

**Key:**

Purple – Introduction, Conclusion, Main Points, and Sermon Thread

Blue – Explanation/Exposition

Red – Application

Green – Illustration

Brown – Quotation

Yellow – Sermon Notes

## Paul in Peril: Leading through Crisis

Acts 27:1–38

Let's take our Bibles together and turn to Acts 27. And let's continue our series "No Other Name," verse by verse through the book of Acts. Our study of the book of Acts is drawing to an end. Let's finish strong these last three weeks.

A little over 25 years ago, Sanja and I got married in Longview, Texas. And after our wedding, we did something that a lot of married folks do after they get married—we went on a honeymoon cruise. And it was supposed to be a fun and exciting time for the two of us. We envisioned laying out on the deck of the boat, swimming in the ocean, eating exotic foods, etc. We were going to have the time of our lives.

And for the first 24 hours or so, that was the case. It was fantastic. But then on the second day of our voyage, our boat hit a massive squall in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico. And it seemed like that storm just came out of nowhere. We were, in an instant, pounded with wind, rain, waves, and rough seas. And at one point it felt like our boat deck went from parallel to the surface of the water to perpendicular to the surface of the water. Sanja and I were terrified. We thought to ourselves, "We just got married a few days ago and now we're going to die."

We weren't the only ones. All of the people on this massive ship started to panic, and everyone ran downstairs to the lower floors of the boat. For the next two days our boat went up and down and up and down. It was maddening. Everyone on the boat was seasick. We had this massive buffet on the boat that was wasted because everyone was too sick to eat. The idea of food made you nauseous. And every one of the passengers on the boat couldn't wait until we got back to land. And we couldn't wait to put this miserable event behind us.

If you've ever had an experience like that, you know how terrifying a storm at sea can be. And you know how miserable seasickness can be. I heard one person say that there are two kinds of seasickness in a storm. The first seasickness makes you feel so bad that you think you might die. The second kind of seasickness makes you feel so bad that you wish you could die.<sup>1</sup> And if you're looking for a true test of a person's mettle... if you want to find out what a person is really made of, then there's no better place to find that than on a boat in the middle of the sea in the middle of a terrifying storm.

Well today we're going to see a boat in the middle of the sea in the middle of a terrifying storm.<sup>2</sup> And we're also going to see a man who had the guts to display great courage and leadership and love for people in this midst of that terrifying storm. We're going to see a man who trusts God, leads people, and gives hope when everyone else assumes that hope is lost.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Kindle Edition, chapter 40: "I once heard of a woman who became seasick while on a day-long sport fishing boat and staggered to the captain holding out the keys to her new car, saying he could have it if he would just turn around. The plight of Paul and his friends was a thousand times worse."

<sup>2</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1030: "A comparison of Acts 27 with ancient accounts of actual shipwrecks demonstrates the following: (1) Luke's narrative lacks fictional elements as well as literary motifs of the "storm at sea" tradition. (2) The description of the storm in 27:13–20 is prosaic even compared with the account of Plutarch and the authentic reports of Arrianus and Aelius Aristides; the 'drama' that is often mentioned is simply the precise observation of events and actions. (3) The route of the voyage in Acts 27 is realistic, as are the nautical details of the narrative."

<sup>3</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 728: "Why does Luke give such detail to this journey? Witherington (1998: 755) suggests that part of the reason was the eyewitness character of the scene, which was a part of Greek historical writing. We should add that the risk of the journey allows Luke to show how far away Rome was and how God protected Paul in every way to assure his arrival there. Rome has the feel of being at the 'end' of the earth as viewed from the land of Israel."

**The man who does that is none other than the Apostle Paul, who has already earned our respect as a man of faith and courage under fire in the book of Acts. And the principles that we glean from him in this passage today have to do with leadership in the midst of a crisis.**

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**I've entitled this message "Paul in Peril: Leading through a Crisis."<sup>4</sup> And I want to list for you today five principles for biblical leadership, based on Acts 27.<sup>5</sup> Go ahead take your notes and write these down as we go. This is "Biblical Leadership in Action." These are five things that leaders do in the midst of a crisis. Here's #1.**

1) Leaders **earn the trust** of those around them (27:1-3)

Paul, if you remember from last time, had been examined by the Governor Festus. He had been examined by King Agrippa as well. Both of these men found no wrongdoing in Paul. And after Paul preached his heart out to these two men—he gave his testimony as a "defense" against the accusations against him, but it was really more of a evangelistic sermon preaching Christ—and all these men could say afterwards was, "this man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" (26:32). No conversion. No repentance and faith. They missed it. They missed the most important message they would ever hear in their lives. And instead of examining their soul in light of Paul's message, they casually discuss Paul's appeal Caesar. They have a nice safe, sanitized discussion about the wrong things.

Well anyways, after all of that, in Acts 27, verse 1, Paul finally gets his wish. And Festus ships him off to Rome.<sup>6</sup> Look at verse 1.

<sup>1</sup> And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy,<sup>7</sup> they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius.<sup>8</sup>

Paul boards this ship with a bunch of prisoners. Maybe some who have appealed to Caesar like him. Maybe some of them are headed for the Roman Coliseum to die as gladiators.<sup>9</sup>

And Luke tells us that the person leading this group is a high-ranking Roman centurion named Julius. He was part of an exclusive cohort of Caesar protectors called the "Augustan Cohort."

Look at verse 2.

<sup>2</sup> And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium,<sup>10</sup> which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.

Now let me just point out a few things here. Paul's not traveling alone. Paul has two companions on this voyage. The first is Doctor Luke. If you'll notice in verses 1 and 2, the "we" language picks up again. The author, Luke, accompanies Paul on this journey, perhaps to assist the ailing Paul as his personal physician. Maybe Luke was a prisoner as well. We don't know.

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<sup>4</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13-28 for You*, 181: "Acts 27 presents a picture of God's hand providentially orchestrating human decisions and natural events to accomplish his perfect will." Many commentaries emphasize that the sovereignty of God is the key theme of Acts 27. I don't disagree, but another theme involves Paul's action and not passive acceptance of the events of this passage. Paul never doubted God's sovereignty or his promise to get Paul to Rome. Nevertheless Paul acted with confidence and conviction. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 726: "One of the main themes of the account, beyond God's sovereign protection, is that Paul can influence events even as a prisoner."

