

Title: Except Ye Stay in the Ship

Text: Acts 27: 22-44

Date: August 13, 2017

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Thursday, we saw in Matthew's gospel when the disciples' of Christ followed him into a ship and then into a storm, how that when we enter into fellow-ship with Christ then we shall face trials. But the trial is a must because we are taught of Christ through the stormy trial. Through the word of God our Savior and the trials we face, we learn the importance of staying in fellow-ship with Christ and his people.

This morning we will see that again in our text in Acts 27.

The title of the message is "Except Ye Stay in the Ship."

The apostle Paul was being carried, bound to Rome to stand before Caesar. There were many fellows in the ship with Paul. It is not by accident that believers in the church under the rule of Christ through the preaching of the gospel are said to be in "fellowship." The concept of fellowship is what we see pictured by the apostle Paul and these men all in the ship on their way to Rome. Like believers, they were in fellowship. Also, like believers, different kinds of people were in fellowship: a Roman centurion and Roman soldiers, sailors from various parts of the world, Paul an apostle, Luke who was a physician, Aristachus from the church in Thessalonica. All these different kinds of people were in this fellow ship on a voyage across the sea to a predetermined destination. So it is with us who worship Christ. We are believer's in fellow-ship with Christ and the Father, and with one another in Christ, as we take our voyage across the sea of life on our way to God's eternal shore.

As Paul and the others sailed, a large storm came upon them, called, Euroclydon. They tried to save themselves. They cast overboard things they did not need. But they could not save themselves. At last, having heard from the Lord, Paul stood up and declared the word of the Lord in their midst.

Acts 27: 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. 23: For there stood by me this night the angel of God, [Christ the Lord] whose I am, and whom I serve, 24: Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. 25: Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. 26: Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. 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; 28: And sounded, and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms. 29: Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. 30: 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, 31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

Christ had spoken to Paul his messenger. Paul his messenger was in fellow ship with these men. So Paul spoke Christ's word to these men. According to Christ's word of promise which Christ gave Paul, Paul declared that promise to those in fellowship with him, saying, "*Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.*"

Here is the main point we will focus our attention on. When God reveals that salvation is by being in fellow-ship with Christ through faith, he reveals to us that we must abide in fellow-ship together, under his gospel, with his people, hearing and obeying the word of our Redeemer. This is Christ's word. This is God's means of saving and carrying his people on our voyage across this sea to heaven's glory. And if we will not obey

Christ's word and abide in Christ, abiding in fellowship alongside his people under Christ's gospel then we cannot be saved. Therefore, on Christ's authority, Paul said, "*Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.*" Likewise, on Christ's authority, I say to you, "*Except ye abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.*"

Why is it so important to abide in fellowship with Christ and his people?

CHRIST'S WORD IS PREACHED AND BLESSED TO THOSE IN FELLOWSHIP

Acts 27: 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. 23: For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, 24: Saying,...

It was in the ship were Christ spoke to them through his minister, the apostle Paul. Whether savingly or not we do not know, but the centurion and the soldiers, as well as a great many of the shipmen did believe the word Paul declared and proved it by abiding in the ship.

This is a beautiful picture of the means that God has chosen to spread the gospel of his Son, call out his people and save us until the day God calls us home to glory—which is the preaching of Christ and him crucified by his church, made up of local assemblies of believers abiding in fellowship with Christ and with one another in Christ.

1 Corinthians 1: 21: For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

From Adam until Abraham we see the wisdom of God leaving men mostly to themselves to find out God to show that the world, by its own wisdom cannot know God. But with Abraham, God used the means of preaching to declare the gospel unto him and save him. (Gal 3: 8) Throughout the old covenant, God, "in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." But God "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb 1: 1-2) Christ called his apostles and disciples into fellowship with him, so that that "*so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord*" would be "*confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will.*" (Heb 2: 3-4) Throughout the new testament scriptures we find from then on every single person called out by God was called through the preaching of the gospel of Christ. And those who were called out were, each one, made willing to continue "*stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and **fellowship**, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*" (Acts 2: 42) So it is unto this day and so it shall be until Christ returns.

