

**Introduction** (Acts 27:1-44)

Some scholars believe that Paul was born in 2 AD. He was converted on the road to Damascus in 33 AD. At that time the Lord gave Ananias a prophetic word about Paul's life and ministry. He said that Paul was a chosen instrument of His, and he was to bear His name before the Gentiles and king and the sons of Israel. He also said that He would show Paul how much he must suffer for Christ's name. It is now the fall of 60 AD, twenty-seven years after Paul's conversion, and this prophetic word given to Ananias about Paul bearing Christ's name before kings has just begun to be fulfilled. In Acts 26, Paul has just shared the gospel with King Agrippa. Church, I share this for two reasons. First, it helps maintain the continuity in the series. Second, it is another example of how some prophetic words are not fulfilled right away. This one took twenty-seven years to fulfill.

(Acts 9:15-16) "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; {16} for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

At the end of Acts 26, Festus, Agrippa, commanders, and prominent men said to one another, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment." Then King Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." What King Agrippa does not know is that if Paul had not appealed to Caesar, he would have been given over to the Jews to be put to death. Festus had been willing to sacrifice Paul to find favor with the influential Jews in Jerusalem. He had not been told the truth; some parts of the story had been concealed.

(Acts 26:31-32) "and when they had gone aside, they began talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment." {32} And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

That leads us into Acts 27, where Paul finally begins his journey to Rome. Over two years earlier the Holy Spirit had told Paul that he would go to Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, and then Rome. He went to the first three places within six weeks, but he has been kept in bonds in Caesarea for two years. Perhaps the wait was for him was for the prophetic fulfillment to bear witness before a king. Someday we will find out the answer to many of these questions.

(Acts 19:21) "Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

At some point in those two years that Paul was held in Caesarea, the Lord appeared to him, and encouraged him. The Lord told him that just as he solemnly witnessed to His cause in Jerusalem, so he must also witness at Rome. Paul has now had two specific words that he is going to Rome. He should feel pretty confident and clear about where he is going. Paul is headed into a storm, and it is a good thing to know who you are and where you are going when you go into a storm.

(Acts 23:11) "But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."

Tim Tebow just released a book called *Shaken: Discovering Your True Identity in the Midst of Life's Storms*. I listened to an interview with him about the book. He said that he has learned to give thanks for the storms and difficult times in his life. They have helped him discover who he really is. Storms do more than that; they shake and sift out the less important things in our lives. Storms help redirect our lives. Jonah was redirected as a result of a storm in his life. Storms humble us and cause us to call upon the Lord. The sailors with Jonah developed a fear of the Lord and called upon God. Storms humble us and cause us to examine our ways. In Psalm 119:71, the psalmist said, "it was good that I was afflicted that I might learn Thy statutes." **God uses storms in our lives for a wide variety of purposes.**

Some well-meaning Christians do not believe that they will go through storms. Jesus went through storms. The apostles and disciples went through storms. We all go through storms. There are relational storms. There are financial storms. There are medical and health related storms. There are lots of different kinds of storms, and none of us are exempt from going through them. Some of you this morning are going through a storm. This message is for you. Some of you have just come out of a storm, and this message has applications for you. And, some of you may not realize it, but you are headed into a Northeastern storm yourself, and this message is going to help prepare you to get through the coming storm.

Paul's journey to Rome by ship starts out pretty normal, but it is not long before some troubling signs appear. Those signs and the warnings given by Paul are not heeded. They get caught in a Euraquilo, which is a powerful Northeastern storm. When all hope of surviving had left them, an angel of the Lord appears to Paul and assures him that he must appear before Caesar. This is the third time that the Lord has told Paul he must go to Rome. Next, the angel of the Lord gives Paul specific instructions about what they must do. Paul relays the encouragement to the crew. Finally, the ship runs aground on a reef just off the coast of Malta. All 276 people on board the ship arrive safely on shore. This chapter is about going through the storm.

## 1. The Journey Begins

Luke begins by telling us about who the passenger list, the vessels that were used, and the route that they took.

(Acts 27:1-6) "When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius. {2} And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica. {3} The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care. {4} From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary. {5} When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. {6} There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it."