<sup>5</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1031: "The long and detailed narrative shows that Paul's life is in the hands of God who is in control, protects his servant, and fulfills his promises. It shows that Paul is a prophetic figure whose words convey God's assurance of survival and whose actions demonstrate the grace of God."

<sup>6</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 731: "Such a journey, under the best of conditions and sailing straight to Rome, would take about five weeks."

<sup>7</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1033: "The destination (εἰς) was Italy (see on 18:2). The city of Rome could hardly have been given as destination, since Rome itself had no harbor."

<sup>8</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1034: "Julius would have carried the official documentation related to Paul's case, including the *littera dimissoria*, which explained the circumstances of Paul's case and the reasons for granting Paul's appeal to be tried by the emperor."

<sup>9</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1033: "Since appeals to the emperor were rare and limited to Roman citizens, it must be assumed that these prisoners were convicted criminals being sent to Rome to be killed in gladiatorial games as part of the entertainment of the crowds."

<sup>10</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 515-6: "Adramyttium was a seaport of Mysia, southeast of Troas. The vessel was likely a coasting vessel, which would travel close in to shore and put in at the various ports along the way. Since it was unlikely a vessel bound for Rome would be found along the Palestinian coast, Julius probably took the Adramyttian ship with the intention of transferring to one with a Roman destination."

But it's not only Luke. Luke mentions another guy, Aristarchus, who is also traveling with Paul. Aristarchus is another friend of Paul's. He was with Paul during the riot of Ephesus. If you remember that was when the mob of people cried out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" They screamed that stupid chant for two hours.

And Aristarchus, as part of that free-for-all, got dragged off by the mob instead of Paul. Thankfully he survived that ordeal. But he's off on another adventure with Paul. Life is never safe with the Apostle Paul, but it's also never boring.

Later in **Colossians** and **Philemon**, Paul describes Aristarchus as his fellow prisoner. Basically Aristarchus's lot in life seems to be to suffer alongside of Paul. That's what he does. **And that's what good friends do. They willingly suffer alongside of you like Luke and Aristarchus do with Paul. They are good friends convoying with Paul all the way to Rome.**

Look at **verse 3**.

<sup>3</sup> *The next day we put in at Sidon.*<sup>11</sup> And [now watch this] Julius [the Roman soldier in charge of this who voyage] treated Paul kindly

The Greek word here for "kindly" is φιλανθρώπως (*philanthrōpōs*). This isn't brotherly love or brotherly kindness. Julius isn't a believer. This is kindness more generally from one human being to another. And you can't help but think that Paul earned this treatment by his upstanding conduct.

And watch this. Look at the end of **verse 3**. This is why I say leaders earn the trust of those around them. and [Julius] gave [Paul] leave to go to his friends<sup>12</sup> and be cared for.<sup>13</sup>

Here's why this is so remarkable. Sidon was about 70 miles north of Caesarea. Here's a map of Paul's entire journey to Rome which, in good weather, would have taken about month.



Paul's Journey from Caesarea to Rome<sup>14</sup>

The entire journey is about 1,400 miles as the crow flies. This was not a small undertaking.

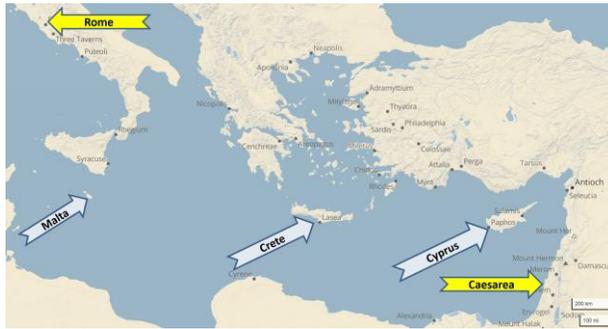
And just by way of preview, three islands are going to figure prominently on Paul's journey. Let me show you those now.

<sup>11</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 732: "Sidon is sixty-nine miles north of Caesarea and would take a full day and night to reach."

<sup>12</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 516: "The 'friends' referred to in v. 3 were undoubtedly the Christians of Sidon, and the occurrence of the word here may indicate that it was a term early Christians used to designate themselves. The indication that they provided for Paul's needs probably refers to their furnishing him with food and supplies for the voyage. In ancient sea travel passengers were often expected to provide for themselves." Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1034: "Luke's comment in 11:19 suggests that a church in Sidon—evidently one of the Phoenician cities that the Jerusalem believers visited who had to flee after Stephen's execution—was established as early as AD 31/32. Note the reference to churches in Phoenician (and Samaritan) cities in 15:3."

<sup>13</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 516: "The establishment of a church in Sidon is not specifically mentioned in Acts, but it probably went back to the early mission of the Hellenists in Phoenicia (Acts 11:19)."

<sup>14</sup> Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), March 5, 2026. Some geographical points added by author.



Caesarea to Rome with the Three Islands of Cyprus, Crete, and Malta<sup>15</sup>

These are important locals in the Mediterranean even today: Cyprus, Crete, and Malta. Paul has been to Cyprus already. He went there with Barnabas to preach the gospel and plant churches. Crete becomes important later in Paul's life when he writes the book of **Titus**. He sends Titus there to help the churches. And Malta, the third island... well, we'll get to Malta in a little bit.

But if we zoom in on the first leg of this journey you can see Sidon, a city just north of Caesarea. That was the first stop on their voyage. They've only travelled 70 miles so far, and they've got hundreds of miles still to travel.



The First Leg of Paul's Journey to Rome<sup>16</sup>

And there was probably a church in Sidon where Paul went to visit and be cared for. Luke says in **verse 3**, that Paul went to "his friends."

But here's what's remarkable about this. Julius gave Paul, his *prisoner*, leave to go visit this church while they were docked in Sidon. If Paul escapes, if Paul says, "*adios muchacho*" and flees from the ship, then Julius loses his life. If your prisoner escapes in ancient Rome, then you get their punishment. We saw that earlier in the book of **Acts**, when the soldiers who guarded Peter got executed after he escaped (**12:19**; see also **16:27**; **27:42**).

