

# God And Shipwrecks

## Introduction

- If you have your Bibles...
- Titanic - Megan, Emily, Sarah. What was her name? Leonardo DiCaprio's girl. The one who hogged the door as her boyfriend froze to death. A wonderful ship story. Filled with hubris and pride. "Greatest ship ever built, Unsinkable."
  - And yet it sinks.
- Our passage this morning is quite similar. A story about a ship, about Man's hubris. About disaster striking. I mean this would make a great movie! You have conflict on the crew, you have fights about setting sail or not. You have people trying to sneak off the ship in the middle of the night. And the whole crew believed that there was no hope. Yet in the center of it all stands a man chained, but unbreakable. A man declaring God's promises.
  - You see this story is about the unyielding sovereignty of God over every storm in life.
    - And if you're here feeling like your life is adrift in uncertainty—job loss, family strife, health battles—this chapter reminds us that God is still on the throne, steering the ship even when it feels like it's sinking.
      - A lot of reading this morning 44 verses. A lot of places, and a lot of ship terminology. I am not a boat guy, maybe you are, but don't butcher me if I mispronounce something. We're going to get through it together.

## Acts 27

And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. 2 And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. 3 The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for. 4 And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. 5 And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. 7 We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. 8 Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

9 Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, 10 saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." 11 But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. 12 And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

13 Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. 14 But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. 15 And when the ship was

caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. 16 Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. 17 After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along. 18 Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. 19 And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

21 Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. 22 Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 24 and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' 25 So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. 26 But we must run aground on some island."

27 When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. 28 So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms.[d] A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms.[e] 29 And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. 30 And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, 31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.

33 As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. 34 Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." 35 And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. 36 Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. 37 (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

39 Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. 40 So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. 41 But striking a reef,[h] they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. 42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. 43 But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, 44 and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

## Context/Story

### The Waring Ignored (Vs 1-12)

- As the chapter opens, Paul is handed over to Centurion Julius, and they set sail on a ship from Adramyttium, stopping at Sidon where Julius kindly allows Paul to visit friends. They change ships at Myra to an Alexandrian vessel bound for Italy, but head winds slow them down. They hug the coast until they reach Fair Havens. Winter is approaching —the Fast (Day of Atonement) has passed, making sailing treacherous after mid-September.
  - Paul, with his experience from previous voyages (he's no novice sailor; 2 Corinthians 11:25 Paul mentions being in three shipwrecks), warns them, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives". But the centurion listens to the captain instead. The sailors had cargo to deliver, and there was money to be made. Greed for profit overrides wisdom, and they press on.
    - Acts 27 exposes the human heart's tendency to ignore godly counsel when it conflicts with our agendas. Paul is speaking as a man attuned to God's leading, yet the majority rules, and disaster looms.
- Prove
  - Proverbs 14:12 - There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.
  - Think of Jonah... another storm story where ignoring God's word leads to chaos.
- Apply
  - Brothers and sisters, how often do we do this in everyday life?
    - You get wise counsel from a godly friend or pastor...but you ignore it because you think you are the exception, not the rule. Happens all the time in dating: "She's not a believer; this won't honor God,". but attraction wins, and so you try out missionary dating. "You can change him." But the chances of that are small... and unless a miracle happens, heartache will follow.
      - I have given this exact counsel dozens of times, and when it is unheeded, I have never seen it work out successfully. There is a reason God tells us to not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever.
        - We must seek God's wisdom first through Scripture and wise counsel, not the majority opinion or lean on our deceptive heart.
    - trusting God's word over circumstances

### **The Despair of the Storm (Vs 13-26)**

- A gentle south wind deceives them into thinking it's safe, so they weigh anchor and sail, but soon, a typhoon strikes, driving the ship helplessly. They undergird the boat with cables, literally tying it together, hoping it will hold. They jettison the cargo of grain, which was all their hopes for financial gain in this storm. They are so desperate that they don't care what they lose, if it means that they will survive.
  - Have you ever felt that way? "I don't care what it takes, take all my money, take my house, take everything. I just want to be free of this. I just want to be safe. I just want to be healed."