We see this beautifully pictured in the apostle Paul preaching Christ's word to the fellows in the same ship with him. It was there and there only—in fellowship—that Christ's word was heard preached and was blessed so that they obeyed, at least outwardly. One may be able to hear the gospel without being in fellowship with brethren but it is only by God that the word preached will be blessed effectually. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we heed his word and make use of the means that God says pleases him and which he promises to bless.

Now, the apostle Paul was only a sinner just like everyone else in that ship. Paul was going through the same storm and affected the same as them. The difference was that Paul was Christ's messenger. Paul said, "*there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.*" So Paul declared to them, not his own word, but what Christ declared to him. This reminds us of the word of the apostle John, "*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have **fellowship** with us: and truly our **fellowship** is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*" (1Jo 1:3) So if these men disobey Paul and his exhortation, who are they really disobeying? Christ!

You see, Christ's preacher is only a sinner like you, in the same ship as you, going through the same stormy seas as you, getting sea-sick the same as you. The difference is he is Christ's preacher. Therefore, he has the responsibility to declare to you, not his own word, but Christ's word.

That was the means by which Christ saved everyone in that ship. It was by using his messenger to declare to all in fellow-ship, the word of Christ. And that is how Christ saves his people—through his messenger preaching his word—to each one in fellowship in his local church!

Romans 10: 13: For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15: And how shall they preach, except they be sent? [this comes down to Christ getting the glory for sending his messenger with his message] as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!.

In Isaiah 52, Christ said in that day they shall know it is I that doth speak. Christ makes the word effectual in the hearts of his people through the Holy Spirit as it is preached. It is as if he anticipated the objection of unbelievers so he used Isaiah to lament,

Romans 10: 16: But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

But did God change his means because some did not believe? What if some jump ship anyway, does that make the word of God without effect? God forbid! Here is the conclusion concerning this means of salvation through the preaching of the gospel of Christ,

Romans 10: 17: So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Christ said the word I speak is spirit and life. And Christ says it pleased God for him to speak his word effectually through an earthen vessel so that no flesh should glory in his presence, so that the power may be of God and not of us, so that it is of God that ye are in Christ and Christ made unto you all, so that he that glories let him glory in the Lord. That is the meaning of 1 Corinthians.

Anyone who would still object after hearing those reasons, never has heard Christ speak to begin with! That is just so! But you, believer, understand that the first reason we need to remain in fellow-ship is because it pleased God to save through the foolishness of preaching. And the word preached is the word of Christ himself. If we would be saved by Christ we need to hear and heed Christ's word and obey by abiding in him.

THE MESSAGE ITSELF

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

Also, we must abide in fellowship under the means of the preaching of the gospel because it is here that we are taught the message of how we shall be saved.

First, Paul cried, “*now, I exhort you be of good cheer.*” Think of what was going on. The waves were coming over the ship. The ship was rocking up and down and rolling to and fro. All onboard were tossed.

In Christ, in his church, we suffer many trials. But as Paul said, “*Be of good cheer!*” Christ said, “*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*” (Jn 16: 33) We go through the week and find it is just as Christ said it would be. In the world we have trouble. But we come here on the first day of each week and during the midweek service to hear an earthen vessel stand up and say, “*Now, I exhort you be of good cheer.*” As we hear the gospel, Christ comes upon the sea like he came to his apostles in fellowship and Christ says effectually into our hearts, “*Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.*” (Mt 14: 27) It is in his church that Christ promised to meet with his people in fellowship and no place else, “*where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” (Mt 18: 20)

Secondly, the message we hear preached gives us the reason we are to be of good cheer, “*for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship.*” What? Abide in the ship because there shall be no loss of any man’s life, but the life of the ship must be lost? How shall the ship be lost and I not be lost if I am abiding in the ship? The gospel does not make sense to the natural man. But to you who are given spiritual discernment it makes perfect sense. Notice in verse 41,

Acts 27: 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.

Christ Jesus is our Ship of salvation. Two seas met in him. The sea of justice broke him in the violence of the waves, under the wrath of God in place of his people. Yet, at the same, because he satisfied justice for all for whom he died, the sea of mercy also met in him. The very act by which he declared God just, he also declared God the Justifier. Truth and mercy are the two seas that met in Christ on the cross by which God saves all those given to Christ.

Psalm 85: 10: Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*.