So this centurion, Julius, takes his life in his hands and says to Paul, "**Sure, you go visit your friends in Sidon so that you can be cared for. I trust you.**" That's how much regard he had for Paul. Probably he knew Paul was innocent. Certainly he knew Paul could be trusted. And in the short voyage from Caesarea to Sidon, he had already acquired enough confidence in Paul's integrity that he gave him leave to visit his friends.

**And you know what? That's what leaders do. They earn the trust of those around them. Sometimes they establish that trust quickly, like Paul does here. Sometimes it takes time to earn trust, especially when previous "leaders" have failed people. But leaders earn the trust of those around them.**

**And by the way, let me say this—trust is a fragile thing. It can be developed quickly or slowly depending on your context. But it can be destroyed in an instant. And so, let me just say this, church.**

<sup>15</sup> Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), January 1, 2026. Some geographical points added by author.

<sup>16</sup> Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), January 1, 2026. Some geographical points added by author.

**With the leadership responsibilities that God has given you, church, you be faithful. Faithful with your children. Faithful with your volunteer roles at church. Faithful with your small group. Elders and Deacons, we need to be faithful with our leadership roles in the church. Let's not ever make someone regret putting their trust in us. Leaders earn the trust of those around them.**

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**Here's a second thing Biblical leaders do.**

2) Leaders **take initiative** and know when to defer (27:4-12)

Let's look at the text and I'll show you what I mean by that. Look at **verse 4**:

<sup>4</sup> And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us.

If you look the map again, you can follow their journey as the sail past Cyprus.



**The First Leg of Paul's Journey to Rome<sup>17</sup>**

To sail “under the lee” is a nautical term which means that they would use the island as a windbreak. So sailors would hug close to the island using the currents to propel them forward and also tacking back and forth to adjust for bad wind conditions. This would have considerably slowed their voyage. And they were in a “ship of Adramyttium” according to **verse 2**. This was a smaller ship that required slower travel.

And that statement at the end of **verse 4** is ominous: “because the winds were against us.” This is the first moment of portentous foreboding. Even as early as **verse 4**, you get the sense that dangers are stalking this boat headed for Rome. **If this were a movie, then the soundtrack would let you know that danger is looming. The suspenseful score would let you know something bad's about to happen.**

Look at **verse 5**.

<sup>5</sup> And when we had sailed across<sup>18</sup> the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. <sup>6</sup> There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria<sup>19</sup> sailing for Italy and put us on board.<sup>20</sup>

A ship of Alexandria is a larger and faster ship than a ship of Adramyttium.<sup>21</sup> And we know from later in the passage that this was a ship carrying grain for Rome.<sup>22</sup> Keep that in mind as the story unfolds.

Look at **verse 7**.

<sup>7</sup> We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), January 1, 2026. Some geographical points added by author.

<sup>18</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1035: “The verb translated ‘we sailed across’ (διαπλεύσαντες) is a technical nautical term that denotes to ‘sail through a straight or gap’ or ‘sail across’ a particular sea. The definite article (τήν) denotes the sea of the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia as a unitary concept in terms of one sea area bordering the southern coast of central Asia Minor.”

<sup>19</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 732: “Here a private ship from Alexandria is found that is heading for Rome, so they board it. This is likely part of a grain fleet, given the mention that it is carrying wheat (v. 38). Egypt was the chief source of grain for Rome... These ships were large; a ship called *Isis* was estimated to weigh anywhere from 1,200 to 2,900 gross registered tons... Lucian (*The Ship* 1–9, esp. 5) describes a ship 120 by 30 by 29 cubits, or 180 by 45 by 43.5 feet.”

<sup>20</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 182: “If Julius had been willing to stay on the Adramyttian ship and go from coastal city to coastal city, they likely would have arrived in Italy and been able to go up the Via Appia toward Rome long before they actually did. Instead, Julius chose to board a much larger Alexandrian ship (v 6).”

<sup>21</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1036: “Ships of 350 to 500 tons could take as many as 600 passengers on board... The biggest grain freighters, measuring 55 meters in length and 13 meters in width (180 by 42 feet), could transport perhaps 1,300 tons.”

<sup>22</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1035: “Egypt provided a third of the grain that Rome needed annually.”

There it is again! More portentous foreboding—“with difficulty.” **Cue the fear-inducing soundtrack.** *and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone.*

Now let me show you a map of the second leg of this voyage. You can see here the city of Myra. They would have hugged the coastline of Cilicia and Pamphylia on their way to Myra. Then they would have traversed through this islands above Crete.



The Second Leg of Paul's Journey to Rome: Crete<sup>24</sup>

You can see on this map the large island of Crete. It's impossible to miss that island. It's one of the largest in the Med. And Luke tells us that they sailed “under the lee of Crete off Salmone.” Again, they are fighting the adverse wind conditions. Salmone was a cape on the far eastern end of that island. And again, they hug the coastline of Crete in order to move forward.

Look at **verse 8**.

<sup>8</sup> *Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea. <sup>9</sup> Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast<sup>25</sup> was already over, Paul advised them, <sup>10</sup> 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.”*

So just to summarize, they are now in the middle of the Mediterranean. They are near the center of the island of Crete. And it's very late in the year. It's taken them too long to get to this leg of the journey.

The reference to “the Fast” in **verse 9** is a reference to the Day of Atonement, a time of fasting for Jews at this time. So it's probably sometime in October or thereabouts.<sup>26</sup> And ancient documents have shown us that vessels rarely went out into the Mediterranean from late October to early March. This was a dangerous time of year to be at sea. The storms were volatile that time of year. Fog, rain, and storms made sea voyages extremely dangerous in the winter. And as we've seen in this passage, this ship is already having an extremely difficult time sailing because of the adverse wind conditions.

So Paul stands up and says, “**Guys, I've got a bad feeling about this.**” Paul says, “**I perceive that there will be much injury and loss if we continue.**”

And by the way, Paul's not just some Christian holy-man who has a premonition. Paul was an experienced sea traveler. He's traveled extensively throughout the Mediterranean by sea. And according to **2 Corinthians 11:25**, he has already survived a few shipwrecks. So Paul knows what he's talking about. And these men would be wise to heed his counsel.

<sup>23</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 733: “They come to Cnidus, a trip of 130 miles (Thucydides, *Pel. War* 8.24.35). This trip should have taken only a couple of days, given the average speed of such ships at six miles an hour, but it took more. In adverse conditions, the speed could reduce to two knots, or two miles an hour... Cnidus was on Asia Minor's southwestern coast, 108 miles south of Ephesus.”

