

Sovereign Pilot of Ship & Storm

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[0 : 00] Acts chapter 27. We'll be reading the entire chapter. Acts chapter 27 verse 1.

When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. We boarded a ship from Andromantium, about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea.

Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us. The next day we landed at Sidon, and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so that they might provide for his needs.

From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra and Lycia.

There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Snidus.

[1 : 14] When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Selamone. We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens near the town of Lycia.

Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the fast. So Paul warned them, Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo and to our own lives also.

But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship. Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there.

This was a harbor in Crete facing both southwest and northwest. When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they had obtained what they wanted.

So they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. Before very long, a wind of hurricane force called the Northeaster swept down from the island.

[2 : 28] The ship was caught up by the storm and could not head into the wind, so we gave way to it and were driven along. As we passed to the lee of the small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure.

When the men had hoisted it aboard, they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Sirtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along.

We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. And on the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.

When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said, Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete. Then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss.

[3 : 34] But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost. Only the ship will be destroyed. Last night, an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, Do not be afraid, Paul.

You must stand trial before Caesar. And God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you. So keep up your courage, men. For I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.

Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island. On the 14th night, we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land.

They took soundings and found that the water was 120 feet deep. A short time later, they took soundings again and found it was 90 feet deep. Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.

In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the water, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.

[4 : 52] So the soldiers cut the ropes and held the lifeboat and let it fall away. Just before dawn, Paul urged them all to eat.

For the last 14 days, he said, you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food. You haven't eaten anything. Now I urge you to take some food.

You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head. After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat.

They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. Altogether, there were 276 of us on board. When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

When the daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach where they decided to run the ship aground if they could.

[5 : 50] Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach, but the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground.

The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf. The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping, but the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan.

He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship. And this way, everyone reached land and safety.

Let's hear the preaching of God's word. The Puritans used to say, if you want to learn to pray, go to sea.

And by that, they didn't mean a seaside hotel or resort alongside of the sea where everything would be quiet. They meant get in a boat and go out on the sea.

[7 : 07] And of course, it was not in our present day ocean liners or cruise ships, but on small vessels, wooden vessels that were easily torn apart by the waves and often were sunk to the bottom as they took on water in the storm.

And of course, in a storm at sea, there's no place to pull over to the side of the road and to get out. There's no Coast Guard back then to call for rescue.

You were helpless, desperately in need. And that's why they were saying, if you want to learn to pray, get in that kind of situation and you'll cry out to God from the heart.

Well, Paul's heading to sea and it's not as a tourist on the Mediterranean cruise. It's as a prisoner bound for Rome where he is going to be tried by the Caesar himself.

You remember in chapter 23 and verse 11, the Lord Jesus stood by Paul and said, take courage as you have testified about me here in Jerusalem.

[8 : 15] You must also testify in Rome. That's the writer of the script giving us the last line of the play. You must testify in Rome.

We know how it's going to end from that point on to the end of the book of Acts. Paul's going to Rome. And the following four chapters then have been filled with one attempt on his life after another that made his arrival in Rome look most unlikely.

Well, throughout this drama, the issue is simply this. Is Jesus Christ powerful enough, sovereign enough, in control of enough, to fulfill all that he has said and to pull off all that he has planned.

That's what's on trial in these closing chapters. And as chapter 27 opens, we find Paul still breathing after all those attempts on his life, still bound for Rome.

No thanks to the Jews who wanted him dead and had many of their thoughts, their plots thwarted. Indeed, King Agrippa and Festus, who just heard him, King Agrippa turned to Festus and said, this man could have been set free if he'd not appealed to Caesar.

[9 : 42] He's done nothing wrong in the light of our loss. Little did they know of the important ministry God had in store for him there in Rome. Now, chapter 27 then will reveal three new threats on Paul's life.

They come from the storm itself, from the sailors, and then from the soldiers. Three threats on his life. And yet at the end of the chapter, we'll find Paul's feet safely on land again, and a whole lot closer to Rome, just as Jesus had said he would be.

Now, Luke, the author of Acts, is on board with Paul. We see that, and he gives such a vivid account that we can almost hear the wind howling as we read it and feel the water splashing across our faces as we come through this chapter.

And so, brothers and sisters, let's climb on board with Paul and make this voyage with him. You may need motion sickness pills. You would want to take them now because we're headed into a storm at sea in a wooden vessel.

