

—*The Journey of Life*—
Counsel for Young Believers from Acts 27

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Prologue

During the 32 years that I worked as an educator, I had personal classroom contact with well over 3,000 students and became acquainted with the personal problems, longings, struggles, failures and victories of many of those young people.

Some of their lives—those who were Christians or who, while I knew them, accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour—often experienced *journeys* of joy and victory (though not without very real testings and trials). Some who heard the gospel seemed so blinded by the *angel of light* that their response was, as it were, *some more convenient day*. Other lives, through refusal to listen to earnest counsel, suffered terrible shipwreck even during those brief teenage years. But perhaps most solemn of all, not a few of these journeys of life ended unexpectedly in death before school was ever completed.

While I often sought, as the Lord allowed opportunity, to give Christian counsel (always in great weakness) to those whose journeys seemed almost assured of sustaining a tragic wreck, it was more often than not, rejected.

Thus it is that these personal observations, (not only from public school and college classrooms, but also among believers gathered to the precious Name of our Lord Jesus Christ) have been in large measure, the motive for presenting the following meditation.

It is, as will be quickly apparent, not a doctrinal dissertation of Acts 27 (nor should it be read as such). Rather it is an application of moral principles found in this account given us by divine inspiration.

Douglas Nicolet
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Please address questions or communications to:

Douglas Nicolet
P. O. Box 57471
Pleasant Hill, Iowa
50327-2189

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The Journey of Life
Counsel for Young and Old
— Acts 27 —

Introduction—A Near Disaster

Indulgence and Self-will—Recipe for Trouble

The sultry Mid-Western August night made us thankful for our air-conditioned van as we sat in the Osceola, Iowa train depot parking lot, waiting for the arrival of Amtrak’s Westbound California Zephyr. Over the past seventy years, the now old, dilapidated passenger station has seen the beginning and ending of countless thousands of travelers’ journeys. This night about thirty people, including our son and daughter-in-law, were waiting to board the train.

Among this group we observed one rather boisterous young man of perhaps twenty years of age. In high spirits, talkative even with total strangers, he excitedly and energetically bounded around the parking lot playing frisbee with some other young people—talking, laughing and yelling at everyone and anyone who would pay attention to him. Before long however, we saw the real reason for his seemingly boundless, boisterous energy. In one hand he held the frisbee while in the other he held a large bottle of beer.

Because the Zephyr was running behind schedule, long before it arrived, the young man had consumed the contents of several bottles. The effects were soon obvious to everyone. Tired and hot from his exertions, overcome by the alcohol he had been consuming, the previously talkative young man became sullen, silent and sleepy.

Finding the hot, stuffy non-air conditioned atmosphere inside the depot oppressive, the drunken young man moved outside to the passenger platform at the front of the station. Dropping his duffel bag and sitting down on the cool concrete slab, he soon fell into an alcohol induced slumber.

Directly above where he sat, a large sign was posted on the brick wall. It read: “Danger—no one allowed on passenger platform until boarding time”. Though the sleeping youth had obviously disregarded the sign’s message—one of the “reasons” for its warning was at that very moment just a few miles away, rushing inexorably towards him.

The width of the Osceola depot passenger platform, between the building and the railroad tracks is a scant 10 feet—perhaps a bit less.

The dual set of shining steel rails that pass there, form the main Burlington Northern–Santa Fe RR central U.S. freight route from the West Coast to Chicago. One of the many regularly scheduled trains that pass through every 24 hours is a 100 car unit coal train. Each 60-foot long hopper car is loaded with Montana coal being shipped to industrial consumers in the mid-central US. As the young man slumbered, this train was steadily moving closer, now scant minutes from the Amtrak depot.

If trains are running on schedule, approximately 20 minutes before west-bound California Zephyr #6 arrives at Osceola, the eastbound section of this unit coal train rumbles through at 50 m.p.h.. Though this unremarkable speed is 30 m.p.h. slower than Amtrak trains travel, so heavy is its tonnage, that when passing by, even the ground of the parking lot behind the depot trembles. Stopping the forward motion of such an immense mass would require well over half a mile. Thus, for the safety of those boarding Amtrak or for anyone else in the station area, the platform is considered an “off limits” area at all times—except when passengers embark or disembark from the temporarily halted Zephyr.

That night the station agent, hearing the distant blast of diesel horns announcing the coal train’s approach, made a quick check to insure that no one was on the platform. Looking out the door, he was surprised to see the sleeping young man. He yelled out a warning, “Hey fella! Get back inside the station. Quick!” But even as the nearby street crossing signal lights began to blink in rhythm with the loud clanging of their warning bells, the young man remained huddled in his unresponsive drunken stupor.

By this time, the white and black striped crossing safety bars had lowered across the road and the headlights of the oncoming locomotive could be easily seen in the near distance—except by the sleeping young man.

Seeing that his warning cry had received no response, the agent left the station door and ran to the still insensible form. Bending over, he yelled one last warning and then hurried for safety along side the building. The agent’s last cry finally roused the sleeper. Frowning and grumbling surly disapproval, he looked around to see why the agent had so rudely awakened him. Then, seeing the train, he began to hurriedly rise in an attempt to get away from the danger.

The massive freight train got to him first.

A thundering roar mingled with the rushing wind and ground vibrations together announced the unexpected arrival of this onrushing, steel goliath to the groggy youth. In drunken clumsiness he stumbled, dropping his duffel bag. Hesitating, he awkwardly turned to pick it up. At that moment, the full force of the passing blast of wind mingled with airborne dust, dirt and debris struck him squarely in the face.

Now fully awake and cursing in discomfort, the frustrated young sleeper turned his back to the train and stumbled unsteadily to safety, blinking uncomfortably as he rubbed the dusty grit from his already irritated eyes.

From the security of the side of the passenger depot, the agent and several of us who witnessed this event, could only silently stand, shaking our heads as we looked at each other.

I doubt that young man, even after this experience, realized how close he had come to a much greater tragedy. Unless he learned a critically important lesson that night, the attitude he displayed and the life-style he was apparently living, seemed destined to bring even greater sorrow into his young life.

Part One

The Journey of Life

The Most Dangerous Journey

As mentioned, the previous account could have had a far more tragic end. While we are thankful that the Lord mercifully spared the foolish and stubborn young man from serious injury or even death, his experience reminded me very forcefully, of another far more solemn, dangerous journey which *every living person* in this world is presently taking.

This journey—replete with multitudes of warnings—contains an almost infinite variety of guide posts and travel tips. Those who disregard warnings, often experience tragic and solemn consequences. The awful potential of these lethal dangers, the finality of the journey's end, and the great difficulty in determining which warnings ought to be heeded and which ought to be disregarded, makes it unforgiving of error and misjudgments. Wrong directions, misunderstandings, incorrect guidance—all of these may serve to bring this journey to an untimely, tragic end—its final, unchangeable destination.

I refer, of course, to the journey of life.

The Inescapable End to Life's Journey

Apart from the promised coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 4:13–18), life's journey has a sure, certain end from which no traveler will ever escape—death.

Doubtless, the largest majority of those on life's journey—like those who boarded the passenger train at the shabby, old depot in Osceola—began their trip in rather mundane, unappealing or perhaps even destitute circumstances. But whether the journey of life began in the most beautiful, richly furnished palace, or in the worst squalor and slums imaginable, it is a journey which at its end has no favorites, and whose consequences are equally immutable and unchangeable for rich and poor alike.

It is my prayer and heart's desire that each who reads this little booklet might realize that in God's Word alone can one find the only trustworthy and infallible guidance counsel which exists. There life's traveler will find infinite resources and principles which provide ever timely warnings and infallible guards against disaster. Embracing and using these divine principles will preserve from catastrophes

which mark the life's journey of so many poor souls. Scriptural wisdom is not human in origin—it is divine. Perfect and infallible, it is the only place where those on life's journey can find the key to real happiness and satisfaction.

Journeying through Cain's World

The world through which you travel, dear young friend, is steadily slipping further and further into moral corruption and darkness. Do remember that though the present world has entered (as far as we can determine) its seventh millennium, it is the same world that was ruined by Adam and Eve's sin (when death came in – Gen. 2:17, 3:19) and developed into a godless moral system by Cain (Gen. 4:16), when he went *out from the presence of God*. Self-willed Cain determined that he would live his life without reference to God, and would still find happiness and satisfaction in his journey of life. But for all the science, arts, and commerce he placed in his city-world (Gen. 4:19-22), he could not rid it of the results and wages of *sin* (Rom. 6:23). Everyone who has lived in Cain's world (save Enoch and Elijah) have had their journey through it end in the same way—by death.

