

Shipwrecked Souls

Christ our Refuge

Matthew 24:24

One of the most feared activities of the ancient world was sailing in a ship across the Mediterranean Sea. Why? Because shipwrecks were so common back then. Many who sailed never returned. The families of would be travelers and sailors most often went with them to the docks and offered farewell sacrifices to the gods; hoping that if pacified safety would be theirs. The numerous National Geographic documentaries on all the wrecks dotting the Mediterranean sea floor, are a mute testimony to the true danger of shipwrecks to the ancients.

Most ships hugged the coasts and made a hop scotch travel around the seas. The responses of biblical seafarers says it all, listen to them:

- The disciples in the various storms on the Sea of Galilee: (“we are perishing” Matthew 8: 25; “waves beat...boat filling” Mark 4: 37);
- The sailors with Jonah: Jonah 1: 4-5 But the Lord sent out **a great wind on the sea**, and there was **a mighty tempest on the sea**, so that **the ship was about to be broken up**. Then **the mariners were afraid**; and **every man cried out to his god**, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.
- Those aboard Paul’s boat as it ship wrecked: Acts 27: 15-33 So when **the ship was caught**, and could not head into the wind, **we let her drive**. 17 When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and **fearing lest they should run aground** on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven. 18 And because **we were exceedingly tempest-tossed**, the next day they lightened the ship. 20 Now when **neither sun nor stars appeared for many days**, and **no small tempest beat on us**, **all hope that we would be saved was finally given up**. 27 Now when **the fourteenth night had come**, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. 29 Then, **fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks**, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come. 33 And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, “Today is **the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing**.”

All of these capture very clearly the fear that the ancients had of being ship wrecked.

Think of the implications of being in a doomed boat. Shipwreck—when what you counted on to get you safely to the other shore--fails you!

To “ship wreck” meant that the ship you trusted to take you across the dangerous waters had failed you and you were not going to make it. If you lose your ship in the midst of the sea there is usually no hope, no place to go—and certain death.

Paul uses the word **nauageo** ‘ship wreck’ when he describes his own experiences with three failed boats in his travels.

2 Corinthians 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times **I was shipwrecked**; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

Amazingly, Paul uses the same word to describe those who thrust away sound doctrine and try to sail on their own and without Christ's way, truth and life.

1 Timothy 1:19-20 having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, **concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck**, 20 of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

The most dangerous shipwreck is not the one that merely endangers your body. Jesus warns that false teaching can sink your soul as well—and Paul names some headed towards destruction.

What can cause a soul to be shipwrecked? False teachers and belief in a false Christ. That was one of Christ's constant warnings.

When Christ Returns there is-- Global False teaching, and Deceptive signs and wonders.

Please open with me to the next section of Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:24 For false christs [pseudo-christs] and false prophets [pseudo-prophets] will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Jesus notes two topics—first pseudo-christs the warm up acts for the Coming World Leader - commonly known as the Antichrist – who has 33 titles in the Old Testament and 13 in the New Testament; and secondly pseudo-prophets the purveyors of false teaching.

2 Thessalonians 2:9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

This morning we are going to consider the dangers of those false prophets or teachers. How do we spot them? What do false teachers look like? One of the clearest descriptions comes to us from Peter. Open with me to 2 Peter 2.

First notice what Peter says in 2 Peter 2:1—he ties the former false prophets with the current false teachers.

*2 Peter 2:1 But there **were also false prophets** among the people, even as there **will be false teachers among you**, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.*

Then Peter launches into an extended description of these false teachers we need to beware of and avoid at all costs.

2 Peter 2:12-17 But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, 13 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, 14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. 15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. 17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Note the following identifying marks of those who are false, unreal, and not of God.

- **UNGODLY (v. 12a)**: they are described as being "**like natural brute beasts**". There is no god-likeness in them. They do not have God as their father, rather they are of their father the devil—so they act like him—killing spiritual life, stealing spiritual truth, and destroying spiritual power.
- **UNRESTRAINED (v. 12b)**: they are described as those who "**speak evil of the things they do not understand**". Before they even hear or understand something they are so unrestrained that they just blurt out disagreement and evil.
- **UNENLIGHTENED (v. 12c)**: they are described as "**they do not understand**". The things of God are foolishness to them. They can't understand, won't understand, and do not want to seek and find the truth. They do not love the truth—they hate it and go away from it.
- **UNRIGHTEOUS (v. 13a)**: they are described as "**receive the wages of unrighteousness**". They earn the judgment of God because they work at being unrighteous. They work at not being like God, they don't want Him or His ways—but they work at the opposite.
- **UNASHAMED (v. 13b)**: they are described as "**as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime**". They aren't ashamed of sin—they love it. They don't run from sin—they run at it. They don't grieve over their sin—they revel in it, brag about it, show it off and try to entice others into their sin.
- **UNFORGIVEN (v. 13c)**: they are described as "**They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you**" They look like

