

Introduction

Luke's account leading up to the loss of the ship, on which Paul was traveling, reads like a cliff hanger show. One moment we feel relief as a crisis passes, but almost immediately, a new threat looms and all seems lost.

Through it all, however, God is faithful.

Summary

In Acts 27:27-44, through the dangers from sea and shipwreck, Paul's faithful God carried him and all his fellow travelers to safety on an unknown shore, vindicating Paul's confidence that God would prove true to his Word.

1. Self Serving Sailors vv. 27-32

Unbeknown to the crew and passengers, the 'north-easter' storm wind had shifted direction and was driving their vessel due west across the Adriatic Sea. In the darkness of night, the sailors heard the crash of waves on a shore and after taking soundings of the depth of the water, they realized that they were approaching land.

Instead of waiting until morning to assess the situation, some sailors panicked and attempted a desperate plan to save themselves at the expense of everyone else.

Paul warned the centurion and the soldiers who cut the skiff loose (**Acts 27:31-32**).

These sailors were tempted to abandon ship despite the promise given by God.

They are examples of unbelief, whereas Paul shows the way of faith.

When God speaks, we should heed his Word and believe it.

God's promise to save the men on board the ship did not mean that Paul should do nothing but wait upon his deliverance. Paul fulfilled his responsibility, shouting instructions, pleading that his advice be heeded.

This is one of the clearest examples in Scripture of the interaction and harmony between God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

2. Needed Nourishment vv. 33-38

As they waited through the night, praying for the dawn, Paul encouraged his shipmates to replenish their strength for the ordeal ahead.

Even a meal in such circumstances as these, was not without its opportunity for evangelism (**Acts 27:34**).

This shipboard meal was NOT the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Paul urged all his fellow-travelers, most of whom were pagans, to partake.

Paul's calm consumption, and especially his public thanksgiving to the God of grace, bears witness to the peace amid life's storms that Jesus gives.

Paul's advice is very practical. Faith does not overlook the practical details, such as eating in order to provide energy for a difficult task that lies ahead.

3. Hidden Sandbar vv. 39-41

With the dawn, they saw a break in the rocky coastline, a sandy beach at the back of a bay. With the lifeboat gone, their best chance of survival was to beach the ship there. Suddenly the ship struck a reef beneath the surface of the water. Exposed to the pounding of the waves, the vessel was of no more use to get the occupants to land. It would soon be shattered into pieces, as Paul had predicted (**Acts 27:22**), and those aboard cast into the churning waters.

4. Conscientious Soldiers vv. 43-44

The soldiers prepared to kill each of the prisoners before jumping overboard themselves but were stopped just in time by their commander. Julius protected Paul by ordering everyone to make for land as best he could. Everyone was saved; all two hundred and seventy-six were accounted for.

Our daily experience of life is so full of decisions large or small, and circumstances beyond our control, that, from our perspective, these all have unpredictable outcomes. Yet through them all the sovereign God sovereignly works everything together for good for those who love him, who are called according to his purpose (**Rom 8:28-29**).

Frustration, anxiety and even bitterness may come to Christians as they pass through this life with its many dangers, toils and snares but for those who have faith in Jesus Christ, whose Word is his promise, no amount of bitterness can remove the assurance of God's providential guidance over every detail of our lives. Through the bitterness of a shipwreck at sea, Paul emerges once again as a man of faith and courage because he trusted in God and his Word. The Word of God fortifies and enriches us, enabling us to withstand any storm and any battle that may come our way.

Luke shows that Paul was a man of integrity, that without his participation, Julius and his men would most likely have drowned at sea. Paul was no troublemaker, but a man of conviction and uprightness, someone whom anyone could trust in times of difficulty and need.

The chapter ends with words of fulfilled deliverance (**Acts 27:44**). This is what God had promised Paul in the midst of the storm (**Acts 27:24-25**). God had kept his word. He always does.

The promise, in Paul's case, was precise and given in special circumstances. No such promise to rescue us from a physical storm is given to us in Scripture. Nevertheless, Christians have been promised that we will be delivered from the storm of God's judgement on the last day, however. Do we trust God's Word enough to cast our very lives upon it?