Oh, this world can look very bright, immensely appealing and full of promise—especially in these western lands of material abundance. The world we are familiar with seems to present endless and exciting opportunities for energetic, bright and eager young people to gain happiness, acquire wealth, and achieve satisfaction during their life's journey. The world holds out its hand to you, dear young Christian, beckoning with a seemingly friendly gesture, offering to help you through life's paths and byways. It promises to help you achieve great joy, prominent social status and immense material wealth if you will agree to “loosen up” and join with it in fellowship.

What are Those Stains?

May I lovingly warn you to look very carefully at the hand being held out to you. That friendly looking hand has been cleverly disguised to hide the blood stains of our precious Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Eternal Son. Never was there a more false, worthless offer of fellowship, help and guidance given by a more treacherous, murderous companion than what the world offers you. May God graciously *open* your eyes (as He did those of the young man in Elisha's day – 2 Ki. 6:17) to see the real truth of what the world is and

the true value of what it offers. “*the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*” (1 Jn. 2:17).

Do follow the godly wisdom found in Proverbs, in relation to this world. “*Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away*” (Prov. 4:14, 15). Remember that One only—He who is called *the way, the truth and the life*—can be fully and unreservedly trusted to guide you safely through your journey.

Journeying Safely in the 7th Millennium

The Word of God contains the accounts of many life journeys. The longest journey of life that God has recorded in His Word is Methuselah’s —969 years (Gen. 5:27). In Psa. 90:10 we are told that *our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years . . .*”. Only 70 to 80 years! The age of a mere child in Methuselah’s lifetime! Yet today the majority of the world’s population seldom reach even that age. The average life expectancy in many lands is barely 40 years, and every day, millions of infants and little children end their journey of life after but a few hours, weeks or short years.

God alone knows the exact amount of time that each soul born in this world will spend traveling on their journey. What each of us knows for sure is stated in these words from Jas. 4:14: “*For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*”. Life’s journey, whether one has been traveling for 3 years or 93 years, is soon over.

Because it is so short (though when you are young it may seem as though it will be virtually endless), it is vitally important to get all your moral and spiritual instruction and guidance from God’s Word. Then your journey—which is taken only once, never to be repeated—will not experience sorrowful wrecks that end in tragedy here, and, worse yet, perhaps in hopeless despair for all eternity.

Journeying First Class or Coach Class?

For the one who has accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, life’s journey promises to be the very best—and the only safe one—of all. Our God has provided *first class* accommodations for His children. But why would He do such a thing?

First, because those living today, whose sins have been washed away in His precious blood, are the only people who have the *right*

to expect *not to die*—the only ones whose journey of life may not end in death. If the Lord Jesus’ promised return comes during our lifetime—and it may come today—we will end life’s journey here alive. (Carefully read 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

Second, because real Christians have been assured by God in His Word that if we end our life’s journey in death, we will be *absent from the body and present with the Lord* (2 Cor. 5:8). We will have departed *to be with Christ which is far better* (far better than continuing our journey in this world). (Phil. 1:23).

Third, because whether a believer’s life journey is a long one or a short one, they are assured of the precious, divine company of the Lord Jesus Christ for the whole trip. “*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*” (Heb. 13:5).

Fourth, because believers have been given God’s infallible and unailing instruction book—the Bible—which is living and powerful and has wisdom to meet every need that will be encountered on life’s journey. (Psa. 119:105). And, believers have been *freely given all things* (Rom. 8:32), have been *blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places* (Eph.1:3), and have been given *all things that pertain unto life and godliness— exceeding great and precious promises*. (2 Pet. 1:3, 4). Truly, believers have been furnished by our loving Saviour God with *first class* accommodations for this journey!

But, even though this is so, Christians who refuse to follow the instruction manual that God has provided for this journey (His precious Word, the Bible), can still experience miserable, tragic wreckage in their lives.

How important to heed the pleas of a father made to his son and recorded in Proverbs: “*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:*” (1:8). “*Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.*” (4:10). “*Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.*” (23:19).

Part Two

The Journey of Self-Will

Practical Lessons For Today

Let's retrace a journey that a group of people made a long time ago. Because this journey is recorded in the Word of God, we know it contains vitally important principles and instruction for today. It took place sometime around A.D. 60 and is not only historically true, but morally valuable. *All God's Word is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness* (2 Tim. 3:16), so we will find that these principles are fully applicable to our lives today. The Word of God is "quick" —living—and powerful. Thus this account, part of the living Word of God, can always be applied through the direction of the Spirit of God to every soul and in every circumstance of life.

The World's Morality is Worthless

No instructions, warnings, or safeguards invented by man can be trusted to provide *safe* passage for the journey of life. Lost in sin, man has willingly been alienated from his Creator, and is morally incapable of knowing the mind of God. And—even if he did know it—he's incapable of submitting his rebellious will to the will of God. May God grant that each one—especially our beloved young Christian readers—turn away from the advice of the world that spit in the face of our blessed Saviour, and instead submit their will to the warnings, instructions and guidance found in His infallible Word.

Who Went On The Journey?

The particular *journey* we will consider is found recorded in the 27th chapter of Acts. It's a trip that the Apostle Paul, and those who were with him, took when he was sent from Caesarea to Rome, there to stand before Nero Ceasar's tribunal.

We will meet several individuals by name, and learn about some others who aren't named. Each of these individuals' lives and actions are recorded in God's Word to give instructions for us on our "trip".

Perhaps we could say that the Apostle Paul represents the only legitimate testimony to the *truth of God* that existed. If that precious truth is embraced, believed and practiced—if Paul is listened to—there will be preservation from tragedy and shipwreck in life.

Julius the *centurion* represents a *responsible individual*—just

like yourself—traveling life’s journey. How good it would have been for *everyone* who went on that journey if Julius had heeded the apostle’s warnings. We must *hear* and *do* the counsel and instruction which our blessed Lord Jesus gives through His dear servants and in His precious Word. Julius made a decision not to listen to Paul. The results affected not only himself, but also everyone else on the ship. So there will be both *individual* and *collective* effects resulting from the decisions you make in your life’s journey. How important to *listen* to the Lord!

Beginning the Journey

Acts 27:1 “*And 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.*”

Our life has been *determined* by Another. No one planned his or her birth into this world—no one had any say about when, where, or into what conditions they would begin life’s journey. All that has been determined by God. What a comfort to realize that our God has *foreknown* us—He has planned our lives, desires to bless us, and all in perfect love and wisdom. “*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* (Rom. 8:29-30).

Dear young person, even if you sometimes get discouraged and think you may have somehow been *cheated* in the circumstances into which you were born, always remember the question that is asked immediately after the above passage: “*What shall we then say to these things? If God [be] for us, who [can be] against us?*” The God who created you and determined the circumstances and time of your entering upon life’s journey, is, if you know Him as your Saviour God, *for* you. He makes no mistakes. Only Satan, who fooled Adam and Eve in the garden, would desire to get us to question God’s perfect ways, His goodness and His love. The devil will always try to get us to question God’s ability and desire to make us supremely happy.

A Responsible Traveler

Julius the Centurion was in a very responsible position. He was given a service to carry out for the emperor, and he must give answer for how he did. Dear young believer, you must too answer for how you carry out the responsibilities of this life—a life that God has

given you for the purpose of bringing honor and glory to Him.

What am I talking about? We read in Ezek. 18:3, 4 “*As I live, saith the Lord GOD. . . Behold, all souls are mine*”. And in Rom. 14:12 we also read, “*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*” Every soul who has been born into this world (save, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself), will stand before—not Nero Caesar—but God, there to give an account to Him of their life. No one will be able to say, “I am not responsible to answer to you, God, for how I lived”. Each *mouth will be stopped* (Rom. 3:19) and all judged according to the thoughts and standards of an holy God.

Giving an Account—Getting a Reward

Believers will never have to give account of or answer for their sins, for the blessed Lord Jesus Christ bore those sins on the cross, washing them away in His own precious blood shed there (Jn. 19:34). Instead, we who have trusted in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, will stand before the One Who *loved me and gave himself for me* (see Rom. 14:10, 2 Cor. 5:10, Gal. 2:20). We too will give an account, but it will be an account of how we lived our lives for His glory. And then it will be His joy and delight to reward each one for any little thing done during our life that honored and pleased Him.

But how awful it will be for those who (like the *prisoners* on Paul’s voyage) must give an account for their sins because they ended life’s journey still unforgiven by God. We speak of those who have never accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. We read of them in Rev. 20:12-15: “*And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is [the book] of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. . . And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*” Oh! What a solemn, eternal judgment awaits the unbeliever, after this journey of life is finished!

God grant that not one who reads this will ever face such an awful time. It need never be, for He offers today a full and free salvation to “*whosoever will*”. Do not go, dear young friend, one step further on life’s journey without knowing the joy and peace of your sins forgiven through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9).

A Tested Traveler

v. 2 “*And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched,*

meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; [one] Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.”

