



Never Been to Spain

The Journals & Journeys of Paul

"Romeward Bound"

"I'm not an expert. But I did stay at a Holiday Inn."

I sometimes feel a little that way when, as a Christian, I give people answers or advice. Except I'd have to say, "I'm not an expert. But I did attend a Calvary Chapel."

You know what I mean. The people you are around need help. They're struggling at home. They're struggling at work. School isn't going very well. You give them answers and advice from God's Word. But you're no expert - not to their way of thinking.

I hope to show you that you **are** the expert they need.

After two years of being held in protective custody Paul had appealed his case to the highest court. He was finally Rome-ward bound. He was placed in the care of a Roman centurion named Julius. Two companions were allowed to travel with him - Luke and Aristarchus. Other prisoners were traveling with them as well.

The first leg of their trip was relatively peaceful. Putting ashore in Myra, the centurion booked passage on an Alexandrian ship heading to Italy. It was part of the Roman grain fleet.

It was getting to be difficult sailing against winds that were contrary. Nevertheless ships were still putting out to sea.

Acts 27:7 When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone.

Acts 27:8 Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

Acts 27:9 Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them,

Acts 27:10 saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

Acts 27:11 Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul.

Acts 27:12 And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.

It's no surprise that the centurion took the advice of the ship's owner and the ship's captain over that of the apostle Paul. They were the experts.

But they were wrong. Disastrously wrong.

So today are many so-called and credentialed "experts." Many if not most of the things people need advice about are essentially spiritual. You are the expert – if you know Jesus Christ.

People may not listen – at least not initially. But in the deepest despair of their personal storm they may need you.

The helmsman, or captain, and the ship-owner and the majority advised to set sail. Off they sailed – into the coming storm.

Yes, these guys were “experts” in their field. It’s what they did for a living. But that didn’t mean they exercised reasonable judgment. Their motives were suspect:

1. The ship-owner undoubtedly wanted to insure that his cargo arrived intact and unspoiled. A lot could go wrong as it sat wintering in harbor.
2. The captain undoubtedly thought himself a capable seaman. He would not be upstaged by a traveler.
3. The majority didn’t like the accommodations. There were no *In-n-Outs* in Fair Havens. (More likely there was no night-life).

Every great disaster movie reveals some ulterior motive, usually greed, for putting lives at risk. It’s a common plot theme because it’s too often true. The “experts” have ulterior motives that affect their better judgment.

As Christians we look upon people who don’t know the Lord and are concerned that they do not have eternal life. Thus if they perish they do so eternally

Eternal life isn’t just about the future. It is a quality of life here-and-now. We see people overly concerned about their livelihood, living for this world. Too often they experience the loss of the things that really matter in life.

The same is true of nonbelievers who are pursuing some worldly lifestyle. In the end it's a loss of life because it doesn't fill the emptiness in the heart that only a relationship with God through Jesus Christ can satisfy.

We should look upon all nonbelievers with great concern for their loss of life. In that regard, since we know the Lord, we are the experts.

Acts 27:13 When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.

You don't have to be an expert to know how fast weather conditions can change. The soft wind meant nothing.

When we share about Jesus people tend to look at their lives and see a soft wind blowing rather than the approaching storm. They don't see their need. So they continue along, pursuing their livelihood and lifestyle, when all the while they are heading into treacherous situations that only Jesus Christ can navigate.

Acts 27:14 But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.

Acts 27:15 So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive.

I'm not saying the average Christian is 'smarter' than an expert in their field. I'm saying we have an eternal perspective and it is that perspective that gives us wisdom the experts do not possess.

Acts 27:16 And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty.

Acts 27:17 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.

Acts 27:18 And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.

Acts 27:19 On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

These were skilled expert sailors indeed. But all of their expertise could not save them. Instead it had made them overconfident.

I'm not saying the average Christian is 'smarter' than an expert in their field. I'm saying we have an eternal perspective and it is that perspective that gives us wisdom the experts do not possess.

Acts 27:20 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.

A nonbeliever can pursue livelihood and lifestyle into their old age and seem to live a comfortable life. Sooner or later the tempest comes and they face eternity. Maybe they have time to react; probably they don't.

People ignore God until they find themselves tossed about by life. Things start falling apart and failing. It's then they need us and we ought to be ready with expert advice of our own.

Acts 27:21 But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.

Why mention they had not eaten for some time? To remind us who believe that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from God! They didn't need food; they needed God to intervene.

Acts 27:22 And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

Acts 27:23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,

Acts 27:24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

Acts 27:25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.

Paul based his expert advice on the Word of God. In his case an angel stood by him and gave him an immediate Word from God. In ours we have the written Word. Everything we need in order to advise people is contained in it. Marriage advice; parenting advice; how to get along at work and at school; what kind of citizen you should be; etc., etc. It's all in the principles and precepts of God's inspired, inerrant, infallible Word.

Acts 27:26 However, we must run aground on a certain island."

Whoa! How is that abundant life? If God really cared for them, why not just calm the storm?

He didn't just calm the storm because He had a lesson to teach them. Doing business with God requires faith.

It's so sad when a person is being tossed about in a personal storm but will not exercise simple faith in God to get them through it. They try to find some lifeboat in the world, some expert that tells them either they don't really need God and His Word or that they need more than God and His Word. It sounds good; after all, these people are experts, are they not? They have education and degrees. They have recognition.

But they don't have Jesus. Or, if they do, they don't really rely on Him because they think they've found a better way.

With compassion you need to go on sharing with storm-tossed travelers the simplicity of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Their needs are essentially spiritual. Their greatest single need is to know the Lord or to know Him better. If you know Him and are walking with Him, **you** are the expert.