

Theme: "So Keep UP your Courage"

Text: Acts 27:13 – 44

Season: Veteran Sunday, 26th Sunday after Pentecost

Date: November 13, 2016

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you grow in Godly courage, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. (Acts 27:25)

Those are the words of the Apostle Paul on his voyage to Rome in the midst of a ferrous storm. God says to the Prophet Joshua similar words as he prepares the people of Israel to go into the Promised Land as He says: "**Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**" (Josh 1:9)

So what is Courage? The Webster dictionary say that 'Courage' is the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty. 'Courage' suggests that you have obtained strength to overcoming fear and carrying on against great difficulties. 'Courage' applies especially to the bravery we have in fighting a dangerous enemy or when we are in a dangerous situation.

Today on this Veterans Sunday we come together to especially give thanks to God for the courage that He has given to all the veteran men and women throughout our history, on the battlefields and in many other ways. As they served this nation we have received the benefits of their courage so that we can live in peace. Yes, today we want to give thanks to God for the courage that He has given to all the men and women of the United States' Armed Forces over the years and ask Him to continue to give courage to all our men and women in the Armed Forces so that His peace may be maintained in this nation. It has been said by others that, "Courage is not being fearless, it is however, the ability to fight fear on behalf of others;" "Courage doesn't mean that you aren't scared. It means that you go anyway;" and "Being a soldier is more than courage, it's sacrificing yourself for something greater than yourself."

Today we have the words of God to Joshua, the mighty general who led the people of Israel into the promised land, we have the words of the Apostle Paul, the mighty apostle of God who took the Gospel to the gentiles and we have the words of many veterans of

the past that are all telling us the same thing, “Keep up your courage.” So how do we keep up our courage, how do we have the mental and moral strength to keep on going in this world? Oh, we all can say that it’s not easy; that we have learned through the years of our life that there will be times when the enemy is over powering and it seems like you can’t go on either physically or mentally. But then we find an inner strength that enables us to put one foot before another and we meet the challenges of the day, we fight off the old Evil Foe and we find that we are able to see the light in midst of the darkness of the storm. How are we able to do this?

That’s just what the Apostle Paul was encouraging the people to do in our reading of the Acts of the Apostles today as he says, **“Yet now I urge you keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. [23] For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, [24] and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' [25] So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. [26] But we must run aground on some island.”** (Acts 27:22-26)

The storms of life can often cause us to be discouraged, but when we let God’s word through the Holy Spirit go to work in our lives we find as the prophet Isaiah says, **“God gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might He increases strength. ³⁰ Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; ³¹ but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”** (Isa 40:29-31) God gave the 276 people sailing on that ship in the Adriatic Sea His Word through the Apostle Paul to find hope in, when there seemed to be no hope. God gave them His Words of encouragement through the Apostle Paul to encourage them to do what their body needed, to give them nourishment so that they can meet the future with the assurance that God is working with them.

So what kind of storms are you facing in your life? The Apostle Paul’s storm was called a Northeaster and it had hurricane force winds. That is the storm that the Apostle Paul was dealing with out on the ocean, could have had winds between 75 and 125 miles per hour, alone with cold rain and sleet. The ship of that time and even today are not

made to deal with that kind of weather so the sailors secured the ship as good as they could and hoped it would be enough. Yet God gave the Apostle Paul a hope that was far greater, that his mission of sharing the Gospel to the gentiles wasn't over yet.

When you face the storms of your life where do you find your hope? The Apostle Paul's hope was found in the Words of God given to Him. King David, as he dealt with a lot the storms in his life, tells us over and over again, **"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God."** (Ps 42:5) The devil is working in our lives to take the hope given to us by God's love away from us. God can be our hope and assurance just as it was for the Apostle Paul, Joshua, King David and many others by putting our hope in God's Word, His hands and not on the things of this world or our self. The sailor's and the passenger on the voyage to Rome had first put their hope in their own abilities and then when mother nature took that away they put their hope in the thought that things would eventually get better, which is really no hope at all. The Apostle Paul showed his hope was in God and His Word by his actions so that through his actions he could be an encouragement to others. That's what God is calling us to do in the midst of the storms of our life, for there is no hope without salvation through God and we are reminded through Jesus' own words, **"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."** (Jn 15:4,12-13)

The Apostle Paul let the love of God for him be shown by his actions and all the lives of the passengers were spared as the ship came aground on a reef as they came out of the darkness of the storm. As we learn to abide in Jesus with our storms and hopes we will find ways of showing God's love in our lives and the greatest love of all God's Love to others. **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."** (Jn. 3:16) If God's love for each of us is so great that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to take our place and to die for us in payment for all our sins, what do you think God will do for us as we deal with the storms of our life's voyage?

Oh, our life might be a shipwreck, but as we put our life in God's hands the ship may be wrecked but our life will be spared for a much better life with Him for all eternity. The sailors didn't want to put their lives in the hands of God and in doing so they were risking their lives and the lives of others. Today many feel the same way, but in their self-centered world they will find no hope from the storms they are facing, until they put their lives in the hands of God. With the lives of all the 276 passengers and sailors in the hands of God they found the sandy beaches and the warmth of God's love even as the ship was broken to pieces by the waves. So how is the shipwreck of your life going?

Courage is not found in our strength and abilities, but in God's love working in our lives. Courage is one of those mysteries that the world can see but doesn't quite understand how God is connected to it as General George Patton once said, "Human beings are made up of flesh and blood and a miracle fiber called courage." Why even Lao Tzu, a Chinese philosopher saw courage and loved working together in the world as he says, "Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while deeply loving someone gives you courage." God's love is the source of all our strength and courage as we face the storm of life, because God is the source of life now and for all eternity. Keep up your courage in the love of God for you and share it with others. Amen.

Let us close with a prayer for our military.

We ask Lord, that You guide the leaders of our great country in all their decisions. The burden that has been placed on their shoulders is overwhelming. We ask that with Your infinite wisdom You guide them gently to the right decision. Protect and guide our military, oh Lord; strengthen them in their trials', give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.