Here we meet another by name, who went on the voyage with the Apostle Paul, the centurion and prisoners—Aristarchus. He was a dear believer who had already traveled with Paul through several of his journeys. We first hear of him in Acts 19:29. There, he learned what it was to feel persecution from the world for his fellowship with the dear Apostle Paul. “*All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*” (2 Tim. 3:12). But, though Aristarchus was made to feel the despising and rejection of walking as a believer in this world, he did not get discouraged. His *trial of his faith* was very *precious*, for those trials were used, not only to strengthen him in the path of faith (1 Pet. 1:7), but to cause him to value that which is lasting and eternal (Rom. 2:7, 2 Cor. 4:17).

Thus, when Paul was a despised prisoner, being sent to Rome to stand before Nero as a criminal, Aristarchus *went with him*. He had learned to value the truth of God, and in spite of what the world might say or do or think, he would not abandon that precious truth, nor the servant God used as its channel to this world. By his actions, dear Aristarchus plainly said, “*to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life*” (Jn. 6:68).

How important that we who are believers in the Lord Jesus, not spurn or turn away from the precious truth of God, though it is despised, rejected, and indeed morally, kept a *prisoner* in this dark world. Let’s cling fast to that precious truth, putting it to practical use every day of our journey. Then, if we suffer persecution, we will have the joy of suffering it in fellowship with our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:29, 2 Tim. 2:12). Remember, the devil will seek to make us *ashamed* of the very truth of God that will preserve us. “*I am not ashamed...*” (Rom. 1:16, 2 Tim. 1:12).

An Unseen Traveler

There was at least one other dear believer who went with the Apostle Paul on this journey. Though his name is not mentioned, we know well who he was—the *beloved physician, Luke*. He is the *unseen recorder*, guided by divine inspiration, to record the Gospel of Luke as well as the book of the Acts. The events the Spirit of God has seen fit to record, both of the life and times of our blessed Lord Jesus, and then of the acts of the Spirit in the formation and early history of the assembly, were not only written for Theophilus’ profit,

but for the blessing of all (Luke 1:3, Acts 1:1) who read them.

Now nearly 2,000 years later, the life's journey of each person is also being unerringly recorded by an *unseen Recorder*. He faithfully and unerringly makes note of every thought, word, and deed of each life. Those who end their journey without the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, will have to give account to God for every detail of that divine, unerring record. (Rev. 20:12).

At the *great white throne* (Rev. 20:11), the “books” in which those records have been kept, are opened to see if each life was lived in a way which satisfied God's holy nature and standards. Tragically, none who stand there will be able to show by *their works* that they have earned eternal life. Too late they will realize that all have “*sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” (Rom. 3:23) and all their *righteousnesses* (good works) are as *filthy rags* before God (Isa. 64:6). Then at the solemn close of each review, the Book of Life is opened. The souls who have stood before the *great white throne* will not hear their name read from the list of the eternally blessed, for they cannot be found. Then comes the awful finality of eternal torment as they are cast into the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:15).

Oh! Dear reader! Before we go further, we plead with you to humbly submit to and thankfully accept God's righteous estimation of you—a sinner, born in sin (Rom. 5:12) and practicing sin and in need of His full, free forgiveness and salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16, Rom. 6:23). “*Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.*” (2 Cor. 6:2).

Courteous Unbelief

v 3 “*And the next [day] we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave [him] liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.*”

We will look at Julius as a picture of each on the *journey of life*. He was given the charge of getting the prisoners to Rome safely and he will answer to Nero-Cesar for how he carried out that responsibility.

Julius had to decide how was he going to act towards Paul on the journey. Would he listen to and believe him, or despise him? He is openly courteous towards Paul in just the same way as many who are on life's journey are reverent—courteous, we might say—towards God and towards religion. But though respectful of these things, they do not attach themselves by faith to Christ. Julius was

polite to Paul, gave him a certain amount of liberty to have fellowship with his friends, but he was not interested in listening to Paul or going *with* him.

Dear young reader, it is not enough to be *respectful* of God and to treat His servants *courteously*. You must submit your thoughts to God's thoughts. You must, if you are to have a happy life's journey, fully and unreservedly attach yourself to, and by faith embrace, the *revealed mind of God* as it has been given to us in the Bible.

Who Said It Would be Easy?

v 4, 5 “*And when we had launched from thence, 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.*”

You won't travel on the journey of life long, before finding that things aren't always easy. When young, living at home and under the care and protection of our parents, we are hid from many difficulties, even as the centurion and his ship *sailed under* Cyprus to escape the *contrary winds*. But before long, young believer, your faith will be tested by contrary winds, and what is important to you, what you are trusting in, will be put to the test.

Julius the centurion wanted to have an easy, comfortable voyage, and he spent some amount of time trying to find a comfortable passage through the seas. How many dear young people do the same as they begin their voyage of life—spending much time trying to find the *easiest and most comfortable way* through this world—seeking to find the soft, easy winds of popular opinion to sail *with*, rather than by faith enduring and moving against *contrary winds*.

So You Have a Better Idea?

v 6, 7 “*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 were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;*”

Julius was not happy with the progress his ship was making. Deciding it was time for a change, he chose a ship that came from a city in Egypt (let's remember that in the Bible, *Egypt* usually pictures the world). Changing ships, however, did not change the contrary winds for Julius.

Perhaps this is where you are right now in the voyage of your

life. You haven't been satisfied with Dad and Mom's *religious ways*—nor with the contrary winds they have encountered (see 2 Tim. 3:12). Perhaps you've decided to *change ships*—to reach out to the world and find a more comfortable, easy way to get through this life. You may think that the winds will be less contrary if you follow the ways of the world rather than the ways of God that you have been taught in your home and assembly. Be assured that you will not be long finding the winds are *still contrary*. No one finds that things *always* go just the way they want in life. It just doesn't happen that way! The answer to these difficulties will not be found in adopting a *different ship*, a different manner of life characterized by the easy, carefree and godless attitude of the world. The only safety for life's journey is found in *fully obeying* the Word of God.

Don't Leave The Place of Safety

v 8 “*And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city [of] Lasea.*”

Fair Havens—here was a place of safety. I want you to think of *Fair Havens* as a little picture of blessings of true Christianity. These blessings and safety will be found in Christian homes, the assembly where you live, and in the example of faith of the believers with whom you associate. Also, think of this harbor as a little picture of the *Christ* of Christianity. The world sees nothing attractive in the Lord Jesus Christ, though it does willingly practice and embrace *religion*. But *Fair Havens* was the only place where protection from the coming storms of winter could be found—and it wasn't attractive.

Even if you have not been raised in a “Christian family” dear young reader, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, then the grace of God has surely brought you, in Him, to a place of refuge from all you are sure to meet on your voyage. Ask Him—He who loves you with a divine, eternal love—to make His Word good to you, that you might never stray from the place of safety that He has provided. “*Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart*” (Jer 15:16). Oh! do accept the safe shelter of the *Fair Havens*.

Making Your Own Choices

v 9 “*Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them*”

When young, it seems that it takes almost *forever* to get old

enough to be able to have freedom and liberty to make our own choices. It is as though *much time has been spent* in your life remaining in the *Fair Havens*. Don't make the mistake of hurrying to get away from safe, godly environments, just so you can be on your own.

The fast was past. What is that? Simply put, as you grow older there will come a time when parental and other Christian constraints are loosened—those Christian constraints are like a *fast*. Experiencing new liberty, you may find yourself free and no longer required to *deny* yourself anything (that's what a *fast* is all about). But it is at this very point that your journey of life has become most dangerous.

As long as there have been limits (a *fast*)—bounds of right and wrong imposed by others—you've been in measure kept from moving according to your own will. You may little realize the wickedness, sorrow and corruption of this *present evil world* from which these restraining influences have spared you. But now *the fast is past* and sailing according to your own will is very *dangerous*.

The grace of God is again displayed at this very critical time. Paul (who has said nothing to this point) admonishes them. He gives Julius a *divinely*-sent warning. How interested God is in your life's journey, dear young reader! He wants it to be a happy, profitable and satisfying trip. So much so that He lovingly warns you—through His Word, through His servants—that your journey, if you continue on it after throwing off all godly restraint, is sure to end in disaster.

A Solemn Warning

v 10 “*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.*”

It is easy to imagine how unpopular this warning of the Apostle Paul was to those on Julius' ship who did not find Fair Havens an appealing place. Is that how you react when dad or mom, or other brethren lovingly seek to warn you about your life and ways? Remember that the truth of God is for your safety and protection, though it will not always sound like those *good words and fair speeches* which *deceive the hearts of the simple*. (Rom. 16:18). The world *looks* more inviting, but how much better to be *safe* than *sorry*!

