

Misunderstood Message



Exploring the world by boat had been their dream for years, so when a forty-foot sailboat was offered for sale, the Russian husband-and-wife team sold everything they owned and bought it. After outfitting it, they left from the Pacific coast of Russia and six months later were sailing up the northwest coast of the United States. Suddenly the weather took a turn for the worse. The man listened to the marine weather forecast.

In previous travels he had picked up a smattering of English enough to enable him to understand the words "wind" and "storm," but most of the message was meaningless to him. He didn't understand what the English-speaking people all up and down the coast understood clearly that this was going to be a major storm system, lasting several days. There would be winds gusting up to seventy-five miles an hour—hurricane force. Confident that he could ride out the storm and unaware of its predicted severity, he passed up harbors where he might have found safety.

This Russian's predicament is not so different from a danger many people are in today. God's Word, the Bible, tells of judgment to come. However, for one reason or another, the message gets so garbled up in the hearing that men don't realize the severity of this judgment. God's judgment against sin is severe. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). People who choose to live in sin and never come to Christ will be sent, when they die, to a place of outer darkness where they will suffer forever and ever.

To save sinners, the Son of God went to Calvary's cross where He was crucified. Don't let the message of the impending storm of God's anger, which is certain to fall on every person who has not accepted Christ, become garbled and meaningless to you. Rather,

turn to the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour of sinners and find that one safe harbor where you will find protection.

The weather continued to deteriorate. The sailboat was driven at an incredible speed by the wind. The wife retreated into the cabin, where she was tossed around and battered black and blue. The husband clung tenaciously to the wheel of the ship and to the hope that he could save his ship and their lives. They raced out of control, driven by the wind along the coast of the state of Washington. (On shore, people listening to the wind blow through the trees likened it to standing next to a jet plane rushing down the runway.) In a matter of hours the sailboat covered a distance which would normally take days of sailing.

Both husband and wife were near exhaustion. Hoping to escape the terrific winds, they turned into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. However, the winds blew as hard in the Strait as they had in the open waters of the Pacific. The last sail was torn to shreds. A sea anchor was tossed out. Both husband and wife, deeply fatigued, were losing hope of saving their lives.

Meanwhile people along the coast became aware through television that a life-and-death drama was being enacted in the Strait. The Coast Guard dispatched a rescue helicopter to follow the boat, but the boat was tossing and pitching so wildly in the storm that lowering a rescue basket to the two was out of the question. They also found a translator who could communicate with the pair on board, but still there seemed no way to rescue the couple. At any moment they expected the boat to go under.

At this time a Chinese super-freighter was headed toward Seattle. The captain, hearing of the plight of the two on board the sailboat, devised a plan to save them both.

He steered his ship windward of the sailboat and then turned his giant ship broadside. Turning the boat sideways blocked the terrific winds, and the current brought the sailboat alongside the freighter. A rope ladder was lowered and the two had just enough strength to scramble up the ladder.

The helicopter then picked them up off the ship and brought them to a nearby hospital to receive medical attention. The sailboat was released; after the storm, men searched for it but were unable to find it.

The Chinese freighter turned sideways so that the gale-force winds would spend their energies on it instead of on the sailboat. This reminds us of what the Lord Jesus did on the cross for sinners. There in His own body He bore the sins of all those who would believe on Him. God's anger against sin fell on the Lord Jesus. God is holy and righteous and cannot let one sin in this whole universe go unpunished. On the cross the Lord Jesus took the awful punishment that we deserved for sin. Because He loved us and would rescue us from the punishment of our sins, He died in our place. First Corinthians 15:3 reads, "Christ died for our sins." Because He did this, the most degraded of sinners can turn to Him and receive the free forgiveness of sins. It is free, because it has been paid for. Won't you believe on the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour of sinners? Then you can say like the songwriter:

The tempest's awful voice was heard;
O Christ, it broke on Thee;
Thy open bosom was my ward,
It bore the storm for me.
Thy form was scarred,
Thy visage marred,
Now cloudless peace for me.

by B.P.

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