### Passenger List

The passenger list included Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus, some other prisoners, Julius and his centurion, and the crew. All total, there were two hundred and seventy six on board. (Vs 37). Paul's companions

were Luke and Aristarchus. (Luke uses we in verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. Luke described Aristarchus in Acts 19:29 as one of Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. He is also mentioned in Acts 20:4 as one of Paul's traveling companions. Then, in Colossians 4:10-11, Paul mentions that Aristarchus is his fellow prisoner. Then, in Philemon 1:23-24, Paul says that Aristarchus was a fellow worker of his.

Julius is the centurion assigned to take these prisoners to Rome. He is part of the Augustan cohort. Each cohort had ten units, and each unit had six centurions. Each centurion had ten contubernia, and each contubernia had eight soldiers. So, Julius has eighty soldiers under him, and may have some support personnel in addition to the eighty soldiers. Luke tells us that Julius gave Paul some extra considerations. He allowed Paul to go to his friends and receive some care at Sidon. He was probably escorted by some soldiers, and chained to one of them.

### **The Vessels**

There are three ships used in Paul's trip to Rome. The first two are in this chapter, and in Acts 28, they take a third ship from Malta to Rome. The first ship that they are on is an Adramyttian ship. Adramyttia is a coastal town just south of Troas. The second ship is an Alexandrian ship which was carrying grain. Alexandria was a leading coastal city in Egypt. The cargo ships carrying grain were among the largest ships around, and this was evidenced by the fact that they were able to carry grain and two hundred and seventy six passengers. The third ship was an Alexandrian ship.

### **The Route**

Paul is put on a ship that departs from Sidon. This was about seventy miles north of Caesarea, where Paul had been kept for two years. From Sidon, they sailed along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, and landed at Myra, in the province of Lycia. In Myra, they disembarked and caught the Alexandrian ship which was headed for Italy.

## **2. Early Signs of Trouble**

(Acts 27:7-12) "When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us to go farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone; {8} and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea. {9} When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul began to admonish them, {10} and said to them, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." {11} But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul. {12} Because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

The early sailing was very slow because they did not have favorable winds. Luke records that the sailing was more than just slow, it was dangerous because the fast was over. This is referring to the Jewish Day of Atonement, which fell on the tenth of Jewish month of Tisri. This would have been September 24 on our calendar. In late September and October, it was common for them to have

Etesian winds, which were very violent. These violent winds caused very rough seas, and made sailing very dangerous. So, there were two signs that were ignored. They did not have favorable winds, and it was the wrong time or season to be making the voyage.

Paul is quite aware of this and admonished them, saying that he perceives that there could be damage and great loss of the cargo, ship, and their lives. Remember that Paul has already survived three shipwrecks. He is not a stranger to seas or travel by sea. Paul's warning is the third sign that is ignored and not heeded. The vast majority of catastrophes do not come without warning. They come with lots of warnings that are not heeded. **We must pay attention to what is going on in our lives.**

The centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain than Paul's warning. In the Roman empire, these ships had to be licensed by Rome. With Julius, the Roman centurion on board, the ship's captain would be subject to Julius' final decision. But the captain was very set on moving forward. Historians tell us that there were food shortages in Italy, particularly in the fall, and there were premiums paid for grain delivered at this time of year. The captain put financial gain ahead of the safety of the crew, cargo, and passengers. His greed caused him to err in his judgment, and he tried to force things instead of waiting patiently until the right season.

One year I was paired with Ed Dougherty at the BC Open in Endicott, New York. I always enjoyed playing there. The people in Endicott were very friendly. Ed was from the Philadelphia area, and was a very seasoned veteran. He was known for his collection of Lionel train sets. Ed did not like the shape of 8-irons or 9-irons, so he had Wilson make his 8 and 9 irons with a 7-iron head. It was a little unusual. Anyway, while we were walking down a fairway, he was sharing with me his philosophy about aggressive play. He said, "Billy, birdies happen, but you make bogeys." He explained that when you try to force things, you end up making bogeys. As you play, you will have some opportunities to make birdies, and you try to take advantage of those opportunities. But, if you get greedy and try to force opportunities, you will make costly mistakes. To a large degree, I believe that Ed was correct, and this ship captain would have done well to hear Ed's advice. He tried to force things, even though the winds were contrary, and it was the wrong time of year to make the trip.