a black spot on a white cloth in God's sight when they get around believers. God sees us clothed in Christ's righteousness, we are washed and forgiven. They are lost and unforgiven—they ooze uncleansed sins. They are spots of contamination when near the chaste, pure and white bride of Jesus. They flaunt their sins in the face of holiness. They mock and scoff and laugh at the ways of God's servants. But note they "feast with you" they come to be around God's people, share in worship, sit side by side with the saints but are never changed, never cleansed, never forgiven, never filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

- **UNREPENTANT (v. 14a):** they are described as "*having eyes full of adultery*". They never turn away only toward their sin. They seek evil to the max, they go for it and live it up in the ways of this world. There is no change of heart, mind, or direction. No remorse, no regret, no retreat from sin. They keep their tanks filled with sins of their pleasing. The word full is the same as in John 21:11 when Jesus made the nets of the disciples to bulge near breaking with an overflowing catch of fish—these sinners are bursting with evil desires, their eyes and minds bulge to overflow with sin.
- **UNSATISFIED (v. 14b):** they are described as "*and that cannot cease from sin*". They are addicted to sin. They are drawn by the cords of the flesh and can't seem to stop. In one form or another they are constantly seeking and finding their own way. And as God says, they have less and less return on their sin so they have to chase it harder each day. They get emptier and they get more and more unsatisfied by their sin—so they have to seek out, invent, and try more and more ways to satisfy their cravings—until it is too late to ever stop.
- **UNDISCIPLINED (v. 14c):** they are described as "*enticing unstable souls*". They can't keep to themselves. Sin loves company. They want to feel better by being sure others are doing what they are doing so they entice others to share in their sins. They are emissaries of the devil by leading other blind ones into the deep ditches of their sins.
- **UNHEEDING (15-16):** they are described as "*They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet*". No one can stop them, they won't listen. They can't hear. They shut out the truth, they resist conviction, and they get more and more unresponsive and hardened towards the things of God.
- **UNREAL (v. 17a):** they are described as "*These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest*". They look promising but are empty. They are driven and just crash on the rocks. Nothing lasts in their lives, nothing is useful for God or others—they just waste life in a flaming bonfire of their own vanities.
- **UNSAVED (v. 17b):** they are described as "*for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever*." The place of the devil they earn for themselves. The abode of the damned they seek through life and finally find it. The light is forsaken and fled from instead of sin. The reservations in heaven are unwanted, unsought, and unfound—hell is their destination forever.

Ship wrecked lives follow the false teaching of false teachers and the false hopes of false christ. This morning this is a warning to Christ's church. Are you following a lifestyle or a teacher/model/ or hero who is:

- **UNGODLY**
- **UNRESTRAINED**
- **UNENLIGHTENED**
- **UNRIGHTEOUS**
- **UNASHAMED**
- **UNFORGIVEN**
- **UNREPENTANT**
- **UNSATISFIED**
- **UNDISCIPLINED**
- **UNHEEDING**
- **UNREAL**
- **UNSAVED**

Then if you are—you are headed for the reef, you will shipwreck, you will be dashed upon the rocks.

Or are you seeking the way of God. The way of God can be found by looking at the opposite of all these qualities of a false teacher and a false Christ. God's way is:

- **GODLY** seeking, **RESTRAINED** from within by the Holy Spirit, **ENLIGHTENED** by God in our mind and spirit, **RIGHTEOUS** by God's grace, **ASHAMED** of sinning, **FORGIVEN** of all sins, **REPENTANT** of all known sins in the life, **SATISFIED** continually by Christ, **DISCIPLINED** by the work of God's grace, **HEEDING** God's Word , **REAL** and not fake, **SAVED** and sure of it!

How can we avoid shipwreck? By being tied to Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus Anchors our souls in Heaven.