The *ship* in which you take the journey of life is carrying precious *lading* (cargo). Think of that *cargo* as being those things which your loving God and Father, who delights to bless, has entrusted to you—faith, hope, love, purity of mind and body... oh! such

precious cargo! But if you disregard the warnings of God’s Word through His servants, all of this cargo may be lost in the coming storms of life. The sad results of a course of self-willed disregard for God’s Word can very likely cause you to lose your physical purity, mental abilities—even overthrow your faith, cause your love to grow cold, or extinguish the bright hope which properly belongs to a believer. Though it is certainly true that a real believer can never lose his (or her) eternal salvation, what a terrible price to pay for self-will! Do listen, beloved reader, to the loving warnings God has graciously given, no matter what *vessel* (person or manner) He uses to send them to you.

A Rejected Warning

v11 “*Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.*”

Poor, foolish, Julius! A Roman centurion would normally be a very cautious, though exceedingly brave person. Yet we see that even this courageous, intelligent soldier listened to the *wrong advice*! His decision to listen to others instead of the Apostle (who was the only channel of *truth* that was available to him), was going to cost him everything, even the ship on which he traveled. Is that not a very steep price to pay, dear young reader, for not listening to the entreaties and warnings of the God who loves you?

Do not trust in your intelligence or strength in the decisions you make in life. Listen to the One Who is *the way, the truth* and the life. Will you, like the centurion, lose everything (except your eternal salvation) that God has given for your journey of life, because you listened to the wrong advice?

Who is Master and Owner?

Who owns you, dear young believer? The world says that you have *no owner*—you are *your own person*. That’s a horrible lie. Who is it that has *redeemed you* with His own precious blood? Does He not have the right to give you guidance and instruction? The *owner* of the ship on which the centurion sailed gave him advice contrary to the servant of God—the Apostle Paul.

Who is your *master* beloved young reader? The master (or *captain*) of the centurion’s ship—the one responsible to steer it—also refused to listen to the servant of God—he who alone had the

wisdom needed to insure a safe journey. Is Jesus Lord of your life?

If you have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, He *ought* to be treated by you in view of what He is—*Master* and *Owner* of your ship. Sad to say, there are many believers who have truly trusted in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to wash their sins away, and yet, strangely, refuse to allow Him to be Lord of their lives. They would rather listen to *themselves*—would rather take the place belonging to the ship’s *master*.

Do you want to have supreme authority in your life, or are you willing to submit your will to the perfect will of Another, and allow Him to really be the *Master* of your life? Your happiness is at stake.

God who has created and saved you is your rightful Owner. But have you adopted the humanistic philosophies of this present world which teach you to look within yourself to find sources of power, wisdom, and satisfaction (see 2 Pet. 2:1)? We live in a world that demands *liberty* and *freedom*—a world that refuses to own its responsibility to God. To whom will you listen? Lifetime and eternal issues with irreversible consequences hang in the balances of your answer.

The Majority is Wrong!

v 12 “*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, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.*”

Fair Havens, the place of safety that God had allowed that little ship to reach, did not look like a pleasant, comfortable place to spend the winter. Maybe it didn’t have enough movie theaters, sports stadiums, shopping malls, exciting places to visit, or fun, attractive people. Whatever it lacked, the majority on the centurion’s ship decided it was not there they wished to spend the coming dark, cold months of winter. They were not looking with the *eye of faith*.

What Do You See?

To the natural eye, true Christianity—the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ—never appears to be an appealing way to spend one’s life. The world’s false glitter and colorful, sparkling excitement, while only a cover disguising the dark realities of sin, appear far more inviting than the bold truths of Christianity.

What truths? This world is a scene of death—a *place of winter*. In reality there’s nothing here *morally* that can sustain life. On the

contrary, everything is marked by the stark, cold reality of death.

What does *your* eye see, dear young person? Faith sees the glory and beauty of Him who is *chiefest among ten thousand—altogether lovely*, while it sees this world for what it *really is*—an empty, barren wilderness that is guilty of His murder.

But perhaps the only wilderness and dry desert you see, is instead within the *assembly* or in your *Christian home*. You long to break free of the safe haven provided by home and assembly. Free of them like Demas (2 Tim. 4:10), you begin to search for something more attractive, interesting, and satisfying in this *present world*.

His Summer in The World's Winter

Oh! Do not allow the blessed Christ and real Christianity to seem like a dull and boring place to spend the *winter* which marks the world through which you pass! You hear many false, catchy sayings—“Life is short, play hard”—“Live the moment”—“This is your world, make the most of it”—“It’s your life, enjoy it to the fullest”. What folly! What falsehood these things present!

If you listen to them, your heart will surely grow as cold as the *wintertime*. Seeking to find something apart from Christ to warm and satisfy, your every natural sense and yearning does what the *more part* advised the centurion to do—leave the safety of *Fair Havens* and seek for a more pleasant port to spend the winter.

However, something more pleasant, more exciting, more satisfying than the Christian pathway cannot be found. Do you think that He who suffered those agonies and forsaking of God on the cross in order that He might redeem you and have your company for all eternity, will give you *less joy* and *less happiness* than this poor, judgment bound world can give? Such reasoning is Satan’s lie. He tells you the *grass is greener on the other side of the fence*—Christianity is a hard, cold, boring path. You will miss out on all the fun and excitement available in the world. It is all a horrible, deadly lie.

To which will you listen?—the *Son of God* who left paradise and eternal bliss to die on the cross that He might have you as His own special treasure—or—the *angel of light*, a liar and a murderer, whose object is to ruin the joy and testimony your life can render for the Lord Jesus Christ. “*We walk by faith, not by sight*” (2 Cor. 5:7).

“It Seemed so Right”

v 13 “*And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they*

had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.”

In over 30 years of teaching I have known many students who listened to the enemy’s advice, and though still young in years, were already paying a high price for doing so. How often I heard a tearful student say, “It seemed so right...it seemed like it was everything I had dreamed about, everything I had ever wanted...it felt so good”.

They had left the safe, constraining influences of their *Fair Havens* and had reached out and taken what looked so attractive and promising. The result was suffering horrible pain and sorrow. How many promising young lives, have been ruined, marred, soiled, scarred because they would not stay within the constraints of *Fair Havens*.

When those first exciting steps away from *Fair Havens* were taken, everything did seem wonderful. Freedom, joy, happiness, contentment ...the *south wind* surely seemed to be blowing *softly*. Things couldn’t be better. That’s often the experience of those first few tentative steps away from the safety of Christian homes, assemblies, and the divine protection of the Word of God. When those things are initially left, seeking a wider, more pleasant journey through life, the *south wind* may very likely blow, lulling you into a false sense of well-being and security.

Self-will often doesn’t seem wrong at the very first. But there are sad consequences just around the corner when guided by your will.

“It Felt so Good”

Those with Paul in the centurion’s boat *thought* that they had gained their purpose, because of the initially pleasant atmosphere. All was calm, quiet, and lovely. Much nicer and more pleasant than the boring, dull harbor at *Fair Havens*. They even stayed close to land—*close by Crete*, and in doing so, no doubt felt very safe as well.

The word *Crete* means “fleshy”. And this—seeking to satisfy the flesh—is the very thing, beloved reader, that will bring disaster in your life’s journey. If you know Christ as Saviour, then know that the flesh (which can never please God – Rom. 8:8) was put to death at the cross. *I am crucified with Christ...In my flesh dwelleth no good thing* (see also Rom. 7:5). But the flesh still demands satisfaction if we do not daily reckon it to be where God has placed it—dead and in the grave. It will always demand that your life be charted *close* to it—so it can always be fed and sustained. Don’t listen!

The Word of God tells us to *reckon ourselves dead to sin* and

alive unto God. Sin in all of its corrupting ways, is not to *reign in your mortal body*. But if Christ is not really the *Master and Owner* of your ship, then every day of your life's journey will be spent seeking to satisfy the cravings of the wicked and hopeless flesh in you—leaving you in the end, empty, unsatisfied and shipwrecked.

Disaster Strikes!

v 14 “*But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.*”

The tempestuous wind—no doubt what we would term a hurricane—hit the centurion's ship suddenly and unexpectedly. One moment all was calm and sunny with the south wind blowing gently. No indication of impending doom. Then, without warning the storm hit in all its fury. There was no slow build up of raging waves and winds—it was calm, clear and gentle one moment, and a raging storm was upon them the next. There were no more warnings, for they had refused to listen to the warnings of Paul.

Dear reader, this is exactly what you will face in your life's journey, if you disregard the truth of God. He has warned you through His chosen servants—the Word of God, the circumstances of life, or parents, Christian friends, or brethren. To disregard God's loving and solemn warnings is to, without fail, end up in a disastrous storm. “*He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*” (Prov. 29:1) Oh! Dear reader! Consider well and soberly the awful consequences of having and doing your own will, in direct opposition and disobedience to the will and Word of God.