Luke also said that the majority reached a decision. The majority must have been Julius, the ship's pilot, the captain, and possibly some other crew members or some of Julius' contubernia. Very often the majority are not right. Jesus said that the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction and many are those who are on it, and that the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it. The path of the majority is not always right. In life, we need to choose God's path, even if the people around us do not accept it. **Always choose to do what is right, not necessarily what is popular.** One of the problems with our politicians is that they look at the polls and then decide what to do. Our leaders must look at things from God's perspective and do what is right in His sight, even if the majority do not agree.

(Matt 7:13-14) "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. {14} For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

**Some storms in life can be avoided and/or handled better through better decisions.** The same storm would have still come through, but the ship could have been protected in the harbor. The soldiers and prisoners could have stayed on shore until it was time to sail. In the oil and gas industry,

when a hurricane or tropical storm is in the forecast, the drill ships begin preparing to move off location one week ahead of time. They secure the well, and sail to a different location until the storm has passed. Then, they sail back to the location, and re-enter the well and start drilling again. They try to move the ship and the crew out of harm's way. By the way, the priorities for all ship captains is the safety of the crew and passengers, and secondly, the safety of the vessel and its cargo. The captain of the ship Paul was on did not have his priorities in proper order.

Some financial storms can be handled better by proper stewardship. Learn how to make a budget. Keep track of all your expenditures and all of your income. Learn to live on less than you make. Learn to put money into savings so that it is available for emergencies. Learn to honor God with the first of your income. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. You can avoid or lessen the impact of future financial storms by better decisions today.

Some health storms can be prevented by better decisions and lifestyle choices today. Eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking more water, eating fewer sweets, and not eating between meals or late at night are just a few things that can lead to better health. Choosing to walk more and exercise more are things that we can do to improve our health. Some health storms are due to poor diet and lack of exercise. We can prevent some of these storms. We cannot prevent all of them. Kathleen was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of six. She ate healthy. We grew a lot of our own fruits and vegetables on our farm. She was an active little girl. Yet, she came down with a life-threatening sickness. We went through a major storm. You cannot prevent all storms. We are going to go through some storms in life, but we can and should do what we can to prevent going through unnecessary storms.

### 3. Euraquilo Unleashes Its Fury

(Acts 27:13-20) "When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore. {14} But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo; {15} and when the ship was caught in it and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and let ourselves be driven along. {16} Running under the shelter of a small island called Claudia, we were scarcely able to get the ship's boat under control. {17} After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along. {18} The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo; {19} and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. {20} Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned."

They waited in Fair Havens until it looked like the wind was going to help them make the journey. Then, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete. The Greek word for weighed anchor is *aero*, which means to raise up, lift, or take up. As the anchor was pulled up, it allowed the ship to begin sailing away. Even though this is not the main point of the passage, I want to inject an application here. In Ephesians 4:31, Paul writes, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." The word for put away is the same Greek word, *aero*. We are to pull up the anchor of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice so that we are not anchored or tied down to these things. God wants you free of bitterness and anger.

We must pull these things up by forgiving one another. We must pull these things up by working through offenses, and forgiving one another. **We cannot sail to the destination that God has for us if we do not pull up the things that keep us anchored.** Don't be offended. Forgive one another. Work through things. Pull up those anchors. It is critical if you want to keep moving forward in your life and ministry.

(Eph 4:31) "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."

It was not very long and the Euraquilo hit them. This was a powerful northeastern storm, and they were not able to face the wind. One of the first steps of action in a storm is to face it. Don't deny it. Don't hide from it. **Face the storms in your life.** One of the first steps in recovery programs is for people to acknowledge they have a problem and then to begin facing the problem. For ships, this was very important. If the ship does not face the storm, it is far more prone to capsizing and sinking. They tried to face the storm, but they were not even able to do that very well.

When they were not able to face it, they allowed themselves to be driven along and went under the shelter of a small island called Clauda. The modern name for it is Gavdos, and it is part of modern Greece. It is only 12.5 square miles, so they did not have much shelter for very long. When you are in the midst of a storm, **take whatever shelter you can.** See the shelters as the grace of God and take what shelter you can. When our family went through the storm with Kathleen, we took what shelter we could. I tried to shelter our family from the accusations we received. I tried to shelter our family from the bad counsel of some. I had to tell one Pentecostal friend of mine that he could not come over any longer. He said every doctor is a liar, and that we needed to stop all medical treatment. As the captain of our family, I tried to find and take whatever shelter was available.

