



THE  
DISAPPEARANCE  
OF THE  
**EL FARO**

Echoes of Grace

March 2016 – Vol. 86 – Number 9

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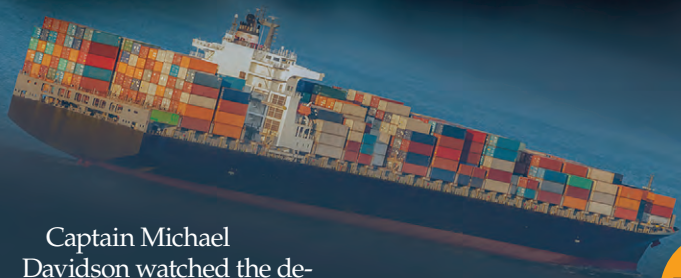
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ECHOES OF GRACE (USPS 167-180) is published monthly by Bible Truth Publishers, 59 Industrial Road, P.O. Box 649, Addison, Illinois 60101, USA. Periodical postage paid at Addison, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ECHOES OF GRACE, P.O. Box 649, Addison Illinois 60101.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: Postage paid to one address within the United States \$10.50 per year (12 issues). Postage paid to one address outside the United States \$13.50 per year (12 issues). Special prices on quantities.

Printed in USA

# THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE EL FARO



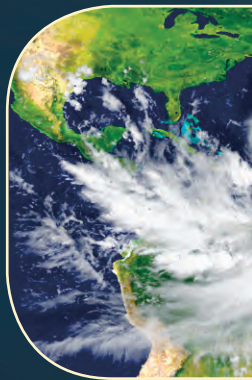
Captain Michael Davidson watched the development of the tropical storm system named Joaquin for several days. The slow-moving storm center had developed off the coast of Africa, traveled across the Atlantic, and was about to make landfall somewhere on the Caribbean and the southeastern coast of North America. Captain Davidson had his 790-foot-long cargo ship, *El Faro*, fully loaded with hundreds of cargo containers, truck trailers and automobiles, in port at Jacksonville, Florida, and was ready to sail for Puerto Rico. He watched the storm so he could plot a course that would keep him and his ship a safe distance from the threatening weather. He finally saw his chance and

“When the ship approached Crooked Island in the Bahamas, the engine abruptly quit working!”

set off from Jacksonville. The course he plotted would keep him 65 miles away from the center of the storm.

Not long after he set out, the storm took a turn for the worse, and weather forecasters upgraded Joaquin from a tropical storm to a category-3 hurricane. Instead of running into the 10-foot waves and 40-mile-per-hour winds that Captain Davidson expected, the *El Faro* ran into 40-foot waves and winds gusting at over a 150 miles per hour.

When the ship approached Crooked Island in the Bahamas, the engine abruptly quit working! Without power, *El Faro* swung broadside to the winds and waves and took a horrible beating. Soon the ship was listing, or leaning, 15 degrees. The *El Faro* reported its precarious condition to the Coast Guard by radio. In its last exchange, the Coast Guard asked how dangerous they felt their situation was. The radio operator on the ship responded, “It is manageable.” What a peculiar thing for anyone to say when



they are caught on a broken-down ship in the middle of a hurricane!

All radio transmission from the ship suddenly ceased. Maybe the ship rolled on its side, and maybe the hull split open. Perhaps we will never know how it sank, but when search planes and ships hurried to the last reported site, they didn't find any signs of the ship. It had disappeared in water that was nearly three miles deep. The search for survivors continued for several days afterwards, but no survivors of the *El Faro* were ever found.

Do you know that the Bible promises that a storm of judgment is in the not-too-distant future for everyone that fails to repent and believe in Christ? The magnitude of this storm is so great that it will sink those caught in it into a lost eternity.

The *El Faro* sank in water that is three miles deep, and that is deep indeed, but it is nothing compared to the profound depths of a lost eternity. Souls that die apart from Christ will disappear forever into the depths of hell. **“These shall go away into everlasting punishment”** (Matthew 25:46).

The only way to avoid this judgment is to come as a lost sinner to the Lord Jesus Christ and receive the forgiveness of sins. When a sinner believes in Christ, God forgives their sins and gives them the gift of eternal life. **“The wages of sin is death; but the**





gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

On Calvary’s hill, the Lord Jesus underwent untold suffering. Lifted up between heaven and earth, He gave His life for sinners. First Peter 3:18 reads, **“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”**

When asked by the Coast Guard to assess their condition, the radio operator responded, “It is manageable.” What a strange message to send when the ship was listing 15 degrees to the side, the engine was out of commission, and the ship was being battered by 40-foot waves and wind gusts of 150 miles per hour. The ship most likely sank shortly after this message was sent. A better answer would have been, “Desperate! We are on the verge of sinking! Send help at once!”