Out of Control

v 15 “*And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.*”

Many have listened to the world that encourages them to *do things their own way—do whatever pleases them*. Ever since the garden of Eden, man has rebelled against God, spending life's journey going his own way and doing *his own thing*. That is the normal course and desire of fallen man. But when a soul is saved and has made the Lord Jesus *Master* (Lord) of their life, then the safe and joyful path is truly saying each day, *not my will but thine be done*.

Yet, sad to say, how many dear young believers (and older ones too!) have traveled life's journey according to their own thoughts,

desires, and will. Unexpected storms—serious difficulties, trials, pressures—*will always* come (God will not continue to allow a dear child of His to live happily in self-will and disobedience), and the *ship is caught*. The so-called freedom and liberty of will is suddenly, harshly swept away—and the sad realization comes—“I’m not in control of my life anymore!”. “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.* (Isa. 53:6).

What a terrible price to pay—to realize that self-will has brought storms of difficulties, which cannot be controlled. Finding that they cannot face life’s storms brought on by self-will and refusal to stay in *Fair Havens*, believers have to give up and *let her drive*. It is no longer their will that is directing events, but the will of forces out of their control—how solemn.

Beloved young reader, this is what comes of refusal to listen to God’s loving warnings. The freedom of will that may have seemed so pleasant, so desirable, only brings you a storm in which your life is out of control, and all of your efforts are found unable to regain what has been lost. Oh! Do not leave the safe harbor, the restraining influences that Christianity has exerted in *Fair Havens*. Remain there seeking grace to submit to His perfect, loving will for your life.

The Bill for Self-Will

v 16 “*And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat (we were with difficulty able to make ourselves masters of the boat – (JND trans.).*”

Though the harbor at *Fair Havens* had appeared harsh and unappealing to the majority of those on the centurion’s ship, staying there would have insured something they quickly lost in the storm—*rest and peace*. The Lord Jesus lovingly entreats each, *come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Matt. 11:28). He is, we might say, the perfect fulfillment of what *Fair Havens* suggests—the One Who has perfect rest, peace and love for those who will come to, and stay with, Him.

We read in Isa. 53 that *when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him*. With the natural eyes, the Lord Jesus Christ appears unattractive to the heart—it is only with eyes anointed by faith that we see that He is truly our *Fair Havens*. The only One in whom we can find true rest, real peace, and lasting comfort.

But now, these who were in the middle of a storm that they could not face, have no time for rest, comfort or ease. It is only with

great difficulty and lots of *hard work* that they are able to gain apparent control of the ship. But at what a cost to the ship.

How expensive it becomes for those whose self-will have taken them away from the protecting care and comfort of the Lord. It takes *much work*—time, effort, finances, emotional and spiritual toll—to try to gain control of a life that has gone out of control in life’s storms.

May we say lovingly and beseechingly to each reader—freedom from the perceived constraints of *Fair Havens* is **not worth what it will cost you.**

Attempting Damage Control

v 17 “*Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quick-sands, strake sail, and so were driven.*”

Often when believers find themselves in great difficulties caused by self-will and disobedience, there is an urge to *make promises to do better* or to be *more watchful* the next time. Perhaps renewed efforts are made to *read the Bible* or *pray* or to be more *faithful in attending meetings*. All of these things, good in themselves, are examples of the *helps* and *undergirding* that those on the centurion’s ship used, trying to lessen further damage.

But dear young friend, making resolutions to *do better, after* the hurt and sorrow of your self-will has marked your life, is not the happy and peaceful way to journey. Seeking the Lord’s help to please and submit to Him *before* the storms brought on by self-will come and so that they *do not come*, is far preferable.

Imminent Destruction

Those on ship realized that they were being driven (against their will) towards the dreaded *quicksands* of the North African coast (the area we know today as Libya). Should the ship be caught in that awful trap, no amount of effort could save them from an agonizing death.

Beloved young person, why wait until a terrible difficulty in life confronts you, before you realize the deadly dangers and hopeless results of doing your own will—of rejecting the Lordship of Christ in your life? There are *no quicksands* in the safe harbor of Fair Havens.

Read verse 17 carefully. Do you know what *strake sail* means? It means that because of the storm, the sail was lowered so it would not be destroyed by the wind. What does that teach us? Once they lowered the sail, all hope of making progress on their journey was

given up! The control they thought to have over their journey, was now completely gone! If a believer follows a course of disobedience and self-will in life, the ability God has given to make progress in the path of faith, to grow *in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour*; to enter in and enjoy all the wonderful promises that God has made us in Christ—all of that joy may be sadly lost.

How sad to have to try to get through the storms and difficulties of life, having lost the ability to move forward—to *press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:14).

Frenzied Desperation

v 18 “*And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship (“threw the cargo overboard” – JND trans.);*”

In spite of all their efforts to save the ship and their lives, the storm only grew worse, proving the utter futility of all their efforts. What was left for them to do? Throw over all the cargo they carried, hoping that the lightened ship could better withstand the storm.

Oh! Beloved young persons—consider well what this desperate move means as you think about living your life according to your own will and desires, while disregarding God’s thoughts! What sorrow, what loss, what sadness!

Do you remember earlier when we mentioned examples of the *cargo* that God has given you to carry on life’s journey—things like purity, emotional well being, faith, etc.? We shudder to think how many dear believers, in order to try to get through a terribly difficult time in their life, throw some or all of these things overboard. Perhaps these terrible storms of life bring a believer to mistakenly reason that the only way out of the trial is to give up one’s purity. Or perhaps the storm is so severe that a believer’s faith is overthrown—and such begin to question their salvation.

We are sure that not one of those who urged the centurion to leave *Fair Havens* in order to find a more pleasant place, thought that doing so would cost them all of the precious cargo that their ship carried. This very thing is seen in the life of dear Naomi in the book of Ruth. There, she and her husband, in order to escape a famine in God’s promised land, left and went to the land of Moab. That decision cost Naomi her husband and two sons. What a price to pay for leaving the place God desired them to occupy! Hear her words when, after several years, she is restored and comes back to the land she left—“I

went out **full**, and the Lord hath brought me home again **empty**.”

Naomi’s life was saved, and she was restored back to the Lord. But she lost all of the precious cargo she possessed when she left Bethlehem and followed with her husband in that path of unbelief.

Beloved young reader, listen! The price is far too costly. If you decide to leave the safety of the *Fair Havens* and move in disobedience to the precious Word of God in your life’s journey, you, like Naomi, will become **empty**.

Uncontrollable Damage

v19 “*And the third [day] we cast out with our own hands the tackling (furniture – JND trans.) of the ship.*”

After this the storm not only claimed the cargo carried on the ship; it also claimed the *furniture* of the ship. Besides the precious *cargo* which God graciously and lovingly has given you, He also has equipped you with the *furniture* necessary to carry you through life’s journey. Perhaps we might think of the *ship’s furniture* as your health, mental abilities, personality, and talents. Thus, the storms that assail one who has moved in direct disobedience to the Word of God, may quickly claim health, emotional stability—all those things needed in order that you might enjoy a happy and fulfilled journey. We say again, dear young reader, the price of self-will exacted in life’s journey is terrible to consider.

Hopeless Despair

v 20 “*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.*”

Now everything’s gone!—Fun, excitement, peace, rest, cargo, furniture—one thing alone—**hope**—is left, and now that too is taken away. Please carefully notice the solemn words of Scripture. Hope wasn’t lost, it wasn’t misused or misplaced—it was *taken away*. Dear young reader, this is the final, awful price that is exacted from a life lived according to self-will and disregard for God’s thoughts. Here it is that the *fiery darts* of the enemy find their mark in a disobedient Christian (Eph. 6:16). After everything else had been *lost* or *thrown away*, hope, the one thing that those on the ship with the centurion absolutely could not afford to lose—the one thing to which they all were desperately clinging and dared not lose—was *taken* from them.

There was no sun, no stars, no indication whatever that the

terrible storm which had overtaken their ship so suddenly was lessening. Had they seen even one tiny star or ray of sunlight during those raging nights and days, they could have had the comfort of a *little* hope. But no, the cost of leaving *Fair Havens* was only hopeless darkness, wind, and waves.

You may not think that the self-willed decisions you have made during your journey of life will require the giving up or the losing of anything. The world and its *angel of light*—the god of this world—are masters at hiding the truth—blinding the *minds* of those *that believe not*.

Give and Take

Be assured that difficulties in a path of disobedience will surely arise—problems of such magnitude that you won't be *able* to find any way to solve them. Those things you hold most precious in life, may quickly and brutally be *taken away* even though you had no thought of giving them up. Cain's world system never *gives*, never provides lasting *hope*—it can only *take*. And it will do so until you have nothing more to give. Then, like the Egyptian servant of the Amalekite (1 Sam. 30:13), when you have nothing more to give the world, it will leave you sick and dying—*empty* and *hopeless*.

