

Take Courage! Jesus will get you safely to shore.

Paul encountered many storms during his travels. In fact, you could say he was an expert, having experienced at least four shipwrecks that we know of, one in which he spent a night and a day in the open seas (2 Corinthians 11:25). Another is recorded in detail in the book of Acts. Let's look at what God's Word has to say!

Acts 27 (Abridged Version)

Cyprus, Fair Havens, and Crete (verses 1-12)

Paul and other prisoners were placed under the care of Julius, a centurion of the Imperial Regiment. They sailed along the coast of Asia Minor, passing south of Cyprus due to contrary winds, and reached Myra in Lycia. There, they transferred to an Alexandrian ship headed for Italy. Progress was slow, and strong winds prevented them from holding their course. They were forced to move along the southern coast of Crete with difficulty until they reached Fair Havens. Because the sailing season was already dangerous, Paul warned that continuing would bring great loss. The centurion, trusting the pilot and shipowner instead, agreed with the majority to attempt reaching Phoenix, a better harbor for wintering.

The Storm on the Mediterranean Sea (Verses 13-26)

A gentle south wind encouraged them to depart, but soon a violent northeaster struck, driving the ship uncontrollably. Near Cauda, the crew barely secured the lifeboat and reinforced the hull with ropes. Fearing the Syrtis sandbars, they lowered the sea anchor and let the storm carry them. After days of violent battering, they threw cargo and tackle overboard. With no sun or stars for many days, all hope of survival faded. Paul then encouraged them, saying an angel had assured him that although the ship would be lost, every life would be spared because he must stand before Caesar. He urged them to take courage.

Shipwrecked on Malta (Verses 27-44)

After fourteen nights adrift in the Adriatic, the sailors sensed land approaching. Soundings confirmed shallower water, so they dropped anchors and waited for daylight. Some sailors attempted to escape in the lifeboat, but Paul warned the centurion that all must remain aboard to survive; the soldiers cut the ropes. Before dawn Paul urged everyone to eat, assuring them that none would perish. After eating, they lightened the ship by throwing the remaining grain overboard. At daylight they saw an unknown bay and attempted to run the ship aground. Instead, it struck a sandbar and began to break apart. The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent escape, but the centurion

stopped them to spare Paul. Those who could swim went first; the rest followed on planks and other pieces of the ship. In this way, everyone, all 276, reached land safely.

While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. -1 Thessalonians 5:3

"Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." -John 12:25

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" -Matthew 16:24-26

"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." -John 3:8

"Cling to your faith in Christ and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith." -1 Timothy 1:19

Ask the following questions as they relate to the points above.

1. What can you learn from these verses? Does anything stand out to you? Which verses speak to you the most?
2. What aspect of Paul's journey do you identify with the most? Why?
3. How is Paul's journey to Italy an illustration of the Christian life? Discuss what each of the following might represent to you in relation to salvation and your relationship with Christ: slow progress, holding course, difficulty and danger, contrary winds, Fair Haven, gentle breeze, violent storm (Northeaster), driven along, cutting the ropes, lifeboat, tackle, food, abandon the ship, safely to land
4. What do you notice about Paul during the entire journey? What did he do? Where was his focus? What character qualities did he display?
5. Identify one big takeaway from this lesson. Share any insights you gained. Summarize what you learned in a sentence or two.

Bible Refs: 2 Corinthians 11:21-28; Acts 27; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; John 12:25; Matthew 16:24-26; John 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:19 [SPANISH]