

Structure of the Church

Some people make themselves a lot of thoughts about the question: What will happen with all the church structures. Buildings and hierarchies of the different churches and denominations? Do the present structures have any importance in eternity? What is really important in our time?

I would like to share some thoughts about the last journey of Apostle Paul on his way to Rom. Acts 27 verse 1 to 12. God revealed to Paul that a journey at this time of the year would be very dangerous not only for the goods on the ship but also for the very lives of all the people on the ship. The leaders did not listen to Paul and went on anyhow, because the harbor was not fitting for the winter. Soon they got in trouble and all hope of surviving was gone.

Acts 27 verse 1 *“And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.*

2And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

3And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

4And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

6And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;

8And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called “the fair havens;” nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

9Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,

10And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is a haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.”

Acts Chapter 27 Verse 20 to 26

- *“20And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.*
- *21But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.*
- *22And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.*
- *23For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,*
- *24Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.*
- *25Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.*
- *26Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.”*

It is a question for many believers what is the church and how does real fellowship look like? How important are the different church structures which have developed in hundreds of years? An Angel of the Lord told Paul that the ship will break in pieces but the people will be saved because of his prayers for them. Paul could accept this information and did start to intercede for the ship. Important was for him the lives of the people on board. The ship did his job and brought them to the island and saved them. As the ship broke in pieces they could swim or save them self with some pieces from the ship. Salvation was nearby. The structure could break now down, but the people Paul prayed for where saved. As they found out that an island was near some of the responsible men from the ship's crew wanted to flee beforehand from the boat. Very strongly Paul rebuked them and stopped these 4 responsible men to leave the ship. He told the commander that all of them

cannot be saved if this man will leave the ship. Verse 31 to 32 ***“Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. 32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.”*** This time the responsible people listen to Paul and all of them were saved.

Verse 34 to 37: 34 ***“Therefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you.***

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.

37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.” If

someone could not swim, he took a piece of wood from the ship and made it to the shore.

This last Journey of Paul can be an example for the end of time. The ship the structure of the church can break down in the great storm of the end of time.

Apostle Paul prayed for the salvation of people and his request was granted and he was not so concerned about the ship. The structure, the ship brought them to a safe place, the island of Malta. The responsible people who wanted to leave the ship beforehand, were strongly rebuked by Paul. After the ship broke into pieces any decision was not needed any more about when to leave the ship. The ship, as it was, was not existent anymore. Some parts of the ship were just available to get on shore and to reach the safe Island. I believe that the main point of the ship is to bring people into the salvation of God. This is important for the Lord and for the Apostle Paul. The structures are important to keep God's people together for the time being, but as the structure breaks down, like now, we are still having our relationship with our loving and saving Lord Jesus and some brothers and sisters in the Lord. Christa Behr