And it's full of lessons for us on our journey and voyage to heaven. Now, as soon as we board, we discover that Paul is not the only prisoner.

[11 : 04] There's other prisoners with him, and they're all headed to Rome. And the man in charge of transporting them is a centurion named just Julius. And very early in the journey, we notice that Julius is showing kindness to Paul.

Indeed, the Lord had given him favor with this man, Julius. Perhaps Festus had already told Julius that the man is innocent. Treat him well.

We don't know. But God has so turned his heart in one way or another so that he shows kindness to Paul. Now, that doesn't happen with people who are obnoxious and always confrontive and agitative and complaining and think the world owes them everything.

You don't win favor with people in that way. And so, we have here another window into the character of the Apostle Paul. He had a winsome character.

And this centurion, this hardened Roman soldier, finds kindness stirred up in his heart toward him. He likes him.

[12 : 12] And indeed, by the end of the journey, we'll find Paul, the prisoner, acting like Paul, the captain of the whole ship. And the whole kit and caboodle are taking counsel and advice from Paul as to what to do.

And they're following his orders. And such is the favor. Are you a winsome representative of the Lord Jesus Christ in the place where he's put you? Well, let's have a look at the map that's charting out our 2,000-mile journey to Rome.

And it begins here at Caesarea where Paul has been in prison for two years. And that's where the trials have taken place. And since we're sailing, and okay, we're heading all the way over here to Rome, 2,000 miles.

And since we're sailing, the wind will have much to do with our itinerary, where we stop. And as we put out to sea, we find the winds are against us.

Now, we're wanting to go northwest. We're wanting to go this way to Rome. But the winds are coming from the northwest. They're coming right at our face. And they're pushing right at us.

[13 : 26] So that determines our itinerary. We're going to hug the shoreline and slowly tack into the wind, inching our way along the coastline around to make our way to Rome.

So instead of cutting straight across the southern side of the island of Cyprus, which would have been surely the shorter way to go, we're going to go around the long way.

And we're going to go on the lee side of the island. That's sailor talk for the sheltered side of the island. That's the side sheltered from the wind. If the winds are against you, you don't want them blasting into you.

So we go around this way and on the lee side, the sheltered side of the island of Cyprus. Again, the problem is the wind.

The wind is against us. Until we finally arrive at Myra. That's right over here. And it was a huge port. Lots of ships coming and going.

[14 : 29] It was the center of trade for grain that would then make its way to Rome. And so the centurion, Julius, found a bigger cargo ship carrying grain and heading for Italy.

And Luke says he put us on board. Now this is a good-sized ship. Besides all the grain, it's a grain ship. Besides all the grain, there's a total of 276 sailors and soldiers and prisoners.

Now the going is still painfully slow. And only after many days and with great difficulty do we finally drop anchor off of Snidus.

Here's the little island of Snidus. It takes a long time and great difficulty just to make it that far, skipping along the shoreline. All right, let's pause for a lesson for our journey to heaven.

The winds were against us. And that meant going around the long way, the slow way to Rome. You can see we're not going the fast way to Rome.

[15 : 36] And this delay is going to have huge consequences on our journey, as you know because we've read the chapter. And all because of the wind. Now, children, who controls the wind?

Paul's sovereign Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. For the winds and the waves obey his voice.

And the psalmist says, even stormy winds do his bidding. Now that will make you rethink the weather. That will make you rethink all the problems resulting because of the weather.

We must rethink the delays, the detours, the days when the wind is in our face, literally and figuratively.

The interruptions that send us around the long way. And upset our plans and expectations and calendar. And try our patience.

[16 : 37] Well, our Lord Jesus is sovereign over the delays. And everything causing them, the wind included. He's working out his sovereign will.

So sail on, brother and sister, with the peace and joy that comes from trusting him. Well, from Snidus, the captain wants to continue going west.

Again, remember, he's headed to Rome. What's the fastest way to Rome? Well, it's just right like that. So that's how he's wanting to go. He tries to go.

But the wind out of the west does not allow us to hold our course. So we have to detour to the south. And we come south then.

The wind in our face, we have to go south. And we come to the island of Crete. And again, we go to the lee side. The protected side. Here, the protected side was on the top side.

