

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 4: The God Like None Other

Unit 4 Big Question and Answer:
Can Anybody Tell Me What the LORD Is Like?
He's Not Like Anyone Else!
PFI ESV Songs 4, Tracks 3,4

Unit 4 Bible Verse: 1 Kings 8:23, ESV
Bible Verse: "O LORD...there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath."
PFI ESV Songs 4, Tracks 6,7

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 4:
The LORD Is Everywhere, All the Time

The LORD made people finite. That means they have things they can do and things they can't do. People can only be at one place at one time. They have to travel to move from one place to another. They have a time to live and a time to die.

The LORD is very different from people. He is infinite—He is everywhere, all the time. He never began and He will never end. There never was a time when the LORD was not alive. There will never be a time when He will stop living. He knows and plans what happens, even before something has begun. He sees everything in all times and in all places, all at the same time.

Because the LORD is everywhere, all the time, He is able to hear and answer all of His people's prayers at the same time. He is able to protect them and help them, no matter where they are. He works out everything with perfect timing, according to His perfect will.

BIBLE VERSE

How do I know this is true? The Bible tells me so!

Bible Truth 4 Bible Verse: Psalm 139:1-3,7-10 ESV
"O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me."

CASE STORY

Acts 27

Our story is:
The Case of the Not-So-Abandoned Ship.

As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out:
1. Why did the ship seem like it was abandoned?
2. Who showed them that it wasn't really abandoned?
Why did he know they weren't abandoned?

This story takes place on the Mediterranean Sea, during New Testament times, about thirty years after Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.

"Lower the anchors! Tie down the ship!" the captain shouted to his weary and frustrated crew of sailors. "We'll have to anchor here at Fair Havens for now. We have no choice."

For days now the captain had been trying to get his large ship, full of Egyptian grain and Roman prisoners, to Rome. But the late autumn winds had given them nothing but trouble. Instead of pushing the ship westerly towards Rome, the winds pushed them to the east and the south. So here they were, stuck on the island of Crete, in the Middle of the Mediterranean Sea, 600 miles away from Rome!

But what did they expect, sailing on the Mediterranean in mid-October? Every good sailor knew the winds would be against them; and what was more, it was the season of Euraquilo—the great hurricanes. These storms were stirred up by strong winds sweeping down off of Mt. Ida in the north and churning up the waters of the Mediterranean into a deadly trap of gigantic waves. It was risky business sailing at this time of year.

That night, the captain and pilot reported to Julius, the centurion in charge of the soldiers, the prisoners and the wheat shipment. They had a big decision to make.

"What should do, captain?" Julius asked.

"The voyage from Myra to here has taken too long. It's well past the safe season for sailing the rest of the way to Rome. We must seek refuge here on Crete and wait out the winter storms," the owner replied.

"I agree," the pilot said. "But we can't stay here in Fair Haven. This harbor isn't safe against the storms of Euraquilo when they come. I say we sail ten hours down the coast to the safe harbor at Phoenix."

Suddenly a prisoner blurted out his opinion. "Stay here

in Fair Havens," he said. "If you sail any further it will be a disaster," he warned.

Who was this bold prisoner? It was the apostle Paul. He had been a prisoner at King Felix's palace for two years and now was being taken to Rome to have Caesar Nero judge his case.

Julius and the others ignored Paul's advice. He was no sailor! Why should they listen to him! "We set sail for Phoenix with the good wind," they decided.

Soon, a gentle, south wind they waited for began to blow. The ship set sail for Phoenix, not far up the coast.

But suddenly, the weather changed. The sky grew dark and cloudy. Rain fell heavily and the wind blew fiercely. It was a Euroquilo! The most terrible storm known on the Mediterranean Sea!

The rain drenched them. The powerful wind and waves slammed into the ship, threatening to crush it. They hoped for the storm to end, but it kept on, day after day. Soon even the captain lost hope. "My ship is almost in pieces, my men can hardly keep going, I've lost my cargo, and the Euroquilo is still beating down on us. Soon we will lose our lives if someone does not help us. But who could possibly help us in the Middle of a Euroquilo? There is no one," the captain despaired.