The next thing they did was undergird the ship with supporting cables. As the ship was getting violently tossed to and fro, they wanted to keep the boards from coming loose. Therefore, they undergirded it with the cables. To me, this speaks of prayer. In the storms of life, **it is vitally important to undergird your lives with prayer.** In our storm, we prayed. We also solicited the prayers of our families, friends, and other churches. I sent out updates that went out all over the world. We received emails from people around the world that were lifting up our daughter in prayer. We did not know most of the people who undergirded us with prayer. I can tell you that it made a difference. God heard the prayers of the saints and healed our daughter. She was given three to eight weeks to live. At that time, they did not have a cure for her type of leukemia. But, the prayers of the saints undergirded our family, and our daughter.

Next, they began to jettison the cargo. This speaks of the priorities in life. The cargo was valuable, but the preservation of the lives and the preservation of the ship was more important than the cargo. In the storms of life, **evaluate your priorities.** After the cargo had been jettisoned, they began throwing the tackle overboard. These were the last things that could be thrown overboard. Next to the lives of the people, the tackle was the highest priority. You could not sail the ship without the tackle. In our evaluation of priorities, sometimes even the necessary things must go. When the news of Kathleen's leukemia hit us, I carried on pastoring at our church, and also working at the prison. It soon became very apparent that I could not carry out my duties at either place and take care of my daughter. Karen was pregnant with Chad and could not be around the chemotherapy, so I was the primary one to stay at the hospital. I resigned from the prison, and we closed down the church. We

helped our congregation find other churches to join. Many of us went to the Cobb Vineyard. We were not able to continue doing foster care. This was like the ship's tackle. Karen could not take the children to see their mothers in prisons. We made the decision to bring our children to the hospital every day so that they could be with Kathleen, and she could be with them. Karen could not do everything, so we gave up the foster children.

I believe it is important to regularly look at your priorities. Many of us can gradually become involved in more and more activities, and we can get overloaded. It is important to know who you are and what you have been called to do, and then to look at what we are actually doing. Sometimes, we must cut out some of our duties so that we can focus on our priorities.

The apostles in Acts 6 were trying to do everything. The church in Jerusalem had grown significantly. It was probably between thirty and fifty thousand. They were teaching, evangelizing, making disciples, shepherding the flock, and they were also serving the widows. A small storm hit the church because certain Greek widows were being overlooked. They looked at their calling and all their current responsibilities. They made a decision to find others to serve the widows so that they could focus on their highest priorities, which were to pray and teach the word of God. It took a storm for them to re-evaluate their priorities and jettison some of their cargo.

Luke records that they had not seen the sun or stars for many days, and no small storm was assailing us. You may have felt this way before. You have not had any relief. You have not seen any let-up on the barrage of things hitting you. The tendency is to lose hope, which is what began to happen to those aboard the ship. Their hope of being saved was gradually abandoned.

(Acts 27:20) "Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned."

When things are looking desperate, things are right for a touch from God. He likes to come to our help in our time of need. Don't lose or abandon your hope. Turn your eyes and your attention to God. The word of is full of promises and examples that bring us hope. For example, in Psalm 107, God raised up a storm. The sailors rose up to the heavens and went down to the depths. This speaks of large waves caused by the stormy wind. The souls of the sailors melted away in their misery, very similar to our text today. They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, and were at their wits' end. But notice what they did next. They did not abandon their hope. They turned their attention to God. It says, "they cried to the Lord in their trouble." In the storm that you may find yourself in, don't abandon hope and give up. **Cry out to the Lord in your trouble.** Notice God's response. "He brought them out of their distresses. He caused the storm to be still, so that the waves of the sea were hushed....and He guided them to their desired haven." God can calm the storm in your life, and bring you safely to your destination.

(Psalm 107:25-30) "For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, Which lifted up the waves of the sea. {26} They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths; Their soul melted away in their misery. {27} They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, And were at their wits' end. {28} Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses. {29} He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed. {30} Then they were glad because they were quiet, So He guided them to their desired haven."