<sup>24</sup> Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), January 1, 2026. Some geographical points added by author.

<sup>25</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1037: “The perfect tense emphasizes the situation that pertained after ‘the fast’ (ἡ νηστεία), i.e., the Day of Atonement celebrated on the 10th of Tishri, which in AD 59 fell on October 5.”

<sup>26</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 733–4: “We are in the fall of late September and October, just before the winter months... Sea travel was normally not undertaken after mid-September and was avoided from November 11 to mid-March (Vegetius, *On Military Affairs* 4.39). The expression *mare clausum* (the sea is closed) marked this period... In winter, the scant daylight, long nights, cloud cover, poor visibility, raging winds, rain, and snow were problems.”

<sup>11</sup> But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said.<sup>27</sup> <sup>12</sup> 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.

Phoenix in Crete was about 40 miles away from Fair Havens.<sup>28</sup> So the centurion basically says, **“Thank you, Paul, for the warning, but we’re going to trust the experienced sailors here. And besides, we’re just going to go 40 miles up the coast to a more suitable harbor for us to spend the winter. They have better food in Phoenix. They have better accommodations.”**

Actually there was a safer harbor in Phoenix. Fair Havens was a shallow harbor.<sup>29</sup> And during the winter, if a storm occurred, ships in the shallows could run aground and be destroyed.<sup>30</sup> And plus, this captain and the owner of the ship are on a timetable.<sup>31</sup> Time is money.<sup>32</sup> So they’ve got to get as far as they can before they bed down for the winter.

And based upon what happens next, who can blame them. Look at **verse 13**.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

**“You see that, Paul. You feel that breeze. It’s a good omen. Everything’s fine. Quit worrying!”**  
**Where’s that theme music?**

**Here’s the principle for leaders. In the midst of a crisis, leaders need to be bold. Leaders need to be outspoken. Leaders need to be assertive. Leaders need to take initiative and speak up when wisdom prompts you to speak. But then also, you need to be ready to defer.**

**Maybe Paul could have gotten them to stay at Fair Havens if he had thrown a little hissy-fit. “I’m telling you, we’re all going to die unless we stay here! You’ve got to listen to me.” If Paul went bonkers on them, he might have gotten them to change their mind.**

**But here’s the thing. Paul has two things that cause him to defer. (1) He has an unflappable faith in God, the God who promised him that he would get to Rome. Remember Jesus told Paul that he’ll get to Rome (Acts 23:11). So Paul has that in his back pocket this whole time.<sup>33</sup> Paul might be the only one that gets to Rome alive, but he’ll get there.**

**(2) And secondly Paul realizes, like all good leaders realize, that sometimes people have to learn the hard way. You can’t lead people who refuse to be led. You can’t influence people who refuse to be influenced. It just doesn’t work.**

**I remember reading once in a Douglas MacArthur biography that MacArthur refused to give his soldiers an order that he knew they wouldn’t obey.<sup>34</sup> He wouldn’t do it. In his mind, all that did was undermine his authority over his men.**

**And so, Paul does the right thing here. He defers. He spoke his mind. He shared his concerns with the captain, the shipowner, and the centurion. And he deferred to their leadership until a later time.**

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<sup>27</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1038: “One should note that Luke does not explicitly portray the centurion as having final authority over the vessel and the continuation of the journey. The decision related by Luke may not have been the decision whether to sail or not, but whether he, his soldiers, and his prisoners would stay on board if the ship continued the journey.”

<sup>28</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 734–5: “Phoenix was up the coast only, at the most, fifty miles west of Fair Havens... This trip normally was quite practicable in a day, even a half day. So this appears to be a prudent plan not to push too hard.”

<sup>29</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 183: “During the winter, the water got very shallow. If a storm occurred, ships in the shallows could run aground and be destroyed. It makes sense, then, that the captain of the Alexandrian ship does not want to stay there long.”

<sup>30</sup> R. Albert Mohler Jr., *Acts 13–28 for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God’s Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2019), 183.

<sup>31</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1038: Cicero advised to his friend Tiro, ‘I must again ask you not to be rash in your traveling. Sailors, I observe, make too much haste to increase their profits.’”

<sup>32</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 182–3: “Any captain who could deliver grain to Rome in winter was paid a premium. So the captain of this Alexandrian ship must have been very ambitious, which explains much of the following account.”

<sup>33</sup> Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Kindle Edition, chapter 40: “Two years earlier (23:11) Christ had appeared in Paul’s cell in Caesarea and told him to take courage, for he would bear witness for the Savior in Rome. This was an unconditional promise. Paul would go to Rome — no doubt about it. However, God did not promise smooth sailing along the way. As we serve Christ, there will be storms, hardships, high seas, breakdowns —but also peace, assurance, fruitfulness, the sustaining presence of God.”

<sup>34</sup> Manchester, *American Caesar*.

And watch what happens. Look at **verse 13**.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

**“You see, Paul. Everything’s fine. What were you worried about?”**

<sup>14</sup> But soon a tempestuous wind [The Greek word for tempestuous there is the word τυφωνικός which we derive our English word “typhoon” from. This was not a run-of-the-mill sea-storm. This was a storm that was typhoon-esque... and it was...] <sup>35</sup> called the northeaster, struck down from the land. <sup>15</sup> And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, <sup>36</sup> we gave way to it and were driven along. <sup>37</sup>

So much for the 40 miles up the shore to Phoenix. So much for we’re trying to find a better harbor for our boat. Now these guys are going to have to fight for their lives.

And by the way, these northeasters came from the northeast and blew southwest. So if you look at that map I showed you earlier, the winds are blowing north to south and east to west.



The Second Leg of Paul’s Journey to Rome: Crete<sup>38</sup>

And the mountains in Crete are upwards of 7,000 feet above sea level. So probably what happened is that the ship eased out away from the land, and all of a sudden one of these gusts of wind blew over the mountains and grabbed hold of their sails and blew them out to sea.

If you’ve ever been in a sailboat without a motor or any gas propulsion, you know how helpless you are in a situation like this. You are at the mercy of the winds and the waves. And that is terrifying.