But Paul knew there was One who could help them—the LORD, who is everywhere, all the time. And right there in the Middle of that furious storm, Paul had cried out to Him. No Euroquilo could keep Him away. He was the awesome God who was everywhere, all the time. He knew that the LORD saw what they were going through and knew what would happen next. He knew that the Lord could do far more than know, hear and see what was happening. He could answer Paul's prayers and help them, no matter where they are. The Lord was working out everything with perfect timing, according to His marvelous will.

Paul stood up and shouted over the storm's roar: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. 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.' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen

just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island." (Acts 2 :21-26)

What was this? Help in the Middle of a Euroquilo? Everyone on board hoped what Paul said was true. They began to watch for signs of land.

On midnight of the fourteenth night of being beaten by this ferocious storm, the sailors came to their captain with a new report, "Captain, the soundings show that the water is getting shallower...we must be approaching land of some sort!"

"This is good news. It is just as Paul said. There is hope for us, but we are still in grave danger, for there is no way that we can see to guide the ship away from rocks on this pitch dark, stormy night," the captain said. "The angel told Paul the ship would run aground. Let's hope that means we can stay afloat until morning when we can see where we are going. Lower the anchors to slow us down and keep a close watch on the water level. And pray for daylight to come quickly!" he told the crew.

At last dawn came. Now they could see where they were and how best to guide the boat towards shore. It soon would be time to abandon the ship.

Paul gathered everyone together for last words: "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food--you haven't eaten anything. You must eat something now if you are to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head."

After he said this, Paul took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. (Acts 27:35-36)

If it had been anyone else talking, the men probably wouldn't have listened. Wasn't the ship still in terrible danger of crashing? But this was Paul who was speaking. The man whose God was the Lord. If no Euroquilo could keep Him away; surely He knew about crashing into rocks, too. He was the awesome God who was everywhere, all the time. The Lord had seen what they were going through then and had known what would happen next. He would answer Paul's prayers and help them, no matter where they are. He was working out everything with perfect timing, according to His marvelous will. All were encouraged by Paul's words. They ate all they wanted and then threw the rest over board to lighten the ship.

When daylight fully came, the captain tried to identify the island. "I have no idea what island this is," he told the

others, "but look, over there is a bay with a sandy beach. That is our best chance for running aground safely."

"Cut loose the anchors, untie the rudder ropes! Hoist the foresail and head straight for the beach!" the captain ordered his men.

Everyone braced themselves for the jolt. Crash! Thud! The mighty ship slammed into the sandbar at full speed and came to a wrenching halt. As the crashing waves began to break up the back of the grounded ship, everyone began to jump overboard and swim for shore. Everyone, that is, except the prisoners and the soldiers guarding them. With drawn swords, the soldiers turned on the prisoners. They had decided they would rather kill them than risk being punished if any of them escaped in the sea.

Would this be the end of Paul? No, it would not! The Lord, the God who is everywhere, all the time, was still there in the Middle of the Euraquilo, right there as the soldiers made their plans. He was making sure that everything would work with His perfect timing, according to His marvelous will. He enabled Julius to find out about the soldiers' plans and stop them before they had killed anyone.

"You who can swim, jump and swim to land," Julius ordered the prisoners. "The rest of you, get a wooden plank from the ship and use it to help you float ashore," he ordered.

After a long fight with the monstrous, crashing waves, every, single one of the 256 people on the ship had made it safely ashore. They dragged themselves ashore and lay exhausted on the beach.

Paul, for one, had his thoughts turned in grateful adoration to the Lord. Praise be to the Lord, the awesome God who is everywhere, all the time! He had rescued them just as He had promised.