#### 4. Encouragement From Paul

After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up in their midst. Paul is a leader, and leaders stand up in storms. In 1 Timothy 3, we find the qualifications of leaders in the church, elders and deacons. One of the requirements is that leaders must be able to manage. The Greek word for manage is proistemi (Strong's G4291b), which means to stand over, preside, or rule. The root word is histemi, which is the word used here. Leaders stand up and quiet the fears of people. Many times leaders are in the same storm, as in this account, but they are able to rise above their circumstances and give peace. Leaders stand up and give hope and encouragement. Paul stood up before the crew, soldiers, and prisoners and gave them peace, hope, and encouragement. He was a leader and leaders stand up in times of trouble. **Storms are a good test of leadership.**

(Acts 27:21a) "When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up (histemi) in their midst and said..."

(1 Tim 3:4) "He must be one who manages (proistemi) his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity."

Paul tells them that they should have followed his advice and they should not have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss. But, Paul does not dwell on the past mistake; he shifts his focus to encouraging them. He urged them to keep up their courage. They had abandoned their hope of being saved, but Paul had not abandoned his hope. God had already told him several times before this trip that he must appear in Rome and testify there, just as he had in Jerusalem. Paul knew that God was sovereign, and He would accomplish His purposes. Paul knew God to be faithful to His word and to His promises. Paul has not listened to that voice of discouragement and despair. He felt the fury of the storm. He saw how desperate the circumstances were. Yet, his faith was in the Lord, the God of all encouragement.

(Acts 27:21b-22) "...Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss. {22} "Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship."

Paul was listening to the Lord rather than the voice of despair. He prophetically tells them that there will be no loss of life among them, but only of the ship. This gives them hope and encouragement. He also tells them how he knew for sure what he was telling them was going to come to pass. An angel of the God whom he belongs to and serves had come and stood before him, and had given him a prophetic word that he must stand before Caesar, and that God had granted life to all those who were sailing with him." Paul uses the opportunity to give a testimony and a word of encouragement to all aboard.

(Acts 27:23-24) "For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, {24} saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'"

I believe the angel of the Lord was sent to Paul by the Lord. Angel means messenger, and the Lord had sent the angel to give Paul and the crew this message of encouragement. I believe the angel of the Lord was sent in response to Paul's prayers. I believe that Paul had been crying out to the Lord,

and the Lord sent His response through an angel. I base this on what God did for Daniel. God heard Daniel's prayers and sent an angel to deliver His response to Daniel. God hears your prayers, and He will answer your prayers.

(Dan 10:11-12) "He said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. {12} Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words."

Next, Paul tells them a second time to keep up their courage, because he believes God that it will turn out exactly as he was told by the angel. He concludes by telling them that they are going to run aground on a certain island. Imagine what the soldiers, sailors, and prisoners are going to think when everything turns out exactly like Paul prophesied. We have been speaking about sharing our testimonies and learning to share the gospel. These are basics that we need to master. But often, God opens doors of opportunities through circumstances.

(Acts 27:25-26) "Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told. {26} "But we must run aground on a certain island."

Let me give you an example of something that happened this week. Kathleen, who used to be our church administrator, was standing in a line this week. The man behind her had a bad case of hiccups. He said that he had been hiccupping all morning. Kathleen saw an opportunity. She said, "my father used to pray for people that had hiccups, and they always went away. Do you mind if I pray for you?" The man nodded his approval. So, Kathleen prayed, "I rebuke these hiccups in the name of Jesus, and I command them to stop right now in the name of Jesus." Guess what? The hiccups stopped. The man was dumbfounded. He couldn't believe that they instantly went away. This gave Kathleen an opportunity to share with the man. There are lots of opportunities before us in every day life. We don't have to wait for a Euraquilo type of storm.

Paul had told the crew that they were going to run aground on a certain island. And, on the fourteenth night, while they were being driven along, the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching land. We do not know what led them to surmise this. It may have been that they heard a different sound from the waves. It may have been a difference in the height of the waves. However they surmised it, the sailors began to take soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms. A little later they found it to be fifteen fathoms. They were getting in shallower water. A fathom was measured from the tip of the middle finger to the tip of the middle finger on the other hand while extending the arms. It is considered six feet. Twenty fathoms would be 120 feet; fifteen fathoms would be ninety feet. They took soundings (bolizo-to heave the lead) by letting down a large lead weight tied to a chain. Often they would put grease on it so that it would pick up sand if the bottom was sandy.

