

There Is No Hope When You Leave it To Chance

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Well, let's come to Acts chapter 27. We're going to read Acts chapter 27, the whole chapter. And then we're going to sing another song.

Paul has just appealed to Caesar in front of Festus, and then Festus brought in King Agrippa.

Paul has testified of his faith in front of King Agrippa. And neither of them find him deserving of death or imprisonment.

And they say this man could have been set free if he'd not appealed to Caesar. And this is where we pick up now. Acts chapter 27. And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius, and embarking in a ship of Adramatium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.

The next day we put in at Sidon, and Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for. And putting out to sea from there, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us.

[1 : 4 8] When we had sailed across the open sea, along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. Then the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board.

We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty of Snidus. And as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete at Salmon.

Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fairhavens, near which was the city of Lassia. Since much time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, because even the fast was already over, Paul advised them, 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.

But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. And because the harbour was not suitable to spend the winter, the majority decided to put out to sea from there on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbour of Crete facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

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. But soon a tempestuous wind called the northeaster, struck down from the land, and when the ship was caught, it could not face the wind.

[3 : 2 8] We gave way to it and were driven along. Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat.

After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Sirtis, they lowered the gear and thus were driven along.

Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo, 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 no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood among them and said, Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss.

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

[4 : 38] 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. So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told, but we must run aground on some island.

When the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven along by the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land, so they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms.

And a little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. Fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.

And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.

Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go. 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.

[5 : 54] Therefore I urge you to take some food, for it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you. When he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat.

They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. We were in all two hundred and seventy-six persons in the ship. When they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned, if possible, to run the ship ashore.

So they cast off the anchors and let them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach, but striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground.

The bow struck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. The soldier's plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan.

[7 : 07] He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, and the rest on planks or pieces of the ship. And so it was, that all were brought safely to land.

Amen. I pray that God would bless the reading of His Word. Let's now sing together. I do not know why. Well, how many times have you found things to be more difficult as a result of not listening?

Now, men, I am mostly speaking to you here. We are particularly good at not listening, aren't we? All the men said, what? Perhaps one of the reasons that it is easy not to listen is, number one, we think that we know better.

And number two, because words are easier to ignore than the consequences that come later. Now, for instance, scenario.

Okay, true story in my house. Maybe we should have a professional put the TV wall mount on, says Jen. No, no, I can do that myself, says me.

[8 : 23] But half a dozen holes in the wall later that are useless? Yes, maybe we're calling Mr. Fix-It to come and help. Maybe more seriously. Maybe you shouldn't drive home.

Maybe you should just leave your car here and get it in the morning. No, no, I've not had that much. Not had that many drinks. It happens, doesn't it? Words are easy to ignore.

Yet some words would save us from much difficulty if only we would listen. And I suppose it's not just about the words, though, is it? But it's also about how much you can trust the person speaking the words.

Are you going to listen to DIY advice from a toddler? Are you going to listen to medical advice from a politician? Or any advice from a politician?

Are you going to listen to spiritual advice from a prisoner? Well, it depends who that prisoner is, doesn't it?

[9 : 23] And why they're in prison. You see, to us, Paul, Paul is one of the heroes of our faith. Paul is one of the most significant players in the New Testament. Someone whose words that we consider inspired.

But aboard this boat going to Italy? Well, he's just another prisoner being sent to Rome. Why should you listen to Paul? Why should you take advice from a prisoner?

In Acts 27, the journey to Rome is finally underway. And between Caesarea and Rome, there are two major events that Luke records. Two major events.

Number one, Paul's time on the ship until it's wrecked. And number two, Paul's time in Malta. Now, many have speculated why Luke goes into so much detail about the places and weather and experiences on the sea.

Is Luke simply trying to fill out the scroll? Is he trying to make the story more exciting? Is he trying to make it more dramatic? Is Luke trying to prove that he was also there with Paul and so add historical credibility to the account?

[10 : 30] Or are there also literary reasons and theological reasons for including all this detail? There's so much detail. So I want to offer just a few brief observations before we actually go through the text.

And I want to show that by observing the text, anyone can do this. Any one of us can go through and look at what's repeated, observing what's in the text, what's the emphasis, what's repeated, what's peculiar about this part?

What comes before it? What comes after it? How does that help us understand the text itself? What sticks out? So if you're looking at chapter 27, here are a few observations.

