

# Dr. Joe Jursa's Sermon

## [Jesus take the Wheel](#) - Acts 28:1-6

Someone asked why each summer I took a month and played music off the radio as a beginning place for the sermon. I discovered in studying the early disciples and Jesus teaching methods that they most often employed events and happening around them. They used what was common to so many of the people of their day.

Most everyone listens to the radio, different stations but so many of the songs have one meaning of the song writer and another meaning for the child of God who is listening for the voice of God in the world around us. Part of the reason each year I do this is so that we will all begin to look at our world differently. God does still speak today, sometimes through preachers or teachers but sometimes through just the ordinary stuff of everyday life. I want us to tune our ears to hear every place that God might speak to us.

So this morning I have chosen one that ought not be too difficult to hear God speaking to us. But by the same token maybe we can come to hear more when we think about scripture and what God is saying through this song. Enjoy Carrie Underwood's "Jesus take the wheel."

### PLAY SONG

When life got hard, when the misfortunes of life overtook the young mother, she remembered Jesus. She remembered he promised to care for those who entrusted their lives to him. Maybe in the past she had done that, but that seemed so long ago. Tonight on the ice slick roads headed home she was reminded she still needed to trust him. When it was beyond her, she cried out to Jesus.

I want to say "Way to go." It is a great first step. Jesus will take the wheel, Jesus will help direct and protect your life.

But if you are a disciple and not a recent convert to the faith, are you working on getting to the place where even when disaster strikes you already know Jesus has control of the wheel, you don't have to cry out.

As I listened to the song my mind recalled the ship wreck of Paul on his way to Rome. He had been arrested, pleaded his case to be heard by Caesar and as a Roman citizen he had the right to be heard. So Paul was placed on a ship bound for Italy and Rome.

While on board, the ship was overtaken by a violent storm. Doing everything possible, the crew was still not able to save the vessel and the ship sank. The crew however because of Paul's direction had all been saved and found their way to an island.

Here on the coast just shipwrecked, Paul helps natives fix fires to keep the shipwrecked travelers warm. This then is where we find our selves in the story as told in Acts 28.

After we had reached safety, we then learned that the island was called Malta. <sup>2</sup> The natives showed us unusual kindness. Since it had begun to rain and was cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us around it. <sup>3</sup> Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire, when a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. <sup>4</sup> When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "This man must be a murderer; though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." <sup>5</sup> He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. <sup>6</sup> They were expecting him to swell up or drop dead, but after they had waited a long time and saw that nothing unusual had happened to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.

Paul is collecting wood. A snake bites him, latching on to his hand. The natives seem to know it is poisonous and believe that Paul must have been a truly evil man so that even though he did not die in the shipwreck still justice is being done as he will die from the snake. Later they come to think he must be a god. But putting all of that aside, the scripture is filled with people praying and seeking God.

But what does this scripture tell us about Paul seeking and petitioning God? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! He is bit by a poisonous snake and Paul does not even bother mentioning it to God?

That really got me. Carrie Underwood has her young mother call upon Jesus immediately when trouble overcomes her. But Paul, a disciple of Jesus, one who is proclaiming Jesus everywhere, one who is on trial for his sharing about Jesus, Paul does not even call on God when he is bit by a poisonous snake.

What is going on with Paul?

I listened to this song by Carrie for weeks always with the scripture running through my mind about Paul on the island of Malta. Finally, I had enough and I like Carrie called out to God asking for some kind of explanation, some kind of answer. Why was not Paul sharp enough to call upon Jesus?

The answer that kept coming to mind was that he already had! He did not pray when the snake bit him because he had already asked Jesus to take the wheel of his life. For him, the snake happened when Jesus was already in control. Whatever the outcome, Jesus was already in control before the crisis came; therefore the crisis was under his direction and control. If he lived he lived, if he died he died, but either way it was at the hand and direction of Jesus!

How would I live if I had already prayed? How might I live if I knew that Jesus was already in control of the wheel in my life? Could I look at crisis different? Would I take what happened to me, not as some sign of displeasure of God but with the steady assurance that everything happening was a part of Jesus plan for me? Could I learn to live so close to God that I know he is already in control?

I think I know why Paul didn't pray, he already had! The trial was part of God's plan. His citizenship in Rome was part of God's plan. The ship wreck was not beyond the plan and control of God who was caring for Paul. The rescue of the shipwrecked men, the native on Malta, even the snake was all under the control of God who had a very special plan for the life of Paul. Paul trusted God, God was in control.

How about your life? Can you trust God? Not just when things happen suddenly and the crisis comes, but long before. Can you trust God to be in control?

I pray for all of us at the moment of crisis to be as quick as the young mother in the song and call out to Christ for his help for him to take control. But for those who want to truly dare to walk close to Jesus, I would invite you to begin praying before, beginning giving control of your life over to Jesus before the crisis. I would invite us to live each day knowing that Jesus is in control.

I would invite you here to the altar. Jesus still answers prayer asking him to take control. Is today the day you will begin asking Jesus to be in control of your life? I invite you to come and talk to Christ here at his altar.