(Acts 27:27-28) "But when the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching some land. {28} They took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found it to be fifteen fathoms."

Then the sailors feared that they might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak. If they ran aground, the rocks may punch a hole in the ship and cause it to sink, and that is not something that they wanted to happen in the middle of the night. Therefore, they put the anchors down to keep them in place until they could see what was going on.

(Acts 27:29) “Fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak.”

The sailors did something else that was sneaky. After putting the anchors in the stern, they tried to escape in the life boat under the pretense of laying out anchors from the bow. Somehow, Paul becomes aware of it and said to the centurion that these sailors must remain in the ship or they would not be saved. The sailors were needed to continue sailing the vessel. As a result of Paul’s word to the centurion, he had his soldiers cut the lines to the life boat, and let it fall away.

(Acts 27:30-32) “But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the ship's boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow, {31} Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved." {32} Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it fall away.”

**Storms often reveal to you who your real friends are.** They let you know who you can trust. The centurion had listened to the captain at the beginning of the journey. Now, the captain and his men are trying to desert the centurion, his soldiers, and the prisoners. He was only out for himself, looking out for number one. His true colors came out. The centurion realizes that Paul was looking out for everyone’s life.

I found out in the storm that our family went through with Kathleen that many people just threw accusations at us. They accused us of eating unhealthy. They accused me of sinning and bringing this upon my daughter. Very few people visited us in the hospital. We found that the men that I ministered to in prison sent lots of cards. They were hand-made cards that were beautiful. We found that our family came to Georgia and North Carolina and helped us out. We found that many professional golfers on the PGA Tour sent us money to help us get through the storm. We found out who our friends were, and who were not friends. You need friends in the storms of life. When others around you are going through a storm, don’t let a boat down and try to get away. Hang tight with your friends. Be an encouragement to them. Undergird their boat with your prayers. Lighten their load and cargo in any way you can. Serve them and do some of their responsibilities for them. Take the financial load off of them, and share resources with them. Encourage them with words. Seek the Lord on their behalf and give them a prophetic word of encouragement. Paul is a great example of a true leader and friend. The centurion came to realize what kind of friend Paul was in this storm.

Paul has given hope to everyone. They had abandoned their hope of being saved, and he has given hope to them. He has calmed their fears and encouraged them. Paul now shifts his care to their physical well being. He encourages them to take some food. He tells them that it has been fourteen days since they have eaten. He encouraged them again to take some food for their preservation. And finally, he reaffirms their hope of being saved by telling them not a hair from their head will perish. Then, Paul took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. When Paul boarded the ship, he was a prisoner. Through the storm, he has established his

credibility as a leader. When he stood up earlier, he stood up as a real leader. He is leading the centurion in his decisions. He is leading the soldiers, prisoners, and sailors by giving them hope and encouragement. He is also leading them spiritually. He gave thanks for the food in the presence of all and then began to eat. What a leader and what an example. All of them were encouraged, and they followed his example and also took food. **One good sign of a leader is if people listen and follow.**

(Acts 27:33-36) “Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing. {34} "Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish." {35} Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. {36} All of them were encouraged and they themselves also took food.

## 5. Safely Brought To Land

After all two hundred and seventy six people had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat. Their plan was wait until day came and then hoist the foresail and drive the ship onto the beach. Therefore, they wanted it as light as possible so that it could get as close to shore as possible. The tradition is that the site of the ship wreck is at a place called the Bay of Saint Paul, which is on the northern side of the island. Luke records that the sailors did not recognize the land. At that time, Valleta, which is a few miles south of the Bay of Saint Paul, was a well-known port and the sailors would have recognized that area of the island. So, scholars do not believe that this was the actual site. They believe that the shipwreck was either at Saint Thomas Bay or at Marsaxlokk. They say this because of the beach mentioned in our text, and because of the path that Luke describes in the text. In either case, the depth of the water outside the barrier reef matches the description in the text. It is around 75 feet deep at the reef, and quickly gets shallower towards the island.

(Acts 27:37-39) “All of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy-six persons. {38} When they had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea. {39} When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could.’