*Hebrews 6: 11-12, 18-20 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have **fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope** set before us. 19 This **hope we have as an anchor of the soul**, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where **the forerunner has entered for us**, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. NKJV*

- **Christ is our Refuge:** v. 18b "*we might have strong consolation, **who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope** set before us*" Salvation is laying hold of Jesus. Just like the disciples knelt at His feet and held on for joy when they saw Him risen (Matthew 28:9); and just as the lame man clung for joy to Peter and

John after they healed him (Acts 3: 11)—so we who believe and are stricken with our sinfulness, flee to Jesus as the only refuge from sin. When Paul knew they were planning to stone him (Acts 14: 6) he fled to escape. So we believe Christ's promise and flee to Him our Refuge, to escape the dread consequences of our sins.

- **Christ anchors our soul in Heaven.** v. 19 "*This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil*" We have continual access to God's presence, not just once a year through a fallen mortal man, but always—at every moment—through our Divine and Immortal Great High Priest, Jesus Christ.
- **Christ anchors our soul:** v. 20 "*where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek*".

Jesus is our *prodromos* who has gone to prepare a place for us. Philip Mauro suggests that the picture here is that of the forerunner used in ancient times to help a vessel enter the harbor safely. He would jump from the ship, wade to the harbor, and fasten the strong rope of the ship to a rock along the shore. Then, by means of a winch, the vessel was brought in.

Just so, our forerunner has gone to heaven, where He stands ready to guide us safely into the Holy of Holies. We are fastened to a rock that cannot be moved. Let the storms tear our sails to shreds; let the floors creak; let the gusts of wind attempt to blow us off course; let the tides overwhelm us; we shall arrive safely into the port. Each day we are pulled a notch closer to the harbor by the One who proved He is more powerful than death.

We have an anchor that keeps the soul Steadfast and sure while the billows roll, Fastened to the Rock which cannot move, Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.

As our High Priest, Jesus serves as our anchor, who forever keeps our souls from drifting away from God—and becoming shipwrecked.

As a believers, our relationship with Christ anchors us to God. The most sacred spot in the temple that God had the Jews construct was called the holy of holies. This room was separated by a curtain from the rest of the temple. Inside this inner room stood a box called the ark of the covenant, signifying the very presence of God. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest of Israel entered the Holy of Holies and made an annual atonement for the sins of his people.

But on the cross, Christ made atonement once for all time and for all people by His sacrifice. As believers God sees us as already secured forever by Christ and placed in the Holy of Holies in Heaven.

"Once Jesus entered the heavenly holy of holies, He did not leave, as did the Jewish high priests. Rather, "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (1: 3).

And Jesus remains there forever as the Guardian of our souls. Such absolute security is almost incomprehensible. Not only are our souls anchored within the impregnable, inviolable heavenly sanctuary, but our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, stands guard over them as well! How can the Christian's security be described as anything but eternal? Truly we can entrust our souls with God and the Savior He provided." 1

A century ago, this passage prompted a song. That song captures what Christ's work for us has done. Let me read you these words. Examine your heart this morning. Is this what you have? Is Jesus Christ your soul's anchor?

"Will Your Anchor Hold?"²

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift or firm remain?

Refrain: We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
Fastened to the rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.

Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,
When the breakers roar and the reef is near?
While the surges rave and the wild winds blow,
Shall the angry waves then your bark o'erflow?.

Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,
When the waters cold chill your latest breath?
On the rising tide you can never fail,
While your anchor holds within the veil.

It is safely moored, 'twill the storm withstand,
For 'tis well secured by the Savio's hand;
And the cables, passed from His heart to mine,
Can defy that blast, thro' strength divine.
Refrain:

Will your eyes behold through the morning light,
The city of gold and the harbour bright?
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore
When life's storms are past for evermore?

¹John MacArthur, *Saved Without A Doubt*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.

² Words: Priscilla Jane Owens, 1882 (at age 53). Born in July, 1829 Priscilla Jane Owens, American public school teacher, was born in Baltimore, Maryland (d. 5 December 1907, Baltimore, Maryland). She spent here entire life in Baltimore, where she taught for forty-nine years. A member of the Union Square Methodist Episcopal Church, she had particular interest in the work of the Sunday school. She published several articles and poems during her lifetime, including the hymn texts "We Have an Anchor" and "Jesus Saves" (a.k.a. "We Have Heard the Joyful Sound").

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