[17 : 32] Here, it's on the bottom side. The prevailing winds. And we are going to go around the south of the island of Crete. And we hug the shoreline again.

And still, it is only with great difficulty that we finally arrive here at Fairhaven. Now, here at Fairhaven, a decision must be made.

So much time has been lost due to the wind and the delay of our journey that we can no longer press on to Italy as was planned. Our window of opportunity has passed.

The window of opportunity to sail was over. Safe sailing season passed. And we have the winter fast approaching. And this was no time to be sailing.

It's too dangerous. So the only decision to be made here at Fairhaven is where to spend the winter months waiting for spring. Should it be here in Fairhaven or somewhere else?

[18 : 39] And evidently, Fairhaven was not as fair as the folks that named it. Because they didn't want to stay there. Precisely because it was an unsuitable harbor to winter in.

That's what this ship owner and pilot thought about that harbor. You can call it Fairhaven. It's not fair enough for us to be here. And they favored pressing on just 40 more miles along the shoreline of Crete to this little place called Phoenix.

A nice harbor. A much more pleasant place. More sheltered harbor in which to wait out the winter months. So it's decision making time.

And at this point, Paul speaks a word of warning. Now he's not a sailor. He's not a pilot. He's not a centurion. He's a prisoner. And yet he speaks.

A Christian prisoner who cares for the well-being of his fellow travelers. And does not want to see them endangered in any way. And at this point, Paul is speaking not by inspiration.

[19 : 50] Not because he received some revelation from God. No. Here he's speaking just out of his own observation and experience. Well, what experience does the Apostle Paul have with the sea?

Well, you can read in 2 Corinthians, he was shipwrecked three times. And he spent a night and a day hanging on to a piece of lumber in the open sea. So he knows a few things about danger and when to sail and when not to sail.

And he speaks up out of his concern for his fellow travelers. This is not the time to sail. He warned them that even the 40 miles this late in the season would be disastrous and would bring great loss to ship and cargo and, yes, to our own lives also.

But rather than listening to the sound advice and reasoning of Paul, the centurion counted noses and the majority had it to sail on to Phoenix and to spend the winter months there.

Just 40 miles. And so when the gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they had achieved what they wanted. This is it. Providence is smiling on us.

[21 : 05] The gentle breeze will take us. We'll be there in no time. And we'll have a wonderful harbor to spend the months of winter in. And then it hit. The nor'easter.

The perfect calm quickly transformed into the perfect storm. These storms were well known. They had this name, the nor'easters. A wind of hurricane force that suddenly would come down because of the opposite air currents that were joining there.

And that's exactly what they ran into. Now, in a normal windstorm, we would still try to cut ourselves at an angle toward Rome.

But not in this wind. No, there's no trying to direct yourselves in this kind of wind. All we could do was give in to it and let the storm drive us.

So the storm's driving us, not the pilot. And as we pass by on the sheltered side of the small island of Kota.

[22 : 10] That's this little island down here. Again, we're on the lee side, the sheltered side of it. We have a window of opportunity to get some important work done regarding our ship.

So they've just got this little time as they're blowing by this island. It protects them and the winds are not as fierce. And so they set about quickly to bring the lifeboat on up on board.

The lifeboats were usually towed behind them with a rope. And it had obviously taken on water and was like an anchor behind them. And so they pulled the lifeboat up on deck during this time of reprieve.

And we also pass ropes under the hull of the ship to keep it from falling apart under the pounding of the sea. If those boards just split open a little bit, water would come in and take us to the bottom.

So the ropes were to hold them tight together. And another danger is the north shore of North Africa, the shoreline of North Africa, Sirtis.

[23 : 11] Sailors dreaded it. It was called the graveyard of ships. That these nor'easters would come and just carry them right into the rocks of Sirtis. And that would be the end of them.

And they're scared to death of that. So we lower anchor. We lower a sea anchor. That's the best we can put on the brakes. Not just to have this nor'easter just blow us right into Sirtis.

And we just let the ship be driven along. Now once we had blown past the small island then of Cotta, the big storm again swallows us up full force.

And all night long the ship took such a beating that the next day we began to throw all kinds of cargo overboard. Not the grain yet, but the cargo.

And on the third day, the ship's tackle. You see it's getting more serious. Luke says they even threw that overboard with their own hands. Because some people could not believe that sailors would throw on purpose, throw tackle that they might need on the journey.