The last thing recorded in Caesarea, the place where Paul has come from, the last thing recorded is Paul giving his testimony before King Agrippa. Acts 26, Paul testified about Jesus and King Agrippa said, could you persuade me to become a Christian after such short time?

But the question is, will this Jewish king choose to listen? Will Festus and the others choose to listen? Paul has said that Jesus sent him to such people to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.

[11 : 49] Paul's only crime is a certain Jesus to be alive. The question is, will they listen? That's what we're left with. And in Caesarea, all we're left with is words. King Agrippa, Festus, all they're left with is words.

It's only words. And then, the other side of this, Paul gets to Rome, he calls a meeting with the Jewish religious leaders, and the big question again is, will they listen or not to his words?

You see, the whole book ends with this question of who will listen. Now, between Caesarea and Rome, Paul's just another prisoner on the boat. Yet, something that Luke highlights, something very interesting to notice, is that Luke records Paul speaking four times, four separate times in the space of weeks on the boat, yet in the months that he spends in Malta, Luke records not even one single word from Paul.

Isn't that interesting? Why is that? See, these things should pop out at us. Why all these speeches on the boat and why nothing? No words at all, no testimony recorded in Malta.

What's Luke trying to tell us? Luke uses 1,020 words on the journey and he only uses 253 words in Malta. Why is the shipwreck more prominent than the Malta revival?

[13 : 13] It's not as though nothing exciting happened in Malta because it did. But I think one of the reasons the emphasis on the sea is Paul's words, the emphasis in Malta is Paul's actions, is because sandwiched between Caesarea and Rome, this idea of will they listen to Paul's words?

Will they listen to Paul's words? And sandwiched in between this, we have a very detailed account of the consequences of not listening to Paul's words. you see that in the shipwreck?

All because they didn't listen. And so I think it's easy to ignore words when they're only words. But when we're faced with the consequences of not listening to those words, suddenly they have much more weight.

And so, while this account that Luke records in the boat is real, true account, Luke shows us a deeper theological point, and what happens when people don't listen to the gospel, when they choose not to listen, and what the result will be?

A shipwreck, a disaster, loss of life. This is the most prominent. This is most prominent in the fact that when they don't listen to Paul's advice in verse 11, yet they rely on chance.

[14 : 30] Notice that word, they rely on chance in verse 12 rather than Paul's advice. And they end up in verse 20, abandoning all hope of being saved. Again, in verse 31, Paul basically says if you don't listen, you cannot be saved.

Are they going to listen? And so, this is the overarching theme of our text today, is whether people will listen or not. And sandwiched in between Caesarea and Rome, we have the consequences of not listening to Paul and the consequences of listening to Paul.

And we're going to go through this text in five sections. Section one is one to eight. There will be times of favor and times of difficulty. Now, there were a number of other prisons sent with him, sent with Paul on the boat, and the man in charge of the transfer was a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius.

Now, given that from verse 1, Luke writes, it was decided that we should sail for Italy, we can tell that Luke is present with Paul. Not only that, but verse 2, Aristarchus, was with them too.

This is the same man along with Gaius back in Acts 19 that was dragged and beaten in the Ephesus riot. Now, they were called Paul's companions in travel.

[15 : 49] Aristarchus, called a fellow worker and fellow prisoner of Paul. So, for whatever reason, Paul's allowed to take these men with him, Luke and Aristarchus. perhaps they were considered his slaves or servants.

I remember finding this book in the glow centre, and you'll know if you go to the glow centre at the cupboard at the back, they've got this wee second hand section. And I found this little book called Paul, it was called Saint Paul and His Friends.

It sounds like a children's book or something. But each chapter was about the importance of the friends of Paul and how they refreshed him and encouraged him through every challenge. And where we see in verse 3 an unusual kindness by Julius to let Paul go and receive care from Christians and Sidon, how encouraging must it have been to have friends also on the ship with him when things got difficult.

You see, there will be times of favour in life and there will be times of difficulty in life. And living a life of faith in the promise of God is no exception. But Paul, Paul had some good friends who were willing to walk with him in the difficulties and not just in the favour.

Aristarchus, what a guy. Even after being dragged and beaten, he goes with Paul to Troas. And now we see him board the ship with Paul and he's not going for a luxury med cruise.

