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Saturday Eveing 11.5.68. Prayer Meeting at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham

Hymns:- 714 "Why so cast down, dejected soul? A loving Christ is near;"  
397 "In themselves as weak as worms, How can poor believers stand,"

Readings:- 27th Ch: Acts verses 9/25 incl: and 33/44 incl:

Address:-

The apostle's life was attended with many very remarkable experiences, many storms and tempests, many dangers, many deep waters, and many distressing things as recorded in his epistle to the Corinthians. Literally speaking, this was one experience wherein all were brought into great danger. I noticed, particularly, when reading verse 13 that "The south wind blew softly" when they started on their voyage, so that they supposed "that they had obtained their purpose" although the apostle had warned them that this voyage would be with hurt and much damage, yet still the word of the master of the ship was taken and all seemed to go well - the south wind blew softly - all seemed promising, and they thought their purpose was gained, (is not this so in the Lord's ways, certain things may seem promising, a bright easy start may be made, the south wind may blow softly, and all may be fair and promising ) but it did not end like this, for they had not been long upon the water, evidently, before a heavy storm came upon them, and they were exceedingly tossed with the tempest - not just feeling the salutary breeze of a south wind - it was just the opposite, they were tossed with a tempest. The journey was not finished without a severe and very threatening storm so that " Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared" and all hope seemed to be given up, they had almost come to a hopeless condition. A fair start was made, but that fair start resulted in a severe tempest, and this seems to remind us of what the hymn-writer says:-

"God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform,  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm."

Now the Lord appeared to Paul in a particular way, in this, for he says, "There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am,

and Whom I serve". How sweet this is, and probably Paul was the only one who knew his God. When he was on those deep waters, in this heavy tempest which lay upon him, his God appeared to him there, - not when the storm was near - not when the wind blew softly, - but right in the midst of the storm when there seemed no hope, no possible escape. How timely, how confirming and strengthening it must have been when the Lord came saying "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all of them that sail with thee" - not, you will be spared, you will escape, and all the rest perish, no, although shipwrecked, none were lost, for it is said "They escaped all safe to land". Now what I noticed more particularly about this is that Paul received what the Lord said. However fierce the tempest might be, or however hopeless the case appeared, the apostle received what the Lord said, and so he said "Wherefore sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." It was this that seemed rather particular "I believe God" Paul did not question what had been spoken to him, he had faith to receive it, lay hold upon it, to put his trust in it; and so it was that the Lord appeared to him in these extreme conditions, to assure him that his life would be spared. Deliverance was wrought and a way of escape made, so that there were no lives lost, hopeless as the case may have appeared.

You may come into things; deep and heavy things, and however comfortable providence may appear to be one day, that is not a precedent for the next day. We do not know how soon a storm may rise, nor unforeseen circumstances plunge us into the deep. May we have the apostle's faith and belief.

Paul received and believed what the Lord said. He did not question, saying 'Oh, but the case is hopeless' No. He said "I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me. Daniel and others had this same trust and belief.