**My dad had a small sailboat, a dual-pontoon catamaran, when we were kids. And we flipped that thing over twice in the middle of Lake Travis. I thought it was awesome! My dad didn’t think so. One time we had to attach our boat to some random guy’s motor boat to get our sailboat flipped back over. That was a tiny little catamaran in the middle of a small lake.** These guys are out in the middle of the ocean with a ship of Alexandria, the largest sail boat in the world at that time.

Look at **verse 16**. Let’s see if they can turn this thing around.

<sup>16</sup> Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, <sup>39</sup> we managed with difficulty to secure the ship’s boat. <sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 520; “Luke described it as being ‘typhonic’ (*typhōnikos*) in force, a word that in Greek as well as in its English cognate refers to a whirling, cyclonic wind formed by the clash of opposing air masses (v. 14; ‘hurricane force,’ NIV).”

<sup>36</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 735: “Such winds come off Mt. Ida, a major, eight-thousand-foot-high peak on the island. They are unable to turn the bow of the boat into the wind, or ‘face the wind eye to eye’ (ἀντοφθαλμῆν τῷ ἀνέμῳ, *antophthalmēin tō anēmō*). They are driven by the wind and not able to control the ship.”

<sup>37</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1039: “The ship evidently had just rounded Cape Matala and was in the open bay when it was caught by winds sweeping down across the open plain of Mesara.”

<sup>38</sup> Atlas taken from Logos Bible Study, Computer software. *Logos Bible Study Atlas* (Bellingham: Faithlife, LLC), January 1, 2026. Some geographical points added by author.

<sup>39</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 520: “Ancient ships were not built to head into such a violent wind, and there was no way the Alexandrian ship could hold its course for Phoenix. The sailors ‘gave way’ to the wind, which probably means they shortened sail and tried to make what progress they could against it (v. 15). It was all to no avail. Helpless before the wind, the ship was carried some twenty-five miles southeast to a small island called Cauda.”

This is the dinghy or “lifeboat” that was dragged behind the larger ship.

<sup>17</sup>After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship.

This is a practice called frapping where you tie rope around the boat to keep the planks from breaking apart. This gives you an idea of how badly the boat was being beaten up by the raging sea.

And this boat is also full of grain. What happens when grain gets wet? It swells and tears up the ship. So there’s not a lot of margin for error here.<sup>41</sup>

Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear,<sup>42</sup> and thus they were driven along.

Now let me go back to the map and show you something. Let me zoom out on the large map I had at the beginning.



Paul’s Journey to Rome with “Syrtis” Added

The Syrtis is a section of sea on the shores of north Africa called the “Sailor’s Graveyard,” because so many ships were lost there.<sup>43</sup> If you look on your map you can see the Syrtis just southwest of Crete on the north part of Africa which is now modern-day Libya. This was a section of sea that was infamous for shallows and sandbars and shoals and shipwrecks.

And the sailors were so afraid of this part of the Mediterranean, that they dropped their gear, they tilted their sail, and tried to drive the ship westward. They gave up on Phoenix and Crete. Now they’ve got to avoid disaster in the open sea.

And **verse 18** says,

<sup>18</sup>Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. <sup>19</sup>And on the third day they threw the ship’s tackle overboard with their own hands.

The tackle includes the mainsail and other heavy equipment for sailing.<sup>44</sup> The boat was probably taking on more water than it could handle, and so the sailors had to make the boat lighter fast. And they gave up on trying to steer the ship.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 183–4: “Ancient ships would tow a lifeboat behind the main vessel, but during storms the lifeboat could ram the ship and punch a hole in it. This presented a major issue, particularly as it endangered all of the grain in the holds. To avoid this disaster, the lifeboat is raised (v 16).”

<sup>41</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 182: “These ships also customarily carried grain in their holds. These holds ran the length and width of the ship and were six feet (2m) deep. When filled with grain, the ship took on enormous weight. Further, this grain would be shifted in the holds by the action of the waves, causing a rocking effect that made stabilization challenging for the ship’s captain... When grain gets wet, it expands and gains weight. If a ship sprung a leak, it would gradually sink—but before it went under the waves, the wet grain would expand and literally break apart the ship. Once a leak started, it was too late to save the grain, which soaks up water very quickly.”

<sup>42</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1040: “The crew lowered (χαλάσαντες) all superfluous sail and rigging (σκεῦδος), retaining only a minimal storm sail with which the ship was kept steady. By lowering most of the sail and rigging, the crew would have been able to lay the ship ‘on a starboard tack, with its right side pointed into the wind, to make as much leeway as possible northward of the natural line of drift, and so away from the Syrtis.’ If the crew did not take these precautions, the Northeaster would drive the ship across the open sea for 350 nautical miles (650 km.) straight toward the Greater Syrtis within two or three days.”

<sup>43</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 735–6: “The Syrtis. This is a combination of sandbars and shoals off the North African coast... The site was known as a graveyard for vessels, equal in fame to the often catastrophic journey between Scylla and Charybdis.”

<sup>44</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 736: “This is because they are continuing to take in water, and by making the boat lighter, they are hoping that the boat will sit higher over the water. The tackle would be all the spare gear and might even include the mainsail and main yard. They are that desperate.”

Look at **verse 20**.

<sup>20</sup> When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days,

Remember these are the days before GPS navigation.<sup>46</sup> The only way these sailors knew where they were going is by navigation through sun and the stars. And they hadn't seen anything for days.

But that's not the worst of it.

and no small tempest lay on us,

They threw all of their equipment overboard. They gave into the drift of the sea. And the storm just keeps raging! And Luke writes,

all hope of our<sup>47</sup> being saved was at last abandoned.

**"We're all going to die!"** Should have listened to Paul, right?

Now just imagine yourself on that ship right now. Imagine yourself as Luke or Aristarchus. Or imagine yourself as the centurion or the captain of the ship. You've been drifting in a storm for days. You're seasick. You're homesick. You feel hopeless and helpless. You're going through all things that you've done in your life, and you're grieving all of the things that you won't be able to do.

And then you start contemplating how you are going to die. **"Am I going to fall off the ship and drown? Am I going to be eaten by sharks? Am I going to starve to death? Are we going to run out of water and I'll die of thirst? Am I going to be battered by the sea against the rocks?"** According to Luke, you've lost all hope of being saved.