The *Fair Havens* is where the *God of all hope, peace, comfort and love* (Rom. 15:13, Heb. 13:20, 2 Cor. 1:3, 1 John 4:8) dwells. Why would you leave such a safe place and such sweet fellowship (with the Creator God and your Saviour!) for the cold, dark, and dangerous waters of the world?

How many poor, deluded people today, wake up with the realization that they have been brought to a place in life where there is no longer any hope. Then, horrible to have to say, having concluded that there is nothing worth living for, they may be driven to commit the ultimate tragedy by taking their life. Oh! May God preserve each one who reads this from such a course!

Would that God stir up each of us, that we not be like those foolish, stubborn sheep that wander away from the blessed comfort, safety and rest that our *great, all gracious Shepherd* offers His blood-bought own.

Part Three

The Journey of Repentance

Help Seemed So Close

I recently read an account of the sinking of the great ocean liner, Titanic, which is purported to be a very accurate history of that tragic event. As I read and pondered its record, the thought often came to my mind, “*if only*”. *If only* the owner had not demanded the captain race through that dark night in order to break the speed record for crossing the Atlantic. *If only* the warning message had been immediately heeded. *If only* the helmsman would have steered the great ship differently when he saw the iceberg.... *if only*.

But to me, the saddest facts were two shocking statements made by eye-witness survivors. *First*, many people *did not believe* the reports of trouble until it was too late. They did not take advantage of the lifeboats, though the crew spent well over an hour pleading with and begging many people to get into them—all the while, being routinely refused! The majority of the lifeboats were only partially filled—some with as few as a third of their potential capacity.

The second, and even more shocking fact was that there was evidently *another ship* within sight of the sinking Titanic—just a few miles away! Many survivors testified to seeing the lights of a large ship in the near distance. This convinced many other passengers who foolishly refused to get in the lifeboats, that help was close at hand. They were sure the ship would come to their aid and need not trouble themselves leaving the comfort of the Titanic.

Yet, in spite of urgent distress calls, that “ghost” ship suddenly turned and left the scene of the terrible catastrophe! Some experts theorize that the ship may have been a foreign vessel that was illegally in those waters. Others suggest its wireless operator had gone to sleep and did not receive the distress call. Whatever the realities, all these circumstances added up to a horrible fate for over 1500 souls.

Help is Close

Dear young reader, though the journey in Acts 27 may seem to have come to a similar hopeless condition—the end is very different from the tragic end of the Titanic. Let’s see how *all hope that we should be saved was then taken away* is now replaced by the wonderful words, *be of good cheer*.

First, never forget that even when things are impossible, beyond

the control or help of man—there is still one (and only one), divine, unyielding, hope. Our blessed God tells us in His precious Word that what is *impossible with men* is one of the *all things* that are *possible* with God (Matt. 19:26, Mk. 10:27). Isn't it great to realize that no matter how dark and hopeless things may be, there still reigns in glory the One Who asks: "*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?*" (Jer. 32:27).

Never, oh never! forget dear young believer, that, no matter how great the sin and failure may be in your life—no matter how hopeless your present situation may seem, God is infinitely greater. He has given you a never changing invitation to come into His very presence to receive *mercy and find grace to help in time of need* (Heb. 4:16). Always remember that the God who loves you, gave His Son to die for you, and who is your Father—perfect in wisdom and love—has never stopped desiring the very best for you. He never change His desire to give the best to you, though self-will and sin are terrible barriers to receiving God's best blessings.

Though sin and self-will seems to have ruined any opportunity for you to receive and enjoy God's best in your life, *there is still a way back*. It is the way of **repentance**. The Word of God has many examples of the blessings that have come when there is true repentance. Consider Job as a prime example. He said (when all seemed lost and hopeless in his life) "*I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes*" (Job 42:6). Just a few verses later (v. 10) we find that the Lord gave Job *twice as much* substance as he had lost!

Remember what wonderful and rich blessings the prodigal son received when he repented and turned back to the father he had dishonored—the best robe, the fatted calf, shoes, a ring, and above all, the father's kisses and the joy he had lost, regained in the father's house!

Repentance—The Truth Hurts

v 21 "*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.*"

As mentioned, *the truth hurts*. But confessing that it is because you have sinned against God that all now seems so dark and hopeless in your life, is the first and most vitally important step you will take on "restoration road". Do you remember what David said when he repented of his dreadful sin (adultery)? "*For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only,*

have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest” (Psa. 51:3,4). How it must have grieved dear David to say that—but those are the *only words* which could open the door to blessing for him

Notice another thing—it was after a *long abstinence* that Paul spoke to those whose *hope had been taken from them*. Why did the apostle wait so long? Why didn’t he keep arguing with the centurion and the crew until they listened to his warning? Because they had already rejected what he said—they *did not want his advice*.

Are You Ready to Hear The Truth?

Dear reader, do you really want to hear the loving and perfect wisdom of God for you, no matter how confused your life may be right now? Our wonderful God won’t force His will on you. We see this principle in Acts 21:14—“*when he would not be persuaded, he ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done*”. How striking that this is recorded about the beloved Apostle Paul himself! Some time before this voyage, the Lord had sent many warnings that he should not go to Jerusalem. But the apostle’s love for the Jewish people caused him to disregard those divine warnings. Finally the warnings stopped, and before long, the apostle found himself a prisoner on a ship, heading towards Rome, all because he hadn’t heeded them.

In Psa. 106:15 we see a similar principle. The Lord gave the children of Israel “*their request; but sent leanness into their soul*”. How those poor, rebellious Israelites suffered when the Lord gave them what they wanted! They desired flesh and they got flesh—quail. But they became so nauseated after eating it, that many died. Later, they got a king—Saul—who made their lives hard and unhappy, and allowed their enemies to oppress them. What a price to pay for *getting what* they wanted!

No Long Speeches

Paul had been quiet all those days after the centurion refused his remonstrances at *Fair Havens*. Now Julius as well as almost everyone else on board ship, realized how foolish and wrong they had been to refuse to listen to Paul. Are you, dear reader, still refusing to listen to God’s loving and gentle warnings about the course of life you are following?

The Apostle didn’t need to say much. They all knew how wrong they had been. Does it seem like the apostle Paul is “rubbing in” the

hard lesson they were learning? He wasn't. But God *requireth that which is past*. In love and faithfulness, He will remind each repentant child, just exactly what caused the sorrow they are experiencing. If this is what you are feeling dear young person, don't despair. You are on the only road that will lead you back to joy, peace and satisfaction. Listen to God's loving and tender rebuke, accept it, bow to it, and judge as sin what took you on that path.

Hope Restored

v 22 “*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.*”

What!? “*Be of good cheer*”? But how can I possibly be happy when I have so miserably sinned against the God who loved and saved me? How can I be cheerful when all I see is the miserable and hopeless storm in my life—a storm that my self-will has caused? How you ask . . . the answer is simple and beautiful. Because **God** tells you to be of good cheer.

A bit later in the 51st Psalm quoted above, David says, “*a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*” When there is true repentance with you, dear reader, the result will be a *broken heart* (for so grieving and dishonoring the Lord) and a *contrite heart* (for making such a mess of your life). When the Lord sees that spirit, the healing and the blessing will begin.

Further, though there is no joy or profit in trying to *hide* sin, God promises that one who “*confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*” (Prov. 28:13). That's just what you may expect to find from the loving, merciful God you have turned your back on—full, free forgiveness, and boundless mercy. But remember—true repentance is proven by *confessing* and *forsaking* the sin into which you have fallen. Words, dear reader, aren't enough—there must also be action. We sometimes hear that “its not enough to *talk the talk* if a person doesn't *walk the walk*”.

Think about the mercy that was being poured out on the foolish centurion and those who had advised him to refuse the apostle's advice. “*There shall be no loss of any man's life among you*”. Probably nobody on that ship (except perhaps Aristarchus and Luke) expected to hear that! One moment *all hope* had been taken away, and the next, after being reminded *why* it was gone, God (using the apostle Paul as His channel of blessing) *restores* to them the seemingly most *impossible* thing to get back—*hope*!

Faithfulness and Forgiveness

But Paul, the servant of God, is *faithful* as well as comforting. The comfort was that their lives would be saved—none was going to a watery grave in that raging sea. The faithfulness was in telling them that the ship would be lost. There is always a consequence for following a path of self-will. “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Gal. 6:7). Sometimes we do, because of self-will and sin, lose something precious. There are consequences—scars—that can result from sin. God who lovingly forgives also faithfully judges.

