

325 Euroclydon

In Acts Chapter 27 the Holy Spirit has given us through the writer Luke one of the most dramatic passages in all of Scripture.

For some years Paul had been facing death threats from the Jews. These started when Paul, facing an angry Jewish crowd in Jerusalem, spoke of his having been sent by God to the Gentiles with the Good News of Jesus Christ. The crowd went berserk, and Paul was hastily brought into the Roman fortress for his own protection, and for a not-so-friendly dose of “scourging” as the Romans tried to discover what all the fuss was about (eg., Acts 22.21-24).

Since then there were various plots, several speeches made by Paul in his own defence, and interminable delays (egs., 23.12-22 / 23.1-10 and 24.10-21 and 26.1-29; / 24.24-27). Finally, when asked by Festus, who was “willing to do the Jews a pleasure” (25.9, KJV, like Felix too, 24.27), if Paul was willing to go to Jerusalem to face the charges against him, Paul had had enough and spoke those telling words – “I appeal unto Caesar” (25.11 end). Hence at the start of Chapter 27 we find Paul on board ship on the first leg of his journey to Rome.

The details of the voyage that followed are grippingly true-to-life. Paul’s advice to “stay put” at Fair Havens, (perhaps based on his own experience of such matters or perhaps on “a word from the Lord”?), because of the lateness of the season, was overruled (27.9-11). The decision was made to sail on to a better winter harbour, and when “the south wind blew softly” (what a phrase! – 27.13, KJV), they set sail.

“But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon” (27.14, KJV, NKJV). What an irony, at this time of deep national peril over Brexit, that this violent storm involved something to do with “Euro”! We gather that this name derives from a powerful wind from the east, (known as a “Levanter” in more recent times) which raised up colossal waves in its path. Frantic steps were taken on board to cope as they were driven before the storm, including girding the hull with cables, dropping all sail, and throwing any surplus tackle overboard (vv 17-19). But the storm went on, and with no sight of the sun or stars “in many days” to enable them to plot their position, “all hope that we should be saved was then taken away” (v 20, the “we” in several verses showing that Luke was on board too). The metaphorical parallels with the situation in Britain in these days are all too obvious.

But then “after long abstinence” – days with little or no food for them all - Paul spoke up once more, starting with an understandable “I told you so” (v 21)! Having been granted an encounter “an angel of God” in the midst of all the darkness, hopelessness and fear (v 23), he now urged all on board to be of good cheer, for no life would be lost from the ship and they would safely “be cast upon a certain island” (vv 21-26).

More dangers followed. As the ship entered shallow waters on an unknown shore in the dark, the sailors tried to escape in the small boat, leaving the rest to their fate: Paul’s warning this time was heeded (vv 27-32). “Time for breakfast!” he then shouted, and reassured them once again that all would be safe. He took bread, gave thanks to God, broke the bread (perhaps thinking, or saying quietly, as he did so, ‘This is my body, do this in remembrance of Me’), and began to eat in front of them all. “Then they were all of good cheer”, all 276 of them (vv 33-37). After further dangers (vv 39-43) we read, “And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land” (v 44). Praise the Lord.

What an example we have here of how one Christian man, using his God-given faith, wisdom and courage, could make such a difference, to so many desperate people, for so long.

It is probably not for any of us to hold a position of such prominence in these dangerous national times (though you never know ...). But how ever great or small may be our situation, we can all be “mini-Pauls” as the Lord may prompt, being people of hope and good cheer in the midst of the storms, knowing the Lord, speaking naturally of Him, and demonstrating in our lives and deeds that He truly can be trusted.

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