[24 : 19] How desperate they are. Anything to lighten the ship as it's taking on more and more water and riding lower and lower in the sea. And before they're done, the precious cargo of grain itself will be thrown overboard.

It's interesting what men will part with when their lives are at stake. I've read of men that were going down on the Titanic that offered all their wealth for one of those seats in the lifeboats.

Here's the owner of the ship. This is his livelihood. His life. It's thrown overboard. It's worthless. You see, when a man comes face to face with death, values suddenly are pressed in upon.

What's important in life? The stuff that we live for. The cargo that we live for. Now suddenly, we can't take it with us. We're going to leave. And this stuff becomes nothing.

And it's thrown overboard. You know, Jesus said to a man once, What will it profit if a man could gain the whole world and yet lose his soul? Have you come to grips with what is important in life?

[25 : 39] Cargo? The stuff of this life? Oh, see the far greater value of your soul. How blessed to know our danger and to let go of our life that we might gain it and find it in Christ.

Well, the storm refused to let up, blotting out all navigational guides. We look to the sun and the stars for our guidance through this vast sea.

But it's covered because of the darkness of the storm. All hope of being saved is now given up. No one has eaten since the storm began. The ceaseless work of trying to keep the boat afloat.

Keep the bailing the water out of the ship. The violent rocking of the boat. The loss of all hope. There was no thought of or appetite for eating.

No one had eaten. And it's then, in the midst of the greatest despair, that the Apostle Paul stands up. Prisoner Paul stands up. That must have been a feat in itself in the wind and the tossing of the boat.

[26 : 43] And he stands up with a word of encouragement and hope in the face of despair. And he starts with, You didn't listen to me before or we wouldn't be in this situation. It's far different from I told you so attitude.

He's not just gouging them. He's rather saying, I want to win your hearing. I love you and I want what's best for you. And if you'd listened to me before, we wouldn't have this trouble. So please listen to me now.

Listen. Listen. I have something good for you to hear. So often when the sun is shining, nobody's listening to the Christian. But when they get in trouble, then they come.

And they want help. Christian, be there for them. You say, I feel used. Be there and be used. But be there with a word of hope from God in the face of their darkness. Paul's here. And he's facing these hopeless sailors and soldiers and prisoners with a word of hope.

Where does it come from? It comes from God. He's got a word from God. And that's why he can offer true hope. Last night, an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood by me and said, Do not be afraid, Paul.

[27 : 51] You must stand trial before Caesar. And we notice again God's concern for the heart of his servant Paul. He comes to chase away his fears with a promise.

And notice it's not a new promise. He just reminds him of the old promise. They gave him back in chapter 23. Just as you have testified in Rome, now you must also testify in Rome.

Paul, you must stand trial. You're going to make it to Rome, Paul. Remember the promise. And that means that this storm, however fierce it be, and your ship, as heavy as it is in the water, is not going to leave you on the bottom of the Mediterranean.

You're going to have your feet in Rome. It must be. It must be. And I'll get you there in my way in my time. So, brothers and sisters, how often is this the case with us?

What we need is not some new word. Oh, if God was only speaking again today. No, we just need to be brought back to an old promise. And the reality of it to grip our hearts, to cause us to trust in the Lord.

[29 : 05] The promise of God, reminded in the time of need. Where are you going to find it? You're going to find them in God's word. This is where he's speaking. Heaven-bound children of God.

This is where his words of hope are found. And he's going to bring you safely to heaven. So the Lord reminds Paul of his promised arrival in Rome. And this storm that threatens to keep him from it is actually going to blow him closer to it.

To Rome, that is. So, Paul is given the old promise, but he's given new information from the angel as well. God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.

Isn't that something? The 275 that are with you, Paul, I'm going to spare them too. Why? Because Paul's on board.

And Paul's got to make it to Rome. And so he's going to spare everyone else on board with Paul. The world rarely knows what it owes to the presence and the prayers of a man, a woman of God in their midst.

[30 : 16] And because there are many blessings that come to other people just because of the presence of one of God's people. Here, people will be spared because Paul's on board. And God graciously gives all who sail with him to safety.

Well, this is the word of encouragement for them. This is hope that not only Paul, but all sailing with him will be saved. Not one of you will be lost.

