

**Guide Me Through the Mine Field****961218**

*Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.*  
*Ecclesiastes 9:12*

Sometimes trouble surprises us. It strikes without warning, leaving us shell-shocked. We nervously wait the next strike against us. One picture that comes to me is my Dad's dog when it thinks that the cat is about to jump him. He walks briskly through the center of a room, but becomes very cautious as he approaches a corner. He knows that the cat is sneaky, and that her game is guerrilla warfare. He does not like to be surprised. We would all like to boldly go forth into our lives without the fear of problems, but we know how life is. There is always something that we have to deal with that we really do not want to, like when a huge bill comes, or you lose someone very close to you.

Another picture that comes to mind is the stealthy movement of a submarine through a mine field. I know you have all seen a movie where this was a part of the plot. The tension inside the ship was so thick you could cut it with a knife. How would you like to ride blind in a steel coffin trying to avoid the mines? You just sit and wait for the click of the detonator going off to blow you out of existence. This is not a good feeling! There have been times in my own life where I felt like this. Recently I have taken to praying for God to guide me through the mine field. I don't know where the problems are: I can't see them at all.

William Barclay translates Jude 12 in the following way: "These people are hidden rocks which threaten to wreck your Love Feasts." He did this because the most common meaning of the Greek word "spilas" (used in the original text) is "a submerged rock on which a ship could easily be ship-wrecked." This is a great way to describe the way life can take us by surprise, and reminds us again of the submarine in the mine field.

The idea of a shipwreck brings the experiences of Paul to mind. He was shipwrecked three times and spent a night and a day in the sea. He surely knew what it was like to wonder when the next disaster might strike. Imagine the uncertainty that the crew of his ship felt as we read from Acts 27:29, "Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight." Then we read that they did strike a hidden sandbar and the ship began to break apart. But Paul had supreme faith in God that everything would work out right. He lived his life with this kind of attitude, even though he had ...

*...worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)*

Paul obviously knew how to handle life through his faith in God. I wish I could be more like him. So now, I just pray for God to guide me through the mind field, or to pilot me through to the harbor. I hope that you will choose Him as your guide, too.

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