The crew cast off the anchors and left them in the sea while they loosened the ropes of the rudders. Then, they hoisted the foresail to the wind. The foresail was in the front of the ship. Scholars believe that the main sail was probably destroyed in the storm, which is why they were willing to ditch the ship and were using the foresail. They struck a reef where the two seas met and they ran the vessel aground. The stern, or back part of the ship where the rudder is located, began to be broken up by the force of the waves.

(Acts 27:40-41) “And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach. {41} But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the force of the waves.”

The soldier’s plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would swim away and escaped, but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention. Paul had favor

with the centurion. Paul had gained the respect and trust of the centurion. **God's favor on Paul kept all the other prisoners alive.**

(Acts 27:42-44) "The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would swim away and escape; {43} but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, {44} and the rest should follow, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land."

They commanded everyone who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. They could not have been too far from land. The rest of the people got on planks and other things from the ship. And so it happened that they were brought safely to land, just as Paul had told them it would happen. They had lost all hope of being saved, and now they were safely on land, and the storm had passed.

### **Conclusion**

Some of you may be going through a storm. It may be a relational storm. Your emotions have been up and down just like the waves. You have felt the fury of the storm. You feel like your life is about to come apart. For those that need to have a line wrapped around your ship so that it does not break apart, we have people here this morning that would gladly undergird you with prayer.

Others of you may have abandoned all hope for the situation you are in. You may not feel that there is any hope of having this relationship healed and reconciled. This storm has gone on and on and you have just lost hope. This morning, I want you to know that there is a God of hope who cares about you, and your situation. I remember one day that I just suffered a terrible loss, and as I was walking away from the situation to my car, the Holy Spirit filled me with joy and birthed a song from Romans 15:13. It goes, "now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. God did that for me, and He can do that for you. We serve a God of hope, and nothing is impossible for Him. If that is you this morning, and you need some hope and encouragement, I am going to ask you to come let us pray for you.

(Rom 15:13) "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Some of you are carrying a lot of weight. You are burdened down with excess cargo in the storm you are in. You feel that your ship is sinking under the weight you are carrying. I have good news for you this morning. God cares for you, and he wants you to cast those cares on Him. In fact, He says, come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. He says that His yoke is easy and His load is light. He does not want you carrying all that weight. He wants to take that load off of you. Sometimes it takes someone coming along side of us to bear that burden with us. If you are feeling like you are carrying a lot of weight this morning, I am going to ask you to come forward. We want to pray with you this morning.

This morning, whatever your storm is, God wants to encourage you that you will get through it. You will get to the other side. If you just need a word of encouragement, let us know, and we will ask the Lord for a word of encouragement for you. He loves to encourage and strengthen His family. If you have any kind of need this morning, please give us an opportunity to pray with you. Let's pray.

**Introduction** (Acts 27:1-44, 9:15-16, 26:31-32, 19:21, 23:11, Ps 119:71)

- God uses \_\_\_\_\_ in our lives for a wide variety of purposes.

**1. The Journey Begins** (Acts 27:1-6)

**2. Early Signs of Trouble** (Acts 27:7-12)

- We must pay \_\_\_\_\_ to what is going on in our lives.
- Always choose to do what is \_\_\_\_\_, not necessarily what is popular. (Matt 7:13-14)
- Some storms in life can be avoided and/or handled better through better \_\_\_\_\_.

**3. Euraquilo Unleashes Its Fury** (Acts 27:13-20)

- We cannot sail to the destination that God has for us if we do not \_\_\_\_\_ the things that keep us anchored. (Eph 4:31)
- \_\_\_\_\_ the storms in your life.
- Take whatever \_\_\_\_\_ you can.
- It is vitally important to undergird your lives with \_\_\_\_\_.
- Evaluate your \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 6:1-5)
- \_\_\_\_\_ to God. (Psalm 107:25-30)

**4. Encouragement From Paul** (Acts 27:21-36, Dan 10:11-12)

- Storms are a good test of \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 27:21a, 1 Tim 3:4)
- Storms often reveal to you who your real \_\_\_\_\_ are.
- One good sign of a leader is if people listen and \_\_\_\_\_.

**5. Safely Brought To Land** (Acts 27:37-44)

- God's \_\_\_\_\_ on Paul kept all the other prisoners alive.

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