

THE SHIP'S CREW which nearly committed suicide  
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(Acts 27:12)

The sailing ship seemed to be hugging the coast, for her captain was a very worried man. Unusual delays had placed the ship behind schedule, and with the approach of the stormy season, the time for sailing had gone. Constantly, anxious eyes scanned the horizon, and many silent prayers were offered for the safety of the vessel. When the famous headlands came into view, the captain sighed with hope and eagerness. If only he could reach the desired refuge in time! Freshening winds filling the canvas gladdened his heart, and slowly the vessel sailed onward. "And when we had sailed slowly many days . . . we came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea" (Acts 27 :7-8).

#### Sure Delights

"The fair havens" was a pretty name; it would be interesting to know who first so named the picturesque harbour. Probably many storm-tossed mariners had sought sanctuary on its placid waters, and one of them had expressed his appreciation when he said, "This is a fair haven." Others shared his opinion, and with the passing of time the place became known as 'The fair havens.' We could ask what has been its counterpart in the history of mankind? The greatest storms of life are not always confined to oceans and continents. Some are found within the hearts of men and women. We might profitably enquire the location of the harbour into which our forefathers ran their storm-tossed vessels. And the answer would be instantly forthcoming. The Church of God has always been the place where travellers found rest. There, innumerable fleets of human vessels found a safe anchorage; and there, hearts have been at rest.

#### Strange Desires

"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 (v. 12). A man's vision is often affected by the desires of his heart. One looked at the fair havens and saw the tranquillity and peace of a lovely harbour. Another looked and saw a lonely place five miles from the nearest centre of habitation. Mutinous thoughts filled the hearts of the crew as they longed for the taverns and gaiety of Phenice . . . the city of palm trees. A deputation waited upon the captain, and their ideas were forcefully presented. The anchor was lifted, and in spite of Paul's warning the ship put to sea. In like manner, many people have left the fair havens of God's house because they have considered it to be too small to accommodate all their desires. Soft lights and sweet music must be sought over the sea in Phenice. The fair havens may be all right, but .

#### Startling Distress

"And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind called Euroclydon . . . And 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" (vv. 13-20). And amid the despair

THE SHIP'S CREW                      which nearly committed suicide of the storm, the peace of the fair havens appeared as one of the most-to-be-desired treasures in the world. How stupid they had been ever to leave the shelter of that delightful place! Our world is filled with people who have similarly made a great mistake. They have left the security of the harbour of God, and in search of worldly pleasures have made shipwreck of their lives.

#### Sublime Deliverance

It was in that late hour that Paul stood up to deliver his message of hope. There was a way out of their danger. If the vessel were surrendered to God; if the commands of the Great Captain were obeyed, all personnel aboard would succeed in reaching land. And since God's commands were given through His servant, Paul would have the final say concerning the navigation of the vessel. "And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship . . . Paul said, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off" (vv. 30-32). Wise men! They escaped death by inches. So it is in the greatest crises in life. There are storms from which only God can save.

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