[17 : 13] It's a cargo ship packed with grain and prisoners. And this is the idea. The joys will be more joyous and the difficulties will be more bearable when we have good friends by our side along the way.

When you find such a good friend, be sure to give thanks for them, pray for them, encourage them often. If you don't have friends like that, then pray for God to give you them. And also, let us think about how we ourselves can be a friend like that to others.

Paul, in his letter, at the end of his life, in 2 Timothy, reflects on the importance of such friends. And not only does he give thanks for them, but he holds them up as an example to the rest of us.

Not only would it be refreshing on a difficult voyage to have a friend with you, but as a prisoner among prisoners, wouldn't it be encouraging? When it comes to sharing your faith, how much easier is it when you have a friend by your side?

I was reminded of the film The Shawshank Redemption. I don't know if any of you have ever seen it. But in it, there's a man named Andy DeFrame. He's sent to Shawshank for double homicide.

[18 : 24] But at every point, he insists on his innocence. I'm innocent. And there's this one scene where a younger prisoner is bragging about being in and out of prison from a young age.

And he tells the story of the crime that got him landed in Shawshank. And then he turns to this guy, Andy, and he asks him what he's in for. And Andy responds by saying that the lawyer's messed up.

That's why he's in there. The young man looks confused and Andy joked, saying, Don't you know? Everyone in here is innocent. But, the truth was, Andy, this guy, was perhaps the only innocent person in that prison.

Yet no one took his innocence seriously. I was reminded of this because there would have been a good chance that many conversations happened between the prisoners on the boat. What about you, Paul?

Paul, what are you in for? Why are you in chains? Some people would have known. Julius, the centurion, he would have had the appeal paperwork for Paul. But I wonder what the conversations would have been like, Paul and the prisoners.

[19 : 27] What are you in for? What was your crime? No, I'm innocent. Yeah, I've heard that before. No, really. I'm here because of the hope of Israel and the hope of the world.

I'm here because I'm certain as Jesus to be alive. Now, that's just my own speculation but I think it's worth considering because every single person on that boat, everyone on that boat is going to learn something about Paul's God by the time they get to Rome.

They're going to hear things and see things that shake their world and I imagine it would have had a lasting impact on their lives. The things they went through would have made them consider the things that Paul said.

Now, we've come to this place called Fair Havens. Sounds lovely, doesn't it? We boat trip to Fair Havens. And Luke describes their journey so far.

Their journey so far, the winds were against us. We sailed slowly for days. We arrived with difficulty. The wind did not allow us to go farther and we were coasting along it with difficulty. This is not plain sailing.

[20 : 30] Verse 9, being after the fast in late autumn, it was the time of the year notorious for being dangerous to sail, just approaching winter. Point number two from verse 9 to 11.

Sometimes we will be passive, but there's always a choice to speak and to listen. And we saw this last week. There are things in life we're not in control of and which we're passive.

Paul was being moved about not at his own will, but he does have a choice whether to speak or not. And Paul has a lot of experience on the sea. And so he, perceiving danger ahead, he cannot remain quiet.

Have you ever been in a situation where you've, you could see someone making a bad decision. You could see them about to make a bad decision and it will cause them harm and perhaps others.

Yet you're torn. You're torn whether to say something or not. Should I say? Should I say? You know, have they even, will they be offended? Will they listen? What right do I have to tell them anything? They've not asked for my advice, but should I, should I say something to them?

[21 : 36] Do you think the captain of this ship or the owner or the centurion was asking Paul for any advice here? Probably not. And I could be wrong, but how could any prisoner have better judgment than the captain or the owner or the prisoner transporter?

It was the centurion that Paul brought the advice to, but naturally he paid more attention to the captain and the owner. And even if he humored Paul, I mean, you've got to think, surely the professionals should know better.

Surely. But what they don't realize is that Paul has a lot of sea miles under his belt. Do you remember 2 Corinthians? What does he say in 2 Corinthians 12?

All the things that he had been through. How many shipwrecks? Three shipwrecks. He wrote 2 Corinthians before this. So Paul's had at least 3 shipwrecks before stepping on this boat.

He's got a lot of experience. It's as if Paul goes to Julius and he says, Excuse me, please sir. I've been here before. Don't be fooled by a gentle breeze.