**I bet Aristarchus turned to Paul at this point and said, "Every time I go somewhere with you, this happens! Can we please just go somewhere without our life being threatened? It's tough being your friend, Paul."**<sup>48</sup>

Now what's Paul going to do? What does a good leader do in a crisis situation like this?

Let's see. Look at **verse 21**.

<sup>21</sup> Since they had been without food for a long time

Who can eat when you're just trying to stay alive? Who can eat when you are so seasick you just going to vomit it out anyway? I've been seasick before. And the last thing you are thinking about at a time like that is food.

Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me

That's a not-so-subtle **"I told you so!"** right there.<sup>49</sup> **"You should have listened to me,"** Paul says. **"If you had listened to me we wouldn't be in this mess."**

you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss.<sup>22</sup> Yet now I urge you to

**"give up!"** Is that what your Bible says? **"Now I urge you to ... cry like babies, because you're all going to die."** Is that what he says?

<sup>22</sup> Yet now I urge you to take heart<sup>50</sup>

Remember Jesus and his disciples in the sea of Galilee? **"Where's your faith?"** Jesus said (**Matt 8:26**). Well, *Paul's got faith*.

I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.<sup>51</sup><sup>23</sup> For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship,

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<sup>45</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 521: "There was really little that an ancient ship could do to fight a violent storm. They surely had the mainsail down and allowed the vessel to be borne along at the whim of the storm. By this time the ship may have developed leaks, and it seemed wise to lighten its load. The excess cargo was jettisoned. Luke did not specify what was thrown from the ship."

<sup>46</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 522: "There was no way to locate their position. They had no compass in those days."

<sup>47</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13-28 for You*, 184: "Even Luke loses hope—clearly he does not possess the confident faith of Paul."

<sup>48</sup> I'm indebted to Alistair Begg for this comment and illustration. See his sermon, "He Plants His Footsteps in the Sea..." 01-08-06: <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/he-plants-his-footsteps-in-the-sea/>

<sup>49</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 737: "Paul is not trying to make them feel worse here, but he is making an appeal to be heard now as a credible speaker."

<sup>50</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 738: "So Paul tells them to take heart (εὐθυμεῖτε,  *euthymeite*), as Paul has faith in this word from God (Acts 27:22, 25 [both in this scene] and James 5:13 are the other NT occurrences of this term). Paul is a figure very much like Elizabeth and Mary in Luke 1-2. Paul trusts God's word."

What a testimony right there! **“I belong to God and I worship God! And this very night an angel of God stood before me!”** What a statement before all these pagan sailors, soldiers, and prisoners!<sup>52</sup>

<sup>24</sup> 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.’<sup>53</sup>

<sup>25</sup> So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. <sup>26</sup> But we must run aground<sup>54</sup> on some island.”

That right there, men and women, is bold, God-trusting, God-honoring leadership in the midst of a crisis. As other men are cowering before the storm... as other men have lost all hope... Paul stands up and says, **“Be courageous, men. Take heart! We’re going to trust God. We’re going to believe his promises and we’re going to get through this.”**<sup>55</sup>

**Here’s a third principle on Biblical leadership in the midst of a crisis.**<sup>56</sup>

3) Leaders **speak with authority** about God’s promises (27:13–26)

Let me put it this way. Leaders stand upon the promises of God. Leaders lead other people to stand upon the promises of God

Tell me if you’ve heard this before.

***(1) Standing on the promises of Christ my King,  
Through eternal ages let His praises ring,  
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,  
Standing on the promises of God.***

***(2) Standing on the promises that cannot fail,  
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,  
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,  
Standing on the promises of God.***

**Here’s the correlation between Paul in Acts 27 and us. God spoke to Paul and gave him these promises on that boat. In the same way, God speaks to us and gives us the promises of his Word. And he asks us to hear his Word and believe.**

**This is an essential principle of interpretation that I hope all of us take away from the book of Acts. God has not promised to save us from every storm of life. We can’t apply God’s promises to Paul as promises to ourselves. That’s a violation of hermeneutical principles. But in the same way that Paul heard and believed God’s promise to him, we need to hear and receive, with faith, God’s promises to us. Everybody understand what I’m saying?**

**Here’s why this is important. I can’t promise that God is going to rescue you from every storm. I can’t promise you that God is going to protect you from every fear-inducing hardship that you will**

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<sup>51</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 522: “The story of Paul’s stormy voyage is reminiscent of the voyage of Jonah. The prophet also encountered a violent storm at sea. Jonah’s crew also jettisoned the cargo and began to despair of life. And the crew and passengers of Jonah’s ship were ultimately delivered. There is, of course, a major difference between the two. It was Jonah’s *presence* on the ship that gave rise to the storm, and only in his *absence* were the others saved. It was altogether different for Paul’s ship. The apostle’s *presence* on the ship led to the deliverance of all aboard. This becomes evident in the next passage.”

<sup>52</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 185: “Though Paul rests in God’s sovereign hand, he knows that humans bear a responsibility to act in accordance with God’s will. God summons us to faith and obedience. These two virtues of the Christian life mark two sides of the same coin.”

<sup>53</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1043: “God ‘has graciously given’ Paul (κεχάρισται) the favor of saving all (πάντας) on board the ship. The verb might imply that Paul had prayed for the rescue of his fellow travellers; while this implication is not certain, there is no doubt that the rescue of crew and passengers is due to the presence of Paul, whose protection by God is the cause of their deliverance.”

<sup>54</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 186: “In Acts 27, Paul calls the ship’s crew and passengers to faith in God, while also directing them to run the ship aground as an act of faith.”

<sup>55</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 185: “Time and again, Paul refuses to allow his circumstances to dictate his theology. When presented with trials, difficulties, and persecution, Paul rests in God’s perfect will... Christians today might jettison our hope in God’s will, even when we only find ourselves stuck in heavy traffic, making us late for an appointment. Paul, conversely, maintains his confidence in God when shipwreck looks certain. It is Paul’s convictions about God that enables his continued faithfulness and empowers his encouraging word to the other sailors.”

<sup>56</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 185: “God could have willed that Paul would make it to Rome speedily. Instead, God takes Paul to Rome on the seas of struggle. The difficult journey, however, leads Paul into a greater dependence upon God.”

encounter in this world. In fact, I can promise you the opposite. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble.” But Jesus also said, “in the trouble, I’ll leave you my peace.” Jesus also said, “I’ll never leave you or forsake you.” Jesus also said, “I will be with you always even to the end of the age.” Those are the promises that God has given us in his Word.