But how about the captain, the pilot, their sailors? And Julius the centurion, his soldiers and all their prisoners? Were they thinking about the Lord, too? The God who had been there in the storm with them and had clearly saved them? We will never know. But I hope that they also did not fail to turn their hearts to the Lord, too. Hadn't He shown Himself to them as unlike any other god they had ever known or heard of? A powerful God who was everywhere, all the time—even in the Middle of a Euraquilo.

Our Bible Truth is:

The Lord Is Everywhere, All the Time

Our Bible Verse is: Psalm 139:1-3,7-10

"O LORD, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me."

These verses remind us that there is nowhere we can be and the Lord will not be there, too. He truly is the God who is everywhere, all the time.

But what about you and me? It doesn't have to take getting caught a swirling monster of a storm at sea to be thankful that the Lord is everywhere, all the time. Isn't it wonderful to think that there is nowhere that we can be separated from God? That there is nowhere where He cannot know, hear and see what is happening. No matter how far away or how scary, no matter how hard or new something is that we and those we love face.

Not even death itself will separate us from the Lord, if we are those who turn to Him, confessing our sins and trusting in Jesus as our Savior. Yes, in everything, even in death, He will be there, working out everything with perfect timing, according to His marvelous will. Let's praise the Lord, who is everywhere, all the time. Let's ask Him to give us faith to trust Him no matter what the situation we are in, to know, hear, see and be at work.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:

The LORD may be everywhere, all the time, but it's too much for Him to hear and answer everyone's prayers at once.

Answer: False! The LORD is infinite! There's no limit to Him. He can even hear and answer everyone's prayers at once.

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. Why did the ship seem like it was abandoned?

Answer: Because the sailors were in a terrible storm that was breaking up the ship and seemed certain to be the death of them all.

b. Who showed them that it wasn't really abandoned? Why did he know they weren't abandoned?

Answer: Paul. He knew the Lord was with him no matter where he was. He believed the Lord's promise that he would appear before Caesar in Rome, so he wouldn't die in that storm. An angel spoke to him, telling him what would happen and what they should do.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:

Psalms 139:7-10

"O ____, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit ____ and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Where shall I go from your ____ Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to ____, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the ____, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me."

Answers: LORD; down; Spirit; heaven; sea.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication

A God, we praise You for being everywhere, all the time.

C God, we confess that many times when we are in hard situations, we act like You aren't with us and can't help us. We worry instead of asking for Your help.

T God, we thank You for being faithful to always be with Your people, even when they are worried and are unfaithful to You.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Help us to trust You to be with us and help us in hard situations rather than giving into fear.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

God Is Working His Purpose Out

PFI ESV Songs 4, Track 19

Verse 1

God is working his purpose out
As year succeeds to year:
God is working his purpose out,
And the time is drawing near;
Nearer and nearer draws the time,
The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.

Words: Arthur Campbell Ainger Music: Constance Dever ©2012

God is everywhere, all the time. He not only sees everything that happens, but He is in control over it and is using it all for His perfect purposes. Yes, the best and good things that happen in this world. And, yes, even the sad and awful things, will all be used perfectly, for His absolutely amazing, glorious purposes. It may be hard for us to see these now, sometimes, but nonetheless it is true. Year comes after another and everything is being fulfilled, until at last God's full plan will be done. All of God's people will be gathered together safely home with God. And all of God's plan will be seen as good and perfect. It will all show God's goodness and greatness--it will all bring God glory.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

O LORD, You Have Searched Me

PFI ESV Songs 4, Track 20

Verse 1

O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
You discern my thoughts, My thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.

Refrain: Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! You are there!

Verse 2:

If I take the wings of the morning
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there your hand shall lead me,
Your right hand shall hold me. *Refrain*
Psalm One-thirty-nine, verses one through three,
and seven through ten.

Words: Psalm 139:1-3,7-10, ESV Music: Constance Dever ©2012

These verses tell us that God is everywhere, all the time. There is no where we can flee from God's Spirit. Everywhere we are, He is, too. God knows us inside and out. He hears all of our prayers. He will help and protect those who trust in Him, no matter where they are. He will always be guiding them according to His perfect plans.