[22 : 45] Don't be fooled by a one fair day. Don't count on chance. This is not going to end well if we go out to sea. Trust me, I've been here before. Paul knows what he's talking about.

He's been on the sea a long, long time and he cannot remain quiet when he knows that somebody's about to make a bad decision and the trouble that's going to bring. But once he says his peace, he doesn't argue.

And it's in this situation that it's the same for the gospel, isn't it? You can't force someone to listen. You can't force someone to make the right choice. Paul knows that the prophet Ezekiel was made a watchman over Israel and he knows the story.

God said that he must sound the warning. If people don't listen then the blood will be in their own heads but if the watchman doesn't sound the warning then their blood will be in the watchman's head. Paul knows this.

He's like, I've got to say something. If they don't listen it's their problem but I've got to say something. There's always a choice whether to speak or not, whether to listen or not.

[23 : 47] Verse 12 to 20 When you leave it to chance there will be no hope. They've already made this choice not to listen.

The warning of danger seems unconvincing to them. Paul gives them a warning and they look at the sky they look at the sea they're like, nah, it's looking good. We'll take our chances.

It's a fair day. We'll take our chances. There's a gentle southern wind. We'll take our chances. Why listen to someone who seems otherwise unqualified?

Paul doesn't seem like he's got the qualifications to advise about sailing. Which one of us seem qualified to give advice about eternal life? People seem unconvinced about our advice, about our warning, about what we say.

People seem unconvinced. Nah, I think I know better. Two things. I think I know better. I think I'll take my chances. I'll take my chances. Is that not what people do with the gospel?

[24 : 55] Life seems okay. I think I'll take my chances. That's what we read in verse 12. The majority, the majority decided on chance. And it seemed to pay off.

Verse 13, they're greeted with a gentle south wind. But when things in life are going gentle, it lulls us into a false sense of security. Chance and gentle wind suddenly turned to a tempestuous wind called the Northeaster.

And again, look at Luke's descriptions. Could not face the wind. Gave way to it and were driven along. Managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. Undergird the ship.

They tied the ship up to save it from breaking apart. Fearing we would run aground in the surf. Driven along, violently storm-tossed, jettisoned the cargo. Neither sun nor stars appeared for many days.

No small tempest laid on us. And finally, Luke says, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned. They've assigned themselves to death.

[25 : 56] We made a choice. We took our chances. We're all going to die. Their choice to take their chance gave them false hope for a little while, but it soon turned to disaster.

Just like Paul warned them. So much so, they abandoned all hope of being saved. They all thought they were going to die and perhaps they would have. Perhaps they should have if it wasn't for God's intervention.

Paul stood up and told them, you should have listened. You shouldn't have set sail incurring this injury and this loss. However, when chance can offer no hope of salvation, God steps in as the only one who can offer a way out.

Paul says, despite all this mess, despite all this mess that you brought on yourselves, an angel of the God to whom I belong, the God who I worship, reassured me of the promise verse 23, 11, Paul must stand before Caesar in Rome.

Not only that, God has granted Paul all those who are sailing with him. You notice that? Verse 21 to 32, pray to, trust in, and listen to the only God who can save.

[27 : 13] If Jesus had promised Paul, back in chapter 23, 11, if Jesus had promised Paul that he will get to Rome, then that's one person out of 276.

One person guaranteed to survive. That's whatever happens, Paul will survive. No matter what, he's dragged through this awful storm because they wouldn't listen, but nevertheless, Paul will survive.

Now, he may be battered and bruised because he didn't listen, but Jesus will never fail on his promise. Jesus will fulfill his word to Paul about getting to Rome. Yet, there's another 275 people on board.

God's not obliged to save them, but the angel said that God granted Paul all of them. What does that mean? What does it mean that God granted Paul all of them?

Why would they be granted to Paul unless Paul asked for them? Despite being in this perilous mess from not listening to Paul, he's praying for them.

[28 : 14] That's the implication here. Paul has been praying. Before he turns up and said, I told you so, he's down there praying. When everything's getting violently storm-tossed, Paul is praying for 275 people, even although they got him into this mess.

And he didn't say a thing until he got an answer. When he speaks, he isn't just saying, I told you so, he's shown credibility so that they might listen to him now. Not only that, it's not merely advice this time, it's a firm word from God, from his God, the God to whom he belongs and worships, the only God who can save them now.