“If you are going through life without the Saviour, you are in a desperate condition too, because you are in your sins, and they will sink you to hell!”

If you are going through life without the Saviour, you are in a desperate condition too, because you are in your sins, and they will sink you to hell! It is amazing that many people living in the state of sin, if asked to assess how they are getting on in their spiritual walk, would reply something along the same line of, “It is manageable. I have it under control.” It would be far better for them to answer, “I am in a desperate condition! I am a lost sinner—ruined and undone—on the verge of perishing. Lord Jesus, save my soul!”

All those who plot their life’s course and leave the Saviour out of it will come into judgment. Won’t you alter your course through life so that by repentance and faith you may come to Christ? Only through faith in Christ can a sinner receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.

**“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”**  
(Acts 4:12).

**“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”** (Acts 16:31).

Unexpected trouble at sea can have a good side to it. See what I mean for yourself in *Saved Through Measles*. ◀



# Saved Through Measles

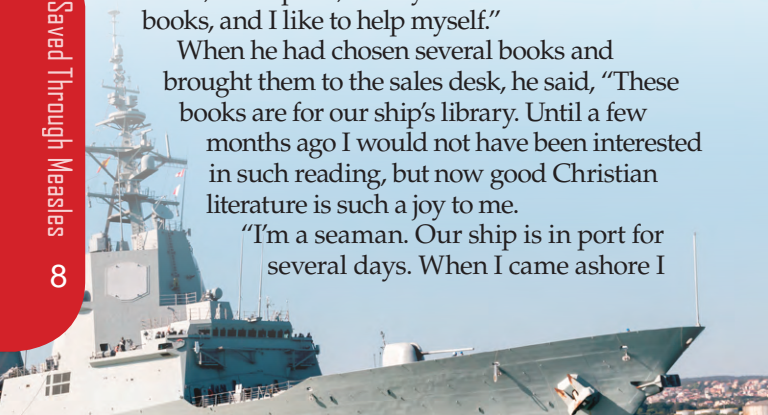


“May I help you?” the salesclerk asked a sailor who had just entered a Bible store in Singapore one afternoon.

“No,” he replied, “I only want to select some books, and I like to help myself.”

When he had chosen several books and brought them to the sales desk, he said, “These books are for our ship’s library. Until a few months ago I would not have been interested in such reading, but now good Christian literature is such a joy to me.

“I’m a seaman. Our ship is in port for several days. When I came ashore I







saw your book display in the window.

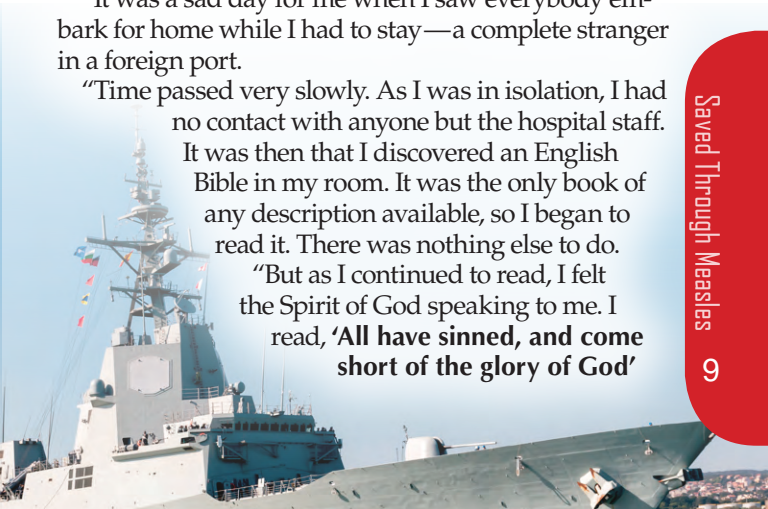
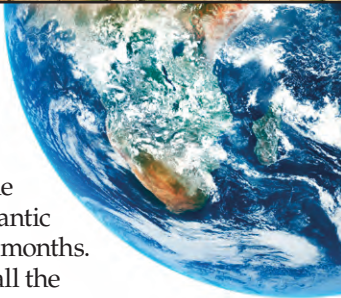
“Some months ago,” he continued, “we were on a round trip from New York to South Pacific ports, north again through the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic Ocean. The trip takes about three months.

“As we left the last port, out of all the ship’s company, I was the one who contracted the measles. I was so sick that when we put into a port in India, the captain put me ashore in a hospital while the ship continued on its way.

“It was a sad day for me when I saw everybody embark for home while I had to stay—a complete stranger in a foreign port.

