of Christ, and His finished work (which bad doctrine always attacks), and church truth, so dear to the heart of Christ who "loved the church, and gave Himself for it." **Eph. 5: 25**. We need not be surprised, therefore, that after lightening the ship, the next day they cast out its tackling (verse 19). Even the very apparatus necessary to the proper control of the ship was thrown overboard. Thus we see the course of departure from the truth of God. It is a gradual thing which begins when we "loose thence." May the Lord give us so to value the truth, that we may seek to walk in the path of obedience at all costs.

The twentieth verse gives us the dark ages in its full sense. The heavenly calling was gone, for "neither sun nor stars in many days appeared" and all hope of being saved was then taken away. Only God could raise up a testimony according to His mind amid such darkness. We use the word "amid" because the Fair Havens were never regained, nor was the ship of testimony, as seen at the beginning, restored, but God did bring them back *in heart* to the point of departure, and so the twenty-first verse is most remarkable in its setting.

Those on board had not taken food for many days. The Word of God as food for the soul, and as the only guide for the individual as well as for the assembly, had been lost during the dark ages. As regards what is known as the Reformation in Luther's time, while it was a time of great blessing for which one can heartily thank God, still there was no

can always say, "I believe God." His unchanging Word settles everything! Let us "be of good cheer" then, for the end of the journey is bright, though the sea may be rough!

The Lord's coming for His own - the rapture is figured to us in the word about being cast upon a certain island. Then at midnight - like those who heard the midnight cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." **Matt. 25:6-** they realized that they were nearing "some country" (verse 27). And we are getting near to our heavenly home too! Let us sound as they did, and we shall find that this blessed event is getting nearer. At the first sounding it was twenty fathoms, then only fifteen. Yes, we shall *soon* hear His blessed voice, and see His lovely face, therefore let us seek to be as men who wait for their Lord. While they were waiting and wishing for the day, they were not idle, for the verses which follow show us that there was much activity on board, with Paul, whose advice was once slighted, speaking once again. They did not allow the wind and the waves to discourage them any longer, because they believed God.

The first steps taken after the discovery of their position as near "some country", are very instructive. "Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day." (verse 29). Here we find the proper attitude of those who would seek, in a day of confusion and darkness, to maintain a testimony according to the mind of God. They feared lest they should have fallen upon rocks - there was humility and a sense of their own helplessness. They waited upon the Lord and their confidence was in Him alone. Nor was this movement confined to one part of the world. It went to the "four corners", and the Spirit of God worked in power gathering souls to Christ - the Anchor. Another striking thing about the early testimony was the "wishing for the day." The bright hope of His coming was before their hearts. What a blessed place when they were thus gathered in confessed weakness, with Christ alone as their Anchor. The enemy soon made an effort to spoil this work of God, and some of the shipmen attempted to flee out of the ship under colour of casting anchors (verse 30). No doubt this would speak of independency, and would remind us of those who leave the collective testimony raised up

recovery of Paul's doctrine. It was but another attempt to "reform" or repair the "ship." The "sun and stars" (the heavenly calling of the church) were not seen, until God in His infinite goodness raised up a testimony to the truth, somewhat over a century ago. Paul had been silent for a long time, but here he "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." (verse 21). Yes, "Paul stood forth!" Amid all the bewilderment and darkness, he recalled them to the beginning of things. They should not have left the Fair Havens. They could never get back there again, as we have remarked, but in *beant* they could return. This, Paul called them to do; and this is exactly what God by His Spirit did about a century ago. He gathered out a testimony amid the confusion of Christendom to express the truth of the one body - the church, - and its heavenly calling. This was the mind of God in the beginning - it had been lost, and now it has been recovered in these closing days.

Paul did not tell them to repair the ship, for that was impossible, but on the contrary he told them that the ship (the outward testimony as such) was going to be lost. However, the words, "There shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship" (verse 22) tell us of the precious truth, "There is one body." **Eph. 4: 4.** All the redeemed, though so scattered here, will be brought safely to glory. None will be lost. Now although the ship was to be lost, those identified with Paul in testimony, are called upon to remember - ye a to express - this blessed truth of the one body amid the ruin. What a privilege indeed, and may the Lord help us to value it more in spite of the increasing darkness.

No doubt the following verses would give us some very important considerations as to the character of the testimony. There are two main points which would perhaps correspond to those found in the church of Philadelphia. They kept His Word, and did not deny His Name. (Rev. 3: 8.) So here Paul said, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (verse 25) - he kept His Word; and he also said, "Whose I am, and Whom I serve" (verse 23) - he did not deny His Name. In a day of "giving up," like the present, it is of all importance that we remain steadfast as Paul did. His message was to be received in faith by those on board, for although everything looked so uncertain at that time, faith