So we can say with Paul,

Galatians 2: 20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live;

All God’s elect were abiding in the ship when Christ was broken on the cross. And because the Ship was broken, now by Christ abiding in us, we live. Look down the page and see how those who could not swim made it to shore so that none died:

Acts 27: 43: 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:

But what about God’s elect? What about us helpless sinners who cannot swim? By the ship being broken,

Acts 27: 44: 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.

Thirdly, we must abide in the ship because the message of salvation by our crucified Redeemer comes to us from Christ our risen Head himself. Paul declared where he got this message to preach, “*For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve.*” What was Christ’s message? “*Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.*”

Christ receives all the glory as the Head of his church for filling all in all. (Eph 1: 22-23; 2: 1) It is because by Christ's blood, just as Paul must be brought before Caesar, all for whom Christ died must be brought before God because Christ has finished the work of justifying us before the law of God. The purpose for which Christ gave himself for us was that it might be he also who, having risen, would send the gospel and sanctify us through the preaching of the word and keep us through that word so that at last he presents us all to himself in heaven's glory:

Ephesians 5: 25...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26: That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27: That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

All God's elect must be saved because just as Christ gave all those men to Paul, God gave all his elect to Christ, "*lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.*"

Acts 4:12: Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we **must** be saved.

Paul believed Christ and so do I. So I say with Paul to you in this fellowship with me, "*Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.*"

HOWBEIT

Acts 27: 26: Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

That island was Melita. Today, it is called Malta. Paul healed a *certain man* there which, in scripture, usually refers to one of God's elect. I am told there is a gospel church in Malta to this day.

The point is we, as Christ's church, must be cast in certain places where Christ has a people that we might preach this same gospel to them. God chose them. Christ redeemed them. The Holy Spirit shall regenerate them. So Christ must cast us with his gospel upon their certain island. This is our purpose for remaining in this world abiding in fellowship with one another in Christ Jesus the Head of the church.

Brethren, we must abide in fellowship, not just for our own salvation, but for the salvation of those Christ shall call through us preaching the gospel. In his intercessory, high priestly prayer, Christ said of those he had called out to preach his gospel,

John 17:20: Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Right now, our High Priest intercedes for each one abiding in fellowship, but he intercedes not for us along, but also for them which shall believe on him through the word we shall preach to them. We shall do by the sovereign hand of our all-powerful Head, Christ Jesus.

Not only that, as we abide in fellowship with Christ, our faith will be tried and proven the work of God.

Acts 27: 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; 28: And sounded, and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms. 29: Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. 30: 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, 31: Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

After Paul preached Christ's word to them, Christ let them endure that storm for 14 days. Brother Paul Mahan, Gabe Stalnaker, me and our wives crossed that little bay from Rhode Island to Block Island on the ferry in terrible seas. We did it in an hour or so. I can't imagine enduring those seas for 14 days.

Yet, Christ has left us in this ship in this sea so that by the trial of storms, Christ proves us to be God's workmanship. The men in the stern believed Christ's word through Paul—*they dropped anchor and waited for the day*. That is what all do in whom Christ works effectually. We drop anchor and abide in fellowship with Christ and with one another.

But by the same trial, Christ proved the men in the foreship did not believe. They pretended to be letting down the anchor but they were really letting down a lifeboat. Many profess faith but "*when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*" (Mt 13: 21)

By the trial, Christ proved the soldiers believed the word spoken to them, also. When Paul saw the sailors trying to depart, he said 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.*" Notice, Paul said, "Except these abide in the ship, ye soldiers cannot be saved." What is the meaning?

Brethren, except Christ save every sinner he promised to save, none can be saved. If he loses one, he saves none. But thanks be to God, Christ said,

John 6:39: And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

John 10: 27: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. 29: My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. 30: I and *my* Father are one.

By the efficacy of Christ's blood, all his people must be saved. We must be brought through every storm, we must be made to abide in fellowship and we must be cast on God's eternal shore of Canaan. And Christ shall lose none! Christ said,

John 15:4: **Abide in me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, **except it abide in the vine;** no more can ye, **except ye abide in me.**

1 John 1:3: That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have **fellowship** with us: and truly our **fellowship** is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

If he has revealed this gospel to you, then you will do what the soldiers did, "*Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.*" Faith relies on no just-in-case life boats! Christ is All! So we cut off the ropes of the life boats and abide in fellowship with Christ!

AMEN!