Only the ship will be destroyed as we must run aground on some island. In other words, it's not going to be easy. We're going to run aground. And it's going to be such a devastation.

The ship and its car, everything will be lost. But not one of you will be lost. People without hope need to see us.

They need to see us in the similar circumstance that they're in. Paul is here saying, Keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.

[31 : 24] Here's Paul. He's always wanting to testify about the grace of God and who he is. And he's got an audience, a captive audience, again, right there on this stormy ship.

And so he's testifying to God. Whose I am and whom I serve. He's the source of all my courage and hope. He's God who speaks to men.

And he's a God with power to save from this storm. He reigns over it. He's a God who is gracious and doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. And he's graciously given all of you who are traveling with me to be saved at the end.

And he's a God who's trustworthy. I have faith. It's all going to happen like he said it would. So take up courage. Pluck up courage. People without hope need to see us in the same boat with them.

Only with hope in the same storms. And then they need to hear from us the reason for the hope that we have. It's the 14th night now. The storm's still not letting up.

[32 : 30] I don't know where you were two weeks ago but that's how long the storm has been raging and they have not eaten. They have just been absolutely captivated and scared out of their wits by this storm and trying to stay alive.

And about midnight the trained ears of the sailors somehow sensed that land was approaching and they let down their findings and their soundings and confirmed it. And now they're scared to death that they're going to be dashed upon the rocks of this land during the night.

So they drop four more anchors and put on the brakes as much as they can against this violent wind that's blowing them. And they prayed for daylight.

But fear got the best of some of them. These sailors hatched a plan for saving their neck by abandoning ship. And so they're going to lower the lifeboat that had been pulled up on board and they're going to pretend to be fixing some more anchors.

And then when they're down there they'll just slip away in the darkness. Gambling that they'll have a better chance at making it to land in the lifeboat than this ship that's just about to go under.

[33 : 41] So the sailors they're heading they're lowering the lifeboat that is their plan and Paul is on to them and he cries out to the centurion and the soldiers in the middle of the night unless these men stay with the ship you cannot be saved.

Now there may seem to be a contradiction here and I want to point it out to you. Paul tells them not one of you will be lost. Told them that didn't he?

Take courage not one of you will be lost. And now he says to them unless these men stay in the ship you cannot be saved. You will be lost is what he's saying.

Now which is true? Well both are true. Both are the truth of God. The God who ordains the end not one will be lost.

Also ordains every detail and every means to accomplish that end. How will it be that every single one will get to shore and not be lost?

[34 : 53] Namely by the expertise of these sailors. They will be needed and their expertise to get this ship to run aground. And so unless these men stay with the ship you cannot be saved.

In other words God is going to save you but only by way of these sailors. Both are true. He ordains the end deliverance for all and the means by which they'll be delivered.

It'll be by the expertise of these sailors. And so the Bible if you can get that here in this storm in Acts 27 you will have a wonderful principle that will serve you well in all your studies of theology.

That God is a God who ordains not only the end but the means to get us to that end. So God has determined the end that all that he chose in Christ before the creation of the world are going to make it.

Not one will be lost. And yet he announces to men that unless you repent you will perish. Oh but I thought all the elect are going to make it.

[36 : 08] But they will not make it unless they repent you see. And it's only those who believe that will make it. Otherwise you will perish but those who believe will not perish but have everlasting.

Oh so you mean that the elect are going to be saved in the end but they must repent and believe. That's the means by which God will bring them there. Well they must be born again or they'll never see the kingdom of God.

That's right. You must be born again and that is the means by which God will bring you to heaven. And Jesus must die on the cross and bear our sins.

All these things must happen to get us to heaven at the last. But you see God who ordains the end ordains every one of those things. The death of his son.

The new birth of the sinner. The faith in Christ. The repentance from sin. That's God's way of getting us to the end. And so God is the God of the end and the means.

[37 : 09] And it's a wonderful understanding of God's ways with us and that will help you out of many a seeming contradiction that you find in the Bible.

Well in the pitch of night just before dawn with the wind still howling the waterlogged ship sinking lower hopes were gone. It's 14 days without food constant suspense and Paul urges them to eat some food and listen to what he says you need it to survive.

Again he is saying to men of whom he has said earlier not one of you your life will be lost and he goes on to say not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.