And God has also promised that “he won’t let us be tempted beyond what we can handle.” Also God has promised that “he will supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” And God has also promised that, “All things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.” And also God has promised that there will come a day when all the sorrow, fear, pain, hardship and storms in this life will fade away for eternity.<sup>57</sup> I’m standing on those promises. Are you?<sup>58</sup>

Leaders speak with authority concerning God’s promises. They cling to God’s promises and they encourage other people to do the same. Here’s another thing that leaders do. Write this down as a fourth point from our message:

4) Leaders **take a stand** against compromise (27:27–32)

Paul was inspiring with his message, but not everyone was inspired by his confidence. Watch this in verse 27.

<sup>27</sup> When the fourteenth night had come,

Can you imagine that? Two whole weeks without sun or stars and being tossed by the storm! That’s half a month of seasickness and hopelessness. That’s a long time.

<sup>27</sup> When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea,<sup>59</sup> about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. <sup>28</sup> So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms.

A measurement of 20 fathoms is roughly 120 feet. A fathom is roughly 6 feet, or the distance of a person’s reach from hand to hand.

A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms.

That’s 90 feet. So they are coming up on land quickly.<sup>60</sup> And remember they don’t have any tackle! They don’t have any way to control their ship.<sup>61</sup> So they start to panic.<sup>62</sup>

Look at verse 29.

<sup>29</sup> And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors<sup>63</sup> from the stern and prayed<sup>64</sup> for day to come.

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<sup>57</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 187: “Christians today sometimes fail in zealous obedience because we lose sight of the spectacular reward that awaits those who obey God. God has promised an eternity unlike anything we can imagine. He has promised that we will be with him, face to face—that death will be no more and sin will pass away. There will be no more tears. No more death. No more sadness. No more grief. God calls his people to seize his promises and hold them tight.”

<sup>58</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 187: “Paul said in verse 25, ‘So take heart ... for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.’ Does the church today possess such faith? Do we believe in the promises of God? Do we live as if we believe in his promises?”

<sup>59</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 524–5: “This is not to be confused with the modern Adriatic Sea between the coasts of Yugoslavia and western Italy. Ancient writers referred to that as the ‘Gulf of Adria.’ By ‘sea of Adria’ they designated the Ionian sea and the north-central Mediterranean between Greece and Italy, extending south to Crete and Malta. It was across this stretch of ocean that Paul’s ship was blown the 475 miles from Cauda to Malta.”

<sup>60</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1043: “It has been estimated that given a drift of 36.5 nautical miles (67.6 km.) in twenty-four hours, the ship would have drifted from Cauda to Malta—a distance of 476 nautical miles (882 km. or 584 statute miles)—in slightly over thirteen days.”

<sup>61</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1043: “To the west of Crete and south of Sicily, the direction of their drift, there are not many islands: Malta, Gaulos, and the tiny islands Lopadusa, Aethusa, and Cossyra. For the anxious passengers who have given up all hope of survival, to run aground on an island is certainly preferable to being in distress in high seas in the open ocean”

<sup>62</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT, 1043: “If the ship ran aground at the traditional site of St. Paul’s Bay near Salmonetta Island (St. Paul’s Islands), located in the northwestern part of the island of Malta, it would have been driven from the east past the rocky peninsula of Koura (Qawra) Point: the crew would have seen the breaking foam of the crashing waves on the rock.”

<sup>63</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 525n36: “Excavations have uncovered a ship from the fourteenth century B.C. with twenty-three stone anchors and a Roman ship of the first century B.C. with five lead anchors.”

Luke says “they,” so I don’t think this is Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus praying to the God of the Universe. **This is pagans praying to their deities like Odysseus and his men in the Odyssey.**

<sup>30</sup> And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship’s boat [that’s the dinghy or the “lifeboat” that was pulled onboard of the ship] into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, <sup>31</sup> Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.”<sup>65</sup>

So here’s an example of bad leadership and good leadership right here! These guys decide to make a run for it. So they pretend that they are going to put the anchors out from the bow of the ship. And they try to take make a run for it in the life boat.

And Paul says, **“Oh no you don’t. Your fate is our fate. If we go down you go down. Nobody’s leaving the boat.”**<sup>66</sup>

Remember now, Paul is a prisoner on this ship. Paul is supposed to be a passive, quiescent passenger on the ship. It’s like he’s the captain of the ship now. He’s giving out orders and telling people what to do.

Well the soldiers have had about enough of these sailors. Watch what they do.

<sup>32</sup> Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship’s boat and let it go.

**“We live together or we die together. Our fates are sealed.”** This was actually kind of an impulsive move. They might be able to use that boat later to row people ashore. Too late for that now.

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**Look at verse 33.**

<sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head<sup>67</sup> of any of you.”

How’s that for leadership? Is that fantastic or what?

<sup>35</sup> And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it<sup>68</sup> and began to eat.

Now I don’t know what you think about that right there, but I think that is tremendous. Paul tells them to eat, and then before he eats he thanks God in their presence.

Most of these men are pagan polytheists. They worship Roman gods or they worship Caesar. And now they are gently being directed to the true God of the Universe, Paul’s God.

And Paul’s letting them know, as well, that he doesn’t serve an uncaring God. God cares about them. He cares about their health. He cares about their wellbeing. He cares about their lives. And, as we know from what we’ve already seen from Paul in the book of **Acts**, he cares about their souls.

<sup>36</sup> Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. <sup>37</sup> (We were in all 276 persons<sup>69</sup> in the ship.) <sup>38</sup> And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat<sup>70</sup> into the sea.

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<sup>64</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 525: “As in the shipwreck of Odysseus, the pagan sailors now prayed to their gods for daylight to come and for deliverance through the night. Their prayer was ultimately answered—not by *their* gods but by *Paul’s* God. They owed their salvation to *Paul*.”

<sup>65</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 522: “Obviously the reference is to their salvation from death at sea, but for a Christian reader ‘saved’ is a term with special meaning. One wonders if Luke didn’t intend at least a mild symbolic meaning.”