Nobody can save them now except God. Even when the sailors attempt to jump ship, I mean, how bad is it when the sailors are going to jump ship? It's like being on a plane and the pilot takes the only parachute and jumps off and you're like, what are we going to do?

Paul, I don't know how he knows this, but he knows that these sailors are pretending to lay down anchors and he tells the centurion and the soldiers cut their ropes.

Nobody can leave this ship. If they leave this ship, you cannot be saved. Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved. And the point is, there's no escaping this.

[29 : 33] There's no way around this. It's like trying to find salvation on your own means. It's like people trying to escape salvation by their own efforts. There's no rubber dinghy to get out of the mess that they're in.

Paul's saying, you may think stealing the lifeboat will save you. It won't. He's not just saying, oh, they might get away and we are lost. He's saying, they're going to die if they do that. They need to stay on this ship.

There's no way escaping. There's no way around it. It's the same with the gospel. It was the same in the day of Noah, wasn't it? There's no other way except on the ship, on the ark.

There's only one ship. There's only one ark of salvation. There's only one name. There's only one gospel. There's only one God who can save. And trying to be saved yourself will not work.

It's only by God's power and grace that we can be saved. It's only by the name of the Jesus who Paul asserts to be alive that we can be saved. Only the God of Paul can save.

[30 : 37] So, listen to Paul if you want to live. That's what he says. And five, God will give you strength until he brings you safely ashore.

From verse 33 to 44. Paul's final word, speech number four, is for all the passengers to take food for strength. They haven't eaten in two weeks.

Why do you think that is? When you're in the middle of a storm and you're thrown up over the side. You can't stomach food in this. In suspense, always wondering if you're going to die.

Can't stomach it. Been tossed back and forth. Yet Paul reassures them that not even a hair on their head will perish. Paul is continually demonstrating what he said back in verse 25.

When he said this, after he repeated what the angel said, he said, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.

[31 : 36] God said it, it will happen. I've got faith. And his faith is shown. His faith is shown when the sailors are trying to escape. His faith is shown when he commands the centurion.

When does that happen? His faith is shown when everyone else is in suspense and he's praying. His faith is shown when he's giving thanks to God and he's breaking bread for everyone on the ship.

His faith is shown embracing for impact and his faith is shown while the soldiers plan to kill, not one person will perish. Again, another film for you if you've not seen this.

Film called Sully. You probably know about the scenario. It's about the airplane that had to crash land in the Hudson River in the middle of January a few years back. New York plane crash in the Hudson.

Cold. And the film, while the landing on the water was successful and without injury, there was still trying to get the people to shore. And so a number of boats came to rescue people from different places and they took everyone to different places to rescue them.

[32 : 45] And there's this scene when the senior pilot, Sully, when he's brought to shore and he's at one side and he's pacing around and you think, it's finished, it's over, it's done.

You can rest, you can relax. But he's not relaxed. He's pacing. He's anxious. And he's asked the question by the emergency services and he says, what's the number?

That's his only thing that's in his mind. What's the number? Just tell me the number because his only concern before he rests, before he celebrates, his only concern is the number of people that were rescued.

He won't rest until he knows that every single person has been rescued. And as it happened in that disaster, every single person was rescued. Same scenario here.

Paul has faith in God. What are the chances? What are the chances that 276 men would be brought safely to shore? After the sailors want to jump ship, after the soldiers want to kill the prisoners, after people are fighting, there's a shipwreck, there's storms, all sorts of things.

[33 : 53] How could they even get to Malta? When the ship does break up, it would be the perfect opportunity for a prisoner to escape. But nevertheless, 276 persons brought safely to shore.

What are the chances? Yeah, we know. It's not left up to chance, is it? It's not chance. It's not skill. It wasn't experience. It wasn't even Paul. But it was his God who brought all men through the water to safety.

And think of what these people now think about the God of Paul. Think about what people think about Paul's words now. His words that Jesus is alive.

His words that Jesus is the hope of the world. His words that he was sent to people like them to tell them about salvation and Jesus. Do you think they'll listen now? You see, that's the difference between Festus and King Agrippa.

They had words. These men lived with the experience of not listening to Paul. Do you think they'll listen now? I want to say this just to finish. Back in verse 10.