That's how strong he is that they're all going to make it and yet you will not survive unless you eat. So God will get them there the end and how will he get them there?

He'll get them there by strengthening them by eating something before they're thrown into the sea so that they will have some strength to make it to shore.

[38 : 13] Means and end all ordained by God. So Paul takes some bread gave thanks to God in front of them all. Don't let anyone tell you religion is a private thing to be kept out of the public in front of these 270 plus pagans.

Paul thanks God. You see he wants them to know that every good thing comes from him. It's because of him that we have this food. It's because of him that we're going to make it to shore. He's ever bearing testimony to this God.

Simple act of prayer. It spoke volumes in the time of need and only then having given thanks does he eat and at his example the others take courage and at his word they're encouraged and they too eat and then they toss all the grain the cargo the main cargo of the ship the grain is now tossed into the sea.

When daylight came they saw a bay with a sandy beach where they aimed to run the ship aground if they could and so in a flurry of activity that took all the skill of these sailors to pull off at that unique opportunity and time before they blew past the island they cut the four anchors loose they untied the ropes that would have been holding the rudders up out of the water now dropping them in so they can steer it for shore they hoisted the foresail to the raging this is a great storm still blowing and they made for the beach but before they got there they stopped and got stuck on a sandbar still some distance from the shore and there with the bow stuck in the sand the back end of the ship was torn to pieces water filling the boat and it's here that the soldiers plan to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping on land because if they escape we are responsible and we don't want that responsibility we don't want to run the risk so let's just kill them all now think for a moment of what we know we've read the last chapter of the book and we know

Paul's going to Rome but it doesn't look like he's going to get there again does it they're going to kill him to save their necks could it be that after the Lord has spared them from all this trouble at sea yet here at last Paul is to be cut down by the sword of these soldiers well not as long as God is alive he's given his word he's ordained the end of getting Paul to Rome and all the means of getting them getting him there you know Julius instrument was this time it's the centurion again it's Julius he says no no men put your swords away again his favor for Paul because of Paul he spares them all and his substitute plan is you soldiers who can swim you jump in first make to the shore and then when others come floating in you can snag them and we won't lose a one of them and then we read the closing line in this way everyone reached land in safety and so it all did happen just as

[41 : 34] God said it would the ship and cargo were lost but every life on board was spared not one was lost and Paul's just all that much closer now to Rome isn't he he's making his way to Rome and here he is he's come a long way and he got there by a storm so then Jesus Christ is strong enough he is sovereign enough he is in control of enough to bring about all that he has said and to pull off all that he has planned and that I believe is the main lesson of chapter 27 that I believe is why the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to spend a whole long chapter talking about nautical terms and the whole kit and caboodle about sailing and ships and weather and storms and the geography of the land that we might know that our Lord Jesus is sovereign over it all he reigns over every detail and he's planned the means as well as the end the timing of the journey when they set out the choice of the boat that they would sail on the decision to sail on for Phoenix that suitable harbor the timing of the storm the direction of the wind and waves that they didn't end up in the graveyard of Sirtis just blown there by the northeaster the fact that when the boat could hardly go another inch without sinking to the bottom there just happened to be an island there at that point and the fact that they didn't just get blown by that island in the night but that it was at daybreak they awake and they see the beach you know when you see that little island in this huge

Mediterranean it's a wonder that they hit it it's a dot in the ocean isn't it and all of this you see our Lord Jesus is sovereign enough to bring about the means oh but the sailors they won off they're he keeps them on board they're gonna need their skill to get to shore the soldiers wanting them dead no he's got a centurion there over them that will stop their plot the Lord is the one who is superintending this evacuation then of 276 people some swimming some just hanging on to pieces of lumber in the midst of this nor'easter just being hurled to the shore and no one being hurled off the island and away out to sea but every single one making it to shore at last this is the one who is building his church in the book of Acts this is the one who's protecting his servant Paul this is the one who is sending his saving gospel all the way to Rome and beyond and showing kindness to sinners along the way and it's the same one who holds you and all of your ways in his hand trust him with the events of your life that seem to be just flying out of control like storms that come upon us no no in reality your sovereign

