

COURAGE IVs

Scripture Reading: Read Acts chapter 27

Several summers ago, I had the privilege of traveling with our oldest son to our church's National Fine Arts Festival. He had competed on the district level in the short sermon category and received a superior with invitation rating that allowed him to advance to the nationals, which were held that year in Charlotte, North Carolina. While there, I became very ill. I tried dealing with it on my own with over-the-counter medicines but eventually ended up having to go to an Urgent Care Center to receive an IV to replenish my fluids. The care I received was top-notch, and soon I was on my way to recovery and we were able to fly back home to Cobleskill.

In today's chapter reading, we find God giving the apostle Paul a "Courage IV" that enabled him to stand strong in a difficult situation. As you may recall, God challenged Paul to "take courage" back in Acts chapter 23 when he faced the opposition of the crowds and the religious leaders in Jerusalem. The Lord told him that he was to bear witness for Him in Rome. Here in Acts 27, Paul and his companions are caught up in a fierce "nor'easter" storm that threatened to destroy the ship on which he was sailing. Luke, who was traveling with Paul to Rome, describes the situation as follows, *"When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved."*

It was a grave situation and the courage Paul felt earlier seems to have disappeared. It was time for a "Courage IV" and the Lord supplied one by way of an angel from the Lord. Paul describes the experience in verses 23-24, *"Last night, an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.'" With his courage replenished, Paul was then able to encourage those traveling with him to be of good courage: "So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me."* He later encouraged them to eat some food and reminded them that, *"not one of you will lose a single hair from his head."* In the presence of all those on board the ship, he took some bread and gave thanks to God and began to eat. Seeing Paul's courage, they were all encouraged, too, and ate some food themselves. The next day, the ship went aground and all 276 on board made it to safety just as Paul predicted God would do.

There are times in life when God calls us to take an initial stand of courage. We do and life often goes well for a while but then a storm arises that saps our courage and makes us flinch with doubt. In those times, we must press in to Jesus and receive a "Courage IV" that enables us to finish well. Along the way, we'll probably find that God's "Courage Ivs" to us will allow us to encourage others on the journey too.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: How's your courage level registering? Spend some time reflecting on Acts 27 in light of your present circumstances. Pray that God would supply you with a "Courage IV" today, if one is necessary, so that not only will you have started well but that you will face the challenge that lies before you and also finish well.

Take-a-way: *A Courage IV is sometimes necessary to overcome the storms of life.*