[34 : 59] Back in verse 10 when Paul gave his advice. We don't know what insight Paul had at maybe just being his experience on the sea. It doesn't matter. It doesn't need to be inspired words.

The point is they didn't listen to Paul. The question I had in my mind was if they did, what if they listened to Paul? Right in the beginning. What if they listened to Paul and they didn't set out to sail?

How would things be different? No shipwreck? Winter in Crete or wherever. Wait for better weather before they go to Rome.

Plane sailing to Rome. We don't know what would be different. I'm sure that God could have accomplished his purposes without a shipwreck. yet they didn't listen and it cost them greatly.

But here's the point. This is why I was asking the question what would be different? Because it's important to know that God isn't reacting off the cuff. It's like that song with God things don't just happen.

[36 : 07] God isn't just reacting to things. God isn't reacting to things like he doesn't know what's going to happen. Like he's not in control.

God knew ahead of time everything that led to the shipwreck. It was so avoidable if they just listened to Paul. And it was a terrible experience.

It must have been a really terrible experience. I'm sure it wasn't fun. A couple of weeks at sea being storm-tossed without food feeling yucky feeling like you're going to die every moment.

No sun or stars. It must have been awful. It's so avoidable so easy to avoid if they just listened. But yet they put their hope in chance and chance failed them.

What are their chances of survival? Never mind their chances of getting to that next port. See, they were banking on chance to get to the next port and now they find themselves struggling to survive.

[37 : 09] What are the chances that a ship drifting in the middle of a storm in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea reaching that tiny island of Malta?

What are the chances? What are the chances of all 276 people being brought safely to land? It's not by chance. I think that's why Luke includes all this detail to show it's not by chance.

This is what happens when you don't listen. You get into a situation where you cannot save yourself. There is only one scenario out of this and that's listening to God and Him saving you.

The only chance of survival is not by chance but it's by the grace of God. And here's another point. despite the mess despite the mess that people get themselves in and people get themselves in messes, don't they?

Despite the mess that you get yourself in no matter what darkness you plunge yourself into no chance of getting out yourself but despite that God is gracious God is powerful God can save you.

[38 : 23] Despite all that look at how God can turn this around. this is the amazing thing. What would have happened if they listened?

We don't know. God could have done it. I don't think God people make decisions. God's not always responsible for people's decisions.

People are culpable for their own decisions. God is not the author of all bad things that happen but He can turn bad things into good things. Look at the mess that they got themselves in.

A couple of people put 276 lives at risk never mind all the cargo, all the cost, all the grain that was supposed to go to Rome, the cost of the ship, all that stuff, all at risk in the lives of 276 men.

Put at risk. They should have died. Yet God, God in His power and grace can not only turn that around so He brings them safely but 276 men, 275 plus Paul, now know how powerful and gracious that God is through that experience.

[39 : 34] He can turn that situation around to be better than it would have been if it never happened. He can make a disaster turn out to be better than if the disaster never happened.

Such is the power and grace of God to rescue. And here's the thing, they've just landed in Malta, all of them, sputtering up on the shore, crawling on the sand or whatever they do, thinking about the God of Paul, thinking about the words of Paul.

They haven't seen nothing yet. Next week, John's going to take us on a journey in Malta. It'll be lovely. Hopefully the weather will be nice. They're about to see even greater things in Malta through the hands of Paul by the God whom he serves and whom he belongs to.

Do you think they will listen? Let's pray and let's sing. Our God and Heavenly Father, you are so powerful and gracious that we can stand here today together because of Jesus Christ.

For if it were not for him, we would yet be in the darkness. If it were not for him, we would be in a situation like this, where all hope of being saved is abandoned.

[41 : 02] But because of the great grace with which you have shown us in Christ, because of those who have spoke this message of grace to us, this good news of Jesus, asserting him to be alive, telling us of the promises in Jesus, because of this, we can now know your grace, we can now know your mercy, and we can now know your salvation.

Lord, we pray that you would help us to stand firm in this through any storms that may come our way, even through death itself, that you will bring us safely to the other side.

And not only that, that we can, like Paul, speak. Whenever we're in situations that are out of our control, we have the choice to speak and to listen.

We pray for people who might hear this message, that they would listen, and that they would know the same God who can save. For we pray it in Jesus' precious and powerful name.

Amen.