

LESSON #4 - DANGERS AT SEA - 2 CORINTHIANS 11: 24-30

COMING TO THE WATERS - Many people think that the danger of persecution for Christians died with the Roman Empire. That is not the case. There are always DANGERS AT SEA as we continue our spiritual journey, **AND** only Jesus can bring us safely to our home port of heaven.

THE PRAYER - Dear Lord, although we walk in the footsteps of Paul and the Apostles, most of us have not experienced the physical oppression they did. Help us remember **AND** help our brothers and sisters throughout the world that are under persecution for their faith. Allow us to see that many, within our own country, are still in DANGER AT SEA. We begin in the name of our Savior and Lord, Who suffered and died for our salvation. Amen.

PARCHED HEARTS - ILLUSTRATION - Over a century ago, 16-year-old Henry Crowell went to work on a sailing vessel. He was the only Christian in the 12-man crew. Before leaving home, he promised his mother to continue with devotions and prayer. When the sailors discovered his faith, they made fun of him, pouring buckets of water over him while he prayed. As the weeks passed their persecution increased. One day they bound Henry to the mast and whipped him, but he kept praying. Eventually, they tied a rope around his waist and threw him overboard. Realizing he might die, Henry called for the men to send his body home with the message, "Tell Mother I was faithful and died in Jesus!" Finally, when they thought he was dead, they pulled him back on deck. Amazingly, Henry revived. Because of his ongoing witness, and pricked from their consciences, two of the sailors were called to faith by the Spirit. Later the captain, and several others, were also converted.

THOUGHT: Very few of the thousands who read this devotion have experienced this kind of persecution for faith in Jesus. Even though we have not been thrown over the side of a sailing ship, that does not mean that we can ignore mistreatment. Take a look at the words of Saint Paul as he lists the hardships he endured as he served the Savior:

SCRIPTURE SEARCH - HUMANKIND'S THIRST - The verses are from 2 Corinthians 11.

v. 24 - What did Paul receive? 39 lashes - five times - from his own people
.....This refers to beatings administered by officers of a synagogue (Deuteronomy 25: 1-3).

v. 25 - How else was Paul physically wounded? beaten with rods.
..... This is a Roman punishment administered to Paul at Philippi (Acts 16: 23)
.....He was stoned.....He was shipwrecked (Acts 14: 11-19)

Where did Paul spend a day and a night? On the open sea.

v. 26 - What dangers has Paul experienced? Rivers, bandits, Jews and Gentiles
Where had Paul been in danger? In city, in country, at sea, from false Christians.

v. 27 - What has Paul known? long hours, lack of sleep, hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness

It didn't make any difference where Paul was, he was almost always in danger. Our lesson refers to that as being in "danger at sea." Nevertheless, the Apostle could proudly proclaim that in every situation, he had learned contentment. (Philippians 4: 12) That was because he had learned to rely upon the Lord. Before we delve into the secret of the Lord's success through the Apostle Paul we need to ask:

THIRST FOR AN ANSWER:

1. Are Christians persecuted, or "at sea" today? **ABSOLUTELY.** Unfortunately, we don't often consider many of these things to be a form of persecution. The fact is, persecution can take different forms. The type of persecution we experience depends, to a large extent on our age. Look at the list and answer, what kind of persecutions might these age groups encounter:

AGE.....	TYPE OF PERSECUTION/TEMPTATION
FROM THREE TO TEN	1. Mockery of other children 2. Being Different 3. Not keeping up
TEENAGE YEARS.....	1. Sexual sellout 2. Drug experimentation 3. Mockery for being a Christian
COLLEGE/MILITARY	1. Being made to feel Christian beliefs are juvenile 2. Finding worship "boring"
20-30.....	1. Too busy for the Lord 2. Belief that you can live without Him.
30-40.....	1. Business takes forefront in life 2. Trying to earn money 3. Social obligations
40-50.....	1. Feeling you are alone 2. Feeling the world has passed you by.

**ISAIAH 55:1 "COME, ALL YOU WHO ARE THIRSTY, COME TO THE WATERS
GROUP BIBLE STUDIES - TEACHER'S PACKET - LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES**

60-70..... 1. Feeling you are slipping 2. Loss of friends 3. Living in a confusing world
All of these things, and many more are persecutions. They are all sent by a sinful world to try to separate us from the Lord's love. It is little comfort for us to think that one form of persecution will pass as we grow older. There is always something which keeps us in "danger at sea."

2. SCRIPTURE SEARCH - DEEP DRINKING - Whether it be 2,000 years ago, or today, we shouldn't be surprised that we have been persecuted and have problems. Jesus told us that anyone who followed Him would have to carry a cross. Turn to Matthew 5: 10-12 and look at the warning He gave to His followers from every generation:

QUESTION.....ANSWER

v. 10 - Who is going to be persecuted?..... Those who are righteous

v. 11 - What will happen to those who follow Jesus?.....They will be insulted and persecuted
People will make up all kinds of evil about them

v. 12 - We are in good company if we're persecuted for following Jesus. Who else suffered for their faith and doing the Lord's will? The prophets

v. 12 - How should we feel when we suffer for the Lord?..... We should rejoice and be glad.

v. 12 - Where will Christians be rewarded?In heaven

These words are easy to read, but hard to accept when we have to stand up for our faith. It is a rare Christian, who, when he is in "danger at sea" doesn't wonder, "Why me?" We can find a partial answer in the writings of a third century bishop by the name of Cyprian. Speaking to a friend, he penned:

THOUGHT & ILLUSTRATION: - "It is a bad world.... an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it, quiet and good people who have learned the great secret of life. They have found a joy and wisdom which is a thousand times better than any of the pleasures of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are Christians... and I am one of them."

Having heard those words from 1,600 years ago, please answer the following:

1. Was the world good or bad in Cyprian's day?Incredibly bad.
2. What had Christians learned?To find a joy and wisdom that is better than this world.
3. Why don't they care?..... Having drunk from the water of life, they are masters of their souls.
4. Who has overcome the world?.....They have - but only through Jesus Christ.
5. Do you think Cyprian was proud to be a Christian? Yes, indeed.

SHARING THE SAV(I)OR

The penalties which early Christians had to suffer were terrible beyond description. Those Christians who were flung to the lions or burned at the stake; suffered kindly deaths. Nero wrapped Christians in pitch and set them on fire, using them as living torches to light his gardens. He sewed them in the skins of wild animals and set his hunting dogs upon them to tear them to death; molten lead was poured upon them; parts of their bodies were cut off and roasted before their eyes. These were some of the "dangers at sea" a Christian might experience, if he took his stand with Christ. Today the persecutions have changed, but they are just as dangerous. We are still in "danger at sea."

Paul found strength in what his Savior had done for him. Men and women, boys and girls at every age, can withstand just about any persecution if they are proud of their Savior. Having come to the water of life, Christians can pass through the 'dangers at sea.' In Jesus they are blessed and their reward is great. That's why it's important that we encourage pride among our fellow Christians as they undergo daily persecution. List a few people you know who are in "danger at sea" and how you can help:

NAME

HOW I CAN HELP INSTILL PRIDE IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION

THANKS FOR THE WATERS - Dear Lord, be with those who are under persecution. Watch over us, as well, for we are in danger on the water of life. Send Your Holy Spirit upon us so that we may be proud of what You have done and share that pride with others. In Jesus' Name. Amen.