Perhaps we can think of dear Lot as an example of this very thing. We will meet him someday in heaven. The Bible describes him (in 2 Pet. 2:7) as *just Lot*. Yet poor Lot lost *everything*, including his good name, because of the self-willed course he followed in life (you read the story of Lot in Genesis 12–19). Oh! Don’t make the mistake of reasoning that because someday you will be in heaven with the Lord Jesus, for now you can live according to your own will. Daily seek grace that you might be preserved *spirit, soul and body* (1 Thess. 5:23).

Faith or Sight?

v 23, 24 “*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.*”

No doubt while the frightened sailors and passengers were *listening* to Paul’s words, they were intently *watching* the storm rage. Which would win—*faith* or *sight*? There was nothing they could see which supported or proved that what the apostle said was true. If they believed their eyes, the apostle was speaking (we say reverently) foolishly. However, faith in what this servant of God said gave them confidence and hope.

In the midst of the raging difficulties of life, dear believer, allow faith to lay hold of God and His precious Word. Act in the spirit of *thus saith the Lord* (faith) rather than the spirit of *we saw the children of Anak there* (sight). Please see Num. 13:28.

Happy, Not Hopeless

v 25 “*Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.*”

It really is just that simple. Do you want to be happy and

comforted in the midst of the difficulties that surround you, dear young person? The answer is obvious!

The key is to say *I believe God* (not circumstances, feelings, or what others think or say). And how can you *know* what to believe—how can you know for sure what God is telling you? By reading, meditating on, and *obeying* His precious Word in faith. Remember what the little child said one time about faith? “God said it, that settles it, *I believe it*”!

Believe the goodness of God. Believe the infinite power of God. Believe the unfathomable love of God. Believe, beloved young Christian, that He is eagerly waiting for one of His erring children to repent—*I have sinned against heaven*. Believe that *if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. Believe and in true repentance turn back to God. You will be met by your Father who waits now, longing to bring blessing to you.

Whatever the seemingly hopeless condition of your life which has resulted from sin and self-will, He can and will bring about peace and joy. Our God is the God of all comfort and hope—the One and the only One who can and will bring light into a dark scene of misery and ruin. Oh! Do run to Him—do come back to Him—right now!

Part Four

The Journey Back To Safety

God's Way or No Way

v 26 *“Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.”*

The Lord graciously begins, we might say, a work of restoration with the centurion and those on board his ship. But things were going to be very different from the manner of life and habits that had previously characterized this vessel. They were going to live—Paul's word assured them of that, and he spoke the truth, for he spoke from God. But in order that his message might bring peace and joy, it would have to be received by faith.

God's message to you, dear young person—if you are going to reap the benefits of joy and peace—must be believed by faith. If your life has met with disasters and storms because of self-will, and you have been brought in God's goodness to repentance—then you may be assured that happy times are ahead. “. . . *the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance*” (Rom. 2:4).

But it will require real faith in the God who loves you and wants to bring you back to Himself where you may afresh enjoy His love. Perhaps in your restoration you, too, will be *cast upon an island*. That is, you will find in the path of restoration, that things for you too are going to be different, and you will be placed in circumstances where you have God alone as your resource. With true restoration, things will be different! *“He restoreth my soul...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”* (Psa. 23).

God's Work— Slow and Thorough

v 27 *“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”*

After 14 days of hopelessness in the violent storm, they finally had hope, for the sailors realized they were drawing near to *some country*. However they didn't know what country they were nearing. In that wonderful *faith chapter*, Heb. 11, we read of those who by *faith* plainly said that they were looking for *a country*. The country they had left could not satisfy them, and they now *desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city*”. That is what the Lord wants to bring you to, dear young believer. He wants you to

have a desire in your heart for something better than what led you away from Him—a desire for the *heavenly* country where He is and where He has prepared your eternal dwelling. Nothing in this world can compare with the peace and beauty of that paradise. The more we desire to be there, the safer and happier will be our journey here.

Making Progress

v 28 “*And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms*”

Those on board the ship, now having regained some hope after their seemingly hopeless ordeal, begin to show an interest in their progress. This ought to be found in the life of one who is restored. That is, there will be an increasing interest in *where I am in my life*—a concern as to whether I am making real spiritual progress. Where before, there was only a desire for freedom and liberty to do my own will, a real desire to make progress in my Christian life will be evident.

Firm Anchors For Fear

v 29 “*Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day*”.

A short time before, those on board the ship had given up all hope of being saved. Now they fear lest the boat be driven onto the rocks and their lives lost! This is progress! So it is that a restored believer will surely have a very tender conscience—a godly fear of *the rocks* which might cause another spiritual disaster.

In an effort to keep from the rocks, the sailors cast out *four anchors*. As a soul once again finds the Christian joy lost through disobedience, God’s Word will become the only safe *anchor* for every circumstance of life. *Four* in Scripture symbolizes what is *universal*. So too there will be a fresh sense that the Bible is *universally applicable* to every area and every detail of our lives.

It was still night, but evidently the storm was abating and they realized that with the coming of daylight they would finally be able to see. How eagerly they must have looked for that day! We are called *children of the day* (1 Thess. 5:5) and we ought never to feel comfortable walking in the moral night of this world.

We also read in Psa. 30:5, “. . . *weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*”. David was told “*as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart*” (1 Sam. 29:10). The

Lord would have us walk in the *light* of day, as He is *in the light* and that He wants us to always be looking and longing for the *daylight* of His promised return. *Even so, come, Lord Jesus* (Rev. 22: 20).

Listening to Paul

v 30–32 “*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, ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.*”

The sailors, responsible for guiding the ship, were planning to abandon it under the guise of making it more secure. It is important, dear young believer, that the unchanging doctrines and principles of the Word of God not be *abandoned* for *modern* concepts of Christianity. Sometimes it may seem as though such modernistic teaching is more relevant, making the abandonment of the *old paths* a wise thing to do in view of the storm. But as with Paul’s warnings, happiness and safety on the voyage of life requires holding to that which never changes—the Word of God. Merely religious ideas and concepts may sound good, especially after experiencing a fall in your life. However, if followed, they may lead to *abandoning* of the Christian pathway.

Can You Trust Your Guide?

Be careful of using the very free and modern paraphrases and translations of the Word of God. The language of these may seem more understandable. But they contain much error and their effect on your life will be like those sailors who, though appearing to be helping, were in reality deserting those in need.

The anchors that were meant to slow the ship and keep it from smashing on the rocks were at the back—the *stern*—of the ship. These sailors (like modern translations) were pretending to put something in the *front*. Modern translations often do not hold back and preserve the ship, but rather allow it to move *ahead*, bringing in doctrinal confusion and error. “*Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God*” (2 John, v. 9, JND Trans.).

Be careful also, dear young believer, of any “religious counseling” which under the guise of helping you out of your difficulties, moves *forward* (teaching supposedly new truth concerning the Lord

Jesus and Christian life)—counselling which does not seem to remain rooted and founded *in the doctrine of Christ*.

You Need Food

v 33, 34 “*And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye 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 of you.*”

Fourteen days is a long time to go without food! They had been so pre-occupied with the terrible storm, that they had not taken time to eat. Perhaps the storm or difficulty that has assailed your life has not allowed you the opportunity or the desire to feed on God’s Word. But that is the very *meat* that you must have to regain your spiritual strength. Be sure to spend time every day, diligently feeding on the precious Word of God. It is *for your health*.

If your desire is to come back to the Lord, be encouraged! *There shall not an hair fall from your head*. The Lord has promised that “*And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand*” (Jn. 10:28, 29). Though you may have suffered a ship-wreck, when there is repentance, God can and will bring you to another ship. Take heart and *take meat*!

A Good Example

v 35–37 “*And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in 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.*”

Paul set the example by giving thanks and eating. See the power and effect of a *good example*! The rest watched him, saw his confidence, believed his word, and they *were of good cheer*. Perhaps you have tasted deep sorrow in your life and realized that self-will has brought it about. Now, repentant and forgiven, it is vitally important to follow *examples* given in the Word of God. God promises not only to *forgive* confessed sin, but to *cleanse... from all unrighteousness*. Let this give you hope for *if God be for us, who can be against us?*

You need the divine food of God’s precious Word to strengthen,

nourish, and keep you from slipping and falling again. There were 276 souls on the ship who were desperately in need of *taking some meat*. Dear young person, you have a far greater number of *reasons* to take divine nourishment! Whether in school, at work, in your neighborhood—whatever the daily contacts of your life, you need food to act for God’s glory for every single situation you will face. If the Lord has graciously restored you from a storm brought about by self-will, remember—*be of good cheer and take some meat*.

Don’t Waste The Wheat!

v 38 “*And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.*”

Strange that having eaten nothing for 14 days, those on board did not seem to *value* the life giving food they were finally able to enjoy. Stranger still that once filled they would so quickly throw overboard the very thing needed to *preserve* their life. How swiftly we too—after the precious Word of God has *satisfied* and helped us through some trial—can lose our taste of its life-giving riches.