“Time passed very slowly. As I was in isolation, I had no contact with anyone but the hospital staff. It was then that I discovered an English Bible in my room. It was the only book of any description available, so I began to read it. There was nothing else to do.

“But as I continued to read, I felt the Spirit of God speaking to me. I read, **‘All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God’**





(Romans 3:23), and I realized I was a lost sinner in the presence of a holy God.

“Thank God the message did not stop there. I also read that **‘Christ died for our sins’** (1 Corinthians 15:3), and **‘the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin’** (1 John 1:7). This wonderful Word of God brought life and light and liberty to my hopeless, dark heart, and now through grace I am a new man in Christ Jesus. My sins are gone!

“In due course, our ship came around again and picked me up. We are on our way home now.”

Who would have guessed that a case of measles would result in eternal blessing to a soul?

Many people place more confidence in science than the Bible. Even when they hear true stories like the big change that came over the young seaman, they remain skeptical. But there’s a way to be free of that skepticism. Find out how in *Who Knows What to Believe?* ◀



# Who Knows What to Believe?



The title of a recent article in the paper caught my eye. “We tried to reproduce 100 published psychological studies—the results were abysmal.”

Researchers, including Dr. Nina Strohminger at Yale University, tried to reproduce previous studies about “How We Think.” They realized that once any research is

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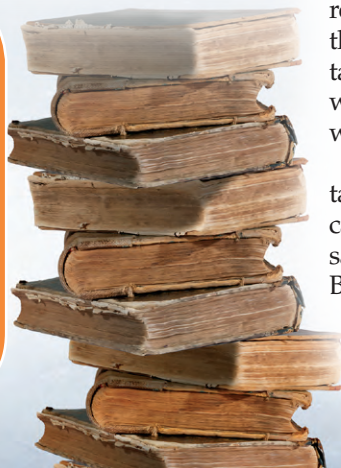
published in a journal, it often acquires an unassailable authority. It will then be quoted with unquestioning confidence by others.

But they found such unquestioning confidence is often undeserved. The article explains that only one-third of the re-run studies produced the same conclusions. And she reports that in other fields of study—for example, cancer biology—replication rates are as low as one-fifth or less.

I know that in my own field of study, eye care, we realize that about half of the things we are being taught today will be proven wrong in a few years. So what should we believe?

I think the point is to take new studies with some cautious doubt or, as they say, “with a grain of salt.” But I want to make a much more important point, a spiritual point.

What can we believe



about spiritual things? It seems that everybody has their opinion, their point of view about God. So I encourage you to go to the Bible itself. It has been hammered and kicked around for centuries.

And yet it remains, having been proven reliable, unaltered, factually correct and with a message that keeps changing lives in every part of the world.

The message of God in the Bible can be believed and counted on. It won't disappoint us. The Bible's diagnosis of our problem is simple and right on. Sin! We have broken God's laws and in turn experienced broken lives, broken bodies, broken minds and more. Here is the simple explanation for the tangled mess we find ourselves in.

Thankfully God also presents the cure for our sorry state of affairs.

“ ...go to the Bible itself. It has been hammered and kicked around for centuries. And yet it remains, having been proven reliable, unaltered, factually correct and with a message that keeps changing lives in every part of the world. ”




“... God also presents the cure for our sorry state of affairs. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

**“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”**  
(1 Timothy 1:15).

We know from history that Jesus came, and history also records His death. But it is the Bible that records the reason why He came. He came to save sinners. Just a brief reflection on your own life should bring you to the realization that you qualify. You are a sinner.

God hates your sin. But He tells us, **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16). He died bearing God’s wrath against my sin. That’s why I call Him my Saviour. Is He your Saviour?

Here is something you can believe or, better still, Somebody you can trust and love. 

# DARK IS THE NIGHT

Dark is the night, and cold the wind is blowing;  
Nearer and nearer comes the breakers' roar;  
Where shall I go, or whither fly for refuge?  
Hide me, my Father, till the storm is o'er.

## Refrain

With His loving hand to guide, let the clouds above me roll,  
And the billows in their fury dash around me;  
I can brave the wildest storm, with His glory in my soul;  
I can sing amidst the tempest: Praise the Lord!

Dark is the night, but cheering is the promise,  
He will go with me o'er the troubled wave;  
Safe He will lead me through the pathless waters,  
Jesus, the mighty One, and strong to save.

## Refrain

Dark is the night, but lo! the day is breaking:  
Onward my bark, unfurl thy every sail;  
Now at the helm I see my Father standing;  
Soon will my anchor drop within the veil.

## **ECHOES OF GRACE**

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that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).*

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