- But you can't fix it. Just like in our story. The storm strips away any illusions of control that we may have. You don't have control. You are utterly helpless.
- Days pass in darkness; no sun or stars for navigation. Vs 20 "When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned." The men had not eaten in days, they had thrown their food overboard. Starvation looms.
  - Enter Paul: "Men, you should have listened to me... But now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life... For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong... saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you'"
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- Prove
  - Psalm 107:23-29 - Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; 24 they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. 25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; 27 they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 29 He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.
- Apply
  - Matthew Henry notes the voyage as a metaphor for the church's journey through worldly storms.
  - When your marriage is stormy, finances crashing, or health failing, and all hope seems gone, do what Paul did: Stand on God's word. Proclaim it to yourself and others.
    - When your world is falling apart, don't numb it with booze. Don't run away into pornography. That is a coward's way out. Don't let despair drive you to sin. Let it drive you to Jesus! Be like Paul, and be the leader God has called you to be. Grab Scripture, and share it with your family.
      - Memorize promises, speak them aloud in trials. In the chaos of parenting teens who are rebelling, remind yourself that God will never leave you or forsake you.
        - Galatians 6:9 - And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

### **Safety Despite Shipwreck (Vs 27-44)**

- After 14 nights adrift in the Adriatic Sea, sailors sense land and take soundings. They fear the rocks, they drop anchors. Some try to escape in the lifeboat, but Paul warns the centurion: "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved" (v. 31). Soldiers cut the ropes. Paul urges all to eat for strength, breaking bread in a communion-like act, encouraging them. They lighten the ship by tossing wheat overboard. Daybreak reveals

a bay; they cut anchors, hoist sail—but the ship strikes a reef and breaks apart. But the sailors all are able to find safety by clinging to the broken pieces of the ship.

- Charles Spurgeon preached on this: "The breaking of the ship was the saving of the lives... So it is with us; our wreckings are often our preservations."
- All 276 swim or float to shore safely, just as God promised.
- Prove
  - John 16:33: "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."
    - But he doesn't always do so. Sometimes he
- Three way God saves us from the storms
  - 1. He calms them.
    - Remember Jesus in the boat? The storm comes and he speaks. He rebukes the wind and the waves, and they obey Him. It is because he is the one who made the wind, and made the waves. He has complete power over every storm.
      - Also note that Paul does not try to calm the storm. He knows that he does not have that power. He is not God. He is not trying to be God. He is simply trusting in the God who does have the power.
  - 2. He walks with us through the Storms Sometimes he calms the storm. Sometimes he wants you to go through it. Starve for 14 days, and end up shipwrecked, floating on a piece of wood to your safe harbor. God preserves His people through trials, not always from them.
    - So much of your life may feel totally out of control. You cant control when you get sick, you cant control accidents, You cant control when you are going to get the C word from your doctor. You can't control other people's choices, you can't control all the injustices in the world.
    - In a world of uncertainty—pandemics, natural disasters—Acts 27 reminds believers that God has a plan, and He knows what He is doing.
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  - 3. He allows the storm to swallow us, and we end up on the other side in paradise.
    - Paul got a promise from God that He would make it to Rome. And because God wanted him in Rome, God spared all 276 lives on that boat. But we need to remember that we are not Paul, and we do not have the same promises. Sometimes your storm will end in the end of your life. But even that is okay, because your promises are greater than Paul's.
      - John 11:25 - Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.
      - Thief on the cross - Today you will be with me in paradise.
        - This was the conclusion for Jesus himself as God allowed that storm of wickedness to swallow Him on the cross.
          - Only For him to be raised again 3 days later securing for himself and for us the ultimate victory.
      - Oh death where is your victory, o death where is your sting?

### **Exactly as We Have Been Told (Conclusion)**

- 25 So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.
- Theologically, our salvation is God's gift, we could not achieve it through human effort any more than those sailors could.
  - This week should remind us that God is completely in control of our lives. That our Days will play out just as God has written them.
    - Psalm 139 tells us “All of our days have been written in God’s book before one of them came to pass.”
      - That psalm can make you into a fatalist, or make you into the happiest, freest person in the world.

### **Pray/Invitation**