<sup>66</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 526: “The soldiers’ hasty response in cutting away the dinghy might be questioned. It would seem that the small boat could have been used to take the passengers to shore in the morning in shifts, perhaps even avoiding the wrecking of the ship.”

<sup>67</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 740: “Paul makes the point with an idiom: ‘No one of you shall lose a hair from your head’ (οὐδενὸς γὰρ ὑμῶν θριξὶ ἀπὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἀπολείται, *oudenos gar hymōn thrix apo tēs kephalēs apoleitai*; 1 Sam. 14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11; 1 Kings 1:52; Luke 12:7; 21:18).”

<sup>68</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 527–8: “The wording is striking: he took bread (*labōn arton*), gave thanks (*eucharistēsen*), and broke it (*klasas*). The familiar terminology is associated with the Lord’s Supper (cf. Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:23f.)... the eucharistic language of the meal on the ship may not be so much an indication that they celebrated the Lord’s Supper there as that Paul and the other Christians were reminded of how Jesus broke bread with his disciples and continues to do so, continues to be present in the lives of his people. The meal thus had a meaning for them it could not have had for the pagans—their Lord continued to be present with them. He was present in that time of particular need. For them the meal was more than needed sustenance—it reassured them of their Lord’s presence to deliver them.”

<sup>69</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 528: “It is interesting to compare Paul’s voyage with Josephus’s account of his own voyage to Rome, which encountered a smaller shipwreck. There were six hundred aboard Josephus’s ship, and only eighty survived (*Life*, 15).”

Write this down as a fifth and final point from our message today:

5) Leaders **strengthen others** in times of crisis (27:33–38)

Again, here are five demonstrations of Biblical leadership in action.

1) Leaders **earn the trust** of those around them (27:1–3)

2) Leaders **take initiative** and know when to defer (27:4–12)

3) Leaders **speak with authority** about God’s promises (27:13–26)

4) Leaders **take a stand** against compromise (27:27–32)

5) Leaders **strengthen others** in times of crisis (27:33–38)<sup>71</sup>

Now I’ll stop here and pick up this story next time. You might say, “**No, no, I got to know what happens with Paul and the ship.**” We’ll come back next time, and we’ll find out.

But really, the tension has already been relieved in this narrative. Because God promised Paul that he’s going to protect everyone on-board. So you know what’s going to happen. But there’s more to this story than just shipwrecks and saving sailors. So come back next time and we’ll finish this story.<sup>72</sup>

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But before we’re done today, let me just say one more thing in closing. I imagine there are probably a handful of people in this room right now who are saying to themselves, “Leadership, who cares about leadership! I’m just trying to survive. I’m just trying to figure out how to navigate the difficult waters of life. Who’s got time to think about leadership?”

And maybe there’s someone out there who feels more like the prisoners and the soldiers on the ship than they do Paul. Or maybe you feel like the sailors who tried to trick everyone by jumping on the lifeboat and heading for shore. I don’t know.

If that’s you, let me just address you as we close. In the midst of this great storm, in the midst of this fear-inducing hopeless situation, Paul had an anchor that he held onto. And no matter what storm he went through, literal or figurative, he was okay, because his anchor holds.<sup>73</sup>

Here’s my question for you, “What’s your anchor in this life? What’s your anchor?” I sure hope it’s not the economy. I sure hope it’s not your job security. I sure hope it’s not your family. I sure hope it’s not trust in yourself or a “can-do” attitude. What’s your anchor? And can your anchor hold through even the most devastating vicissitudes of life?

In 1882, Priscilla Jane Owens wrote the following lyrics for a hymn called “We Have an Anchor.” These lyrics are amazing. Here’s the question she asks:

*(1) Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,  
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?  
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,  
will your anchor drift, or firm remain?*

*(2) Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,  
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?  
While the surges rave, and the wild winds blow  
shall the angry waves then your bark o’erflow?*

*(3) Will your anchor hold in the floods of death,  
when the waters cold, chill your last breath?  
On the rising tide you can never fail,*

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<sup>70</sup> Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 740: “They lighten the ship by casting over the wheat, indicating their confidence that they will obtain access to food again soon. This also will lift the boat higher out of the water so that the vessel can come closer to shore (1 En. 104.4–5). They probably do not toss over all the wheat so that some will remain for ballast.”

<sup>71</sup> Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 527: “There is in fact no explicit reference to Paul’s witnessing in the entire voyage narrative of 27:1–28:16, though one cannot imagine Paul bypassing the opportunity. The emphasis at this point is the physical rescue.”

<sup>72</sup> Hughes, *The Church Afire*, Kindle Edition, chapter 40: “Perhaps many found Christ in those following months on Malta. Sometimes storms come so that others will look beyond us to Christ.”

<sup>73</sup> Mohler, *Acts 13–28 for You*, 185: “Acts 27 reveals that our road might be longer and harder than we imagined. Indeed, we might even question the will of God and why he has brought us on such a perilous journey. But we can, and must, trust in God. His will is perfect, and he calls us to rest in his plans.”

*while your anchor holds within the veil.*

*(4) Will your eyes behold through the morning light  
The city of gold and the harbor bright  
Will you anchor safe by the heavenly shore  
when life's storms are past for evermore?*

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;  
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,  
grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love*

**Hebrews 6:19** says as follows: “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul,” **and that anchor is Jesus Christ, our high priest. And that high priest offered himself on the cross as a payment for our sin. He offers us a new hope and a new life that is only possible through faith in him. Is Jesus Christ the anchor for your soul?**

There is no greater power, there is no greater Rock, there is no greater resource through the storms of this life than Jesus Christ.

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;*

You might say, “Tony I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior. I know he died for my sins. But for whatever reason I don’t run ‘to him’ in times of crisis, I run ‘from him.’” “I run from him.” **Well if that’s you, can I give you some advice? Stop that!**

**You shouldn’t run from him in a time of crisis, that’s the time when you need to run to him. I say that because I’m your pastor, and I love you. But I also say that as a person who has done that myself in times of crisis. And I don’t want to do that anymore.**

**I’m inspired by what I see Paul doing here, and I hope you are as well. Jesus is the anchor, right? And the anchor holds!<sup>74</sup> The anchor holds.**

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<sup>74</sup> Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Kindle Edition, chapter 40: “Every Christian can have courage amidst life’s storms if he or she uses the proper anchors.”