Having freshly received the sense of God’s wonderful forgiveness, do not thoughtlessly throw out all the rich and boundless truth (*wheat*) found in its pages. It is possible that even a newly restored soul can quickly lose the *appetite* for and sense of *need* of the Bible.

Are You Listening to Lies?

What caused those on board ship to throw their supply of *wheat into the sea*? Perhaps it was because they felt its weight would hinder further progress through the lessening storm. Oh! don’t allow the precious truths found in the Word of God to be *thrown overboard*! The enemy will ever seek to convince you that the truth of the Word of God is nothing more than mere *brethren truth* or that, being so hard to understand, it will do you no good. He may suggest that you don’t have time to read in our busy day. Worst of all, he will tell you that those volumes of ministry contain teachings that don’t really *apply* to the situations and conditions of this modern world.

“After all”, the enemy reasons, “weren’t these things written in past centuries? . . . how could believers who lived in the 1800’s when there weren’t airplanes, computers, telephones, and so many other modern miracles of technology, minister from the Bible in a way that meets your needs today?” He may suggest that the truths of God ministered in past generations will only hinder your progress,

holding you back rather than helping you make progress through the often difficult and confusing world in which we live.

Satan may never suggest to you that these volumes of ministry are *wrong*. But he will tell you they are *impractical* and *out of touch* with your needs. He'll encourage you to *throw* them *overboard*, promising a smoother, more comfortable ride through life. All such reasoning and suggestions are presented by he who is "*...the devil...and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him...he is a liar, and the father of it.*" (Jn. 8:44)

Looking For Solid Ground

v 39 "*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.*"

The *land* was, to these weary, storm tossed voyagers, their haven of safety. But when *the day* came it was a place with which they were unfamiliar. Thinking they saw a way (the creek) to reach this unfamiliar land, they made a bad decision.

Unfamiliarity with divine truth may cause the firm and sure footing which God seeks to bring the restored soul to, seem impossible to attain. It may also result in having wrong thoughts about how to get to safety. It is familiarity with the Lord's guiding voice that will bring you there. "*And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it. . .*" (Isa. 30:21). "*I [being] in the way, the LORD led me*" (Gen. 24:27).

If the Lord has graciously restored you to Himself, after a painful fall into sin, dear young person, take time to become acquainted with the *land* (heaven) which is your safe haven. The more familiar you are with it, the happier and safer you will be. Remember, the Lord Jesus alone can give the wisdom necessary to make right decisions when seeking the place of rest and safety after the storm. "*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all [men] liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*" (Jas.1:5).

Don't Give Up and Don't Give In

v 40 "*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.*"

They had already thrown overboard the rest of the food (v.38) —*they gave up their source of strength* . Now the *anchors* that

secured them in the storm are released—they gave up their stability. Next the bands which held the rudder firm were released—they gave up their source of direction. After that the sail is raised, allowing the stormy wind to drive them—they gave up all control. While hoping that the ship would somehow gain the shore's safety, they gave up every means needed to assure them of a safe and successful arrival!

Feed on Christ to Gain Strength

To continue now on a safe and happy journey after the Lord has graciously restored, you must have Christ as the strength of your life. Just like the children of Israel in the wilderness had *manna* (God's heavenly food) to feed on, so you now have Christ, the *Bread of Heaven*, to feed on for your strength and satisfaction. Do feed (think about Him, talk to Him, read about Him) daily—don't throw the *wheat overboard!* "*Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim. 2:1).

Pray to Gain Stability

We are told in God's Word that *men ought always to pray, and not to faint* (Luke 18:1). In 1 Thess. 5:17 we are further told to *pray without ceasing*. And in James 5:16 (JND Trans.) we read that *the fervent supplication of the righteous man has much power*. The Lord Jesus, as the perfect, dependent Man, was, we say reverently, a Man of prayer (see especially the gospel of Luke). Each believer, in spite of their circumstances, failures or victories, must travel the journey of life in the spirit of dependence on God. This is always expressed through prayer, and it is the means by which *stability* is gained—the stability needed to go through life without wavering in storms.

Read to Gain Direction

It is the Word of God which provides *direction* for our lives. The Bible is like those *rudder bands* that kept the ship steady and unwavering in the midst of those terrible waves, wind and storm. How important to keep our eyes steadily focused, through the Bible's divine direction, on the end of the path of faith (*he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God* – Heb. 11:10). How we need this divine *rudder* to guide us along the journey of life!

Follow the Spirit to Gain Control

The Spirit of God Who dwells in every true believer (see 1 Cor. 6:19) is the *power* Christians need to move along the journey of life. It is possible to grieve this Divine Guest through disobedience and self-will. When this happens in a believer's life, *happiness* is lost. It is also possible for a Christian to try to walk on life's journey listening to and using the world's advice (the *wind*) rather than *walking* in the power of the Spirit of God (see Eph. 4:14). When this happens, *control* is lost because a believer is at the mercy of every changing whim of worldly intelligence. How much better to allow the Spirit of God (by faith) to be the only source of power which takes us along our journey.

Don't Give in to The World

v 41 “*And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.*”

Had they not given up control of the ship to the storm, those on board would have experienced a far more pleasant landing. The very same thing happens when a believer tries to follow the Lord, while at the same time listening to worldly advice. Children of God walk by *faith* not by *sight*, so when a Christian tries to do both, the result is that they get stuck—no real progress in the Christian pathway can be made. “*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways*” (Jas. 1:8).

There are *two seas* which frequently beat upon the believer, hindering spiritual progress by faith. They are the *religious world* and the *natural world*. Neither world can help a child of God walk by faith through life. Not only are they opposed to the life of faith, but they often violently oppose each other. A believer who gets caught up in them can receive serious damage in life. Just as part of the ship broke up in the violence of these two opposing forces, so the life of faith cannot be fully and properly lived if following these “two seas” of man's opinions and standards.

Of course the Christian is *safe*. A believer can, as previously mentioned, never lose his or her salvation. But the ability to walk by faith through life's storms can be lost in the violence of *two seas*.

The Best for The Last

v 42-44 “*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”.

Though they all lived (just as the Lord had assured Paul they would), their refusal to listen to his warnings, and their subsequent foolish decisions, cost them everything. This is not God’s desire for your life, beloved young Christian.

We have already mentioned that it is the *goodness of God that leads to repentance*. If you have passed through a storm in your life, have repented, and are now seeking to find a life full of meaning, satisfaction and joy, carefully consider the following passages. They are but a few of those that so wonderfully and clearly reveal the heart of God towards you.

“Prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:10).

“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground” (Mal. 3:11).

“For thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you ” (2 Pet. 1:11, JND trans.).

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (Eph. 1:19).

“Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph. 3:20).

May these verses (and a multitude more) comfort and encourage your heart. In spite of what failures may have taken place in your life, the result of true repentance before God will be to find, as Job did of old, that God is there for you, to bless you with *twice as much*, as it were, as before.

Nothing, dear reader is too hard for God. *“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?” (Jer. 32:27).* *“With God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27).* Trust Him fully, implicitly—trust Him for every step of your life’s journey.

Epilogue

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).

Please receive a loving caution, dear reader, especially if you are younger. More particularly, one who may have experienced a fall, and now, through the goodness and grace of God, has repented and been restored to joy and fellowship with Himself.

The Lord had a solemn warning for one He had graciously forgiven of her grievous sin—*“And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more”* (Jn. 8:11). It was His desire — *his command*—that the forgiven sinner was to live in a way suited to the glory and holiness of the One who had so freely forgiven her. To make light of such infinite restoring grace, and heedlessly return to a path of self-willed sin from which she had been delivered, would doubtless bring far more solemn consequences into her life.

We know that the Lord multiplied Peter’s willingness to forgive an erring brother seventy times (*“Peter. . .said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith. . . Until seventy times seven.”*— Matt. 18:21, 22).

But to use the Divine willingness to forgive as an excuse to return to a path of self-will is, in principle, to *turn the grace of God into lasciviousness* (Jude v. 4). In Hebrews 10:29 we read of those who did *despite unto the Spirit of grace*. Such received a *sore punishment*. Oh! Do not treat lightly your sin or the restoring grace and goodness of God which brought you to repentance and restored your joy! How solemn the results of such a course! *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Gal 6:7).

The path of deep and abiding Christian happiness is found first in repenting and *confessing* known sin, and then in *forsaking* it.

In closing, let us hear the words of King David when he confessed to Jehovah his sin with Bathsheba. May the spirit he displayed be that of each one who has returned in repentance to the Lord.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not the spirit of thy holiness from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and let a willing spirit sustain me” (Psa. 51:9-11, JND Trans).