Lord is in control he's working everything in conformity with the purpose of his will Ephesians 1:11 learn to trust the invisible hand behind your visible storms it's there and that's why it takes faith I believe Paul says that it will all happen just as he said it would I have faith in God we too are journeying to heaven and everything around us may at times seem like we're not going to make it hold on dear brother take courage dear sister your sovereign Lord Jesus is not only piloting the ship he's piloting the storms as well have faith in God and you will see it all happen just as he said it would and one day you too will step onto that shore of heaven where storms are no more and in that day it will be seen that not one who trusted in Jesus is missing they all made it amazing with the world and the flesh and the devil daily working against not one was missing all that the father gave to the son he gave his holy spirit to make them new creatures that they would trust in this savior and be forgiven and repent of their sins and follow him and he got them all the way home and what glory will come to

God in that day but we're not there yet we're here and I want you to know that it's the will of your Lord Jesus that Christians are often found in the same boat with non Christians that's his business that's his will that's the way he wants it and that's why some of you are in the same hospitals with the same diseases with others you're in the same country with the same problems you're in the same employment with the same problems at work with others Jesus wants you in the same boat with non Christians and these storms then serve to reveal the essential difference between the two notice what the storm brought out of these non Christians it brought out their true character didn't it they're frantic they're beside themselves they didn't know what to do they're consumed with fear and despair there's no hope no courage no peace and most of all they're consumed with self aren't they there's no love for their fellow man their self centeredness just taking over there were the sailors they're about to abandon ship take taking the only life boat and leaving the rest to perish with the big rig there were the soldiers and they're thinking only themselves if any of these prisoners get away why that's on us for safety's sake let's just do away with them everybody's out for themselves in the storms of life when everything's crashing in all they can do is think about themselves it reveals the heart oh and then what is the stark difference of this this little man this little prisoner he was once just like them but now look at him in the storm in the same boat and he's acting as God would have every Christian act here's a man who's at peace with the God of the wind and the waves he's at peace with

God and so he's at peace in the storm he knows that he belongs to God what is that worth in a storm the God whose I am what's it worth to know that you belong to him and he maintains communion with God in the storm he's praying in the storm and he trusts in God and he sure promises I have faith in God that it will all happen just as he said it would and he has the presence of mind not to be beside himself with fear and panic and running around in circles no here's here's a practical man in emergency and can speak for the well-being of the others and most of all here's a man who loves others when the storms are raging at their worst what a contrast love for these heathen men on board with him and when everybody else is studying their own interest their own well-being

[49 : 38] Paul's thinking of their well-being come on take heart eat something you're going to need it to survive not one of us will be lost Paul the servant of the Lord who is like that greater servant of the Lord who in his darkest storm at the cross of Golgotha was not consumed with himself but was praying for others and pouring out his life blood that we might be forgiven that's what we see in Jesus the great servant of the world and that's what we see in his servant Paul whose servant I am may God who has us in the same boat with others going through the same storms with other non-Christians may we live upon this savior Jesus and find the peace the joy the love that exuded from him in the storm that we might show that to the world my friend do you have such a savior do you have such a hope in the storms of this life do you have that hope in your greatest storm when you stand alone before your maker what a friend we have in Jesus what a savior for sinners come to him today and live through this life and all of its storms knowing you belong to him and pass through that last storm safe in the arms of Jesus we're going to sing a song that reminds us of the storms and the wonderful privilege of belonging to the

Lord Jesus and having our hope in him it's found in number 717 let's stand as we sing to the Lord of our great hope in Jesus Christ 717 Lord Jesus we were as helpless as this ship at sea we had our hopes and our our trust in all the wrong things and the cargo of life the things that perish with the using we deserve to go down we were running from you as much as anyone else has ever run from you but you pursued us with grace and you saved us and you spoke words of hope to us that whoever believes on this Christ will not perish but have everlasting life that no one will be able to pluck us out of his hands thank you for these comforting words as we make our way heavenward we confess

Lord that the enemy within and without is so strong that we never make it without you we thank you for what a mighty savior you are to finish the good work you've begun in our hearts to take us by the hand and carry us in your arms to bring us safely into that harbor at last Lord would you give us those who travel with us there are others in our families and in our churches our church our workplace our schools would you give us those who are traveling with us would you would you give us our our friends and loved ones would you give us our enemies would you give us others to come to know this wonderful peace and the promise of eternal life we beg it because you're such a merciful and gracious God and we ask it through the blood of Jesus Christ Amen