

# A Storm, a Shipwreck, & a Snakebite

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at [TrinityGraceAthens.com](http://TrinityGraceAthens.com).

So, Acts 27, verse 1, and when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, where Rome is located, they delivered Paul and some of the other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius.

Hop down, so he's in with this cohort. We're going to read about the storm at sea, verse 13. Now, when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, which I'll explain more about in a moment, close to the shore.

But soon, a tempestuous wind, called a northeaster, struck down from the land. And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along.

Running under the lee of a small island named Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship.

[ 1 : 15 ] Then, fearing that they would run aground at Sirtis, they lowered the gear, and thus, they were driven along. Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. That means to throw it off.

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.

Verse 21. Since they had been without food for some time, Paul stood up 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, that there be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night, there stood before me an angel of God, to whom I belong and whom I worship.

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.

[ 2 : 36 ] But we must run aground on some island. So next, they run underground. That's what he's explaining about the rest of this ship, or the rest of this chapter, and then the shipwreck, and then hop down to chapter 28, verse 1.

After we were brought safely through, and we then learned that the island was called Malta, where they were shipwrecked, the native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.

When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them in the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said, No doubt, this man is a murderer.

Though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live. He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall dead, but when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

[ 3 : 49 ] Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.

And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery, and Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him. And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came, and were cured, and they also honored us greatly.

And when we were about to sail, they put us on board whatever we needed. And then the next few verses end us in Rome.

So this is the word of God. This is kind of an interesting part to tackle today, but I think the Lord is with us. You know, it's hard to feel safe until every threat is removed.

Ever since a snake enticed Eve to eat the apple, few things raise our fears than the sight of or the threat of snakes. I think we can all relate to Indiana Jones who says, I hate snakes.

[ 4 : 59 ] So recently I read this story about Bessie, an eight-foot-long Burmese python who was accidentally let loose in an Idaho apartment complex a few years ago.

Burmese pythons are native of Southeast Asia and can grow up to 20 feet long and 200 pounds. Thankfully, they're not venomous. They just wrapped their bodies around their prey to suffocate them before eating them whole.

And on one afternoon, Bessie got loose, making her way out of a hole in the bathroom wall and hiding in the structure of the 57,000-square-foot apartment complex for two weeks.

Each night, residents went to bed with the threat that Bessie could be lurking anywhere in the shadows. For two weeks, residents checked under their beds and under their sheets for Bessie.

For two weeks, they checked under the couch cushions and inside the closets for Bessie. For two weeks, the apartment owner, maintenance workers, and a team of plumbers tried to hunt Bessie down.

[ 6 : 10 ] She was finally found hanging in the ceiling above the neighbor's apartment with a 200-foot-long snake from a plumber.

And after she was discovered, one resident said, Well, definitely sleep better now. I bet. I mean, can you imagine? It takes a little mice to unnerve me completely.

The threat was removed and the residents felt safe. They could sleep easy and without fear. But what if the threat isn't removed?

What if the layoffs keep coming, such that we're dreading when our name is called? What if all the good bills of health don't see tiny cancer cells growing?

What if regardless of how hard we seek to protect our kids, there's still bucket mouths in the lunchroom spreading half-truths and untruths? What if the relationship doesn't work out and we're no longer friends?

[ 7 : 17 ] What if the worst does happen? If there's anything this pandemic has shown us is that we're a culture obsessed with fear. We are obsessed with trying to understand all the risk and trying to control our lives.

And surely we should gain wisdom. There's nothing wise in being foolish. But we will not gain wisdom by eliminating all the risk and the threats from life because life will always be filled with what ifs.

So how do we sleep? I think these verses have a message for us this morning. On the voyage to Rome, Paul faces every imaginable threat.

A storm, a shipwreck, a snake bite, a few uprisings in the ship, thirst, hunger, to name a few. And yet he remains calm. It's got a message for us. Our safety is not found in the castle of our own making.

It's not in our gardens or canned goods or ammo. It's not in a vid angel approved movies or safe for the family radio. We live in an R-rated world filled with wars and hatred and corruption and unkindness and selfishness and lies and viruses.

[ 8 : 31 ] The only safe place is in God and in submitting to his will. Where are we going this morning? The safest place in the world is the will of God.

The safest place in the world is the will of God. So we're going to unpack that in a few points. The first is the scriptures reveal the unchanging will of God. Paul lives throughout these verses with an increasing certainty of the will of God for his life.

Now, if you've read Paul's letters, he wrote 13 that are in the New Testament. He constantly referred to the will of God. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Almost all of his letters begin that way, describing his conversion, his call to preach the gospel.

But throughout this section, this last section of Acts, he becomes increasingly certain that it's the will of God for him to take the gospel to Rome. Now, it's no surprise that Paul would want to go to Rome.

He wants to take the gospel wherever Christ is not named. And Rome is the largest and most impressive of all ancient cities. All roads lead to Rome in the empire.

[ 9 : 39 ] It is the capital. It is the home at this time of Emperor Nero Caesar. It's filled with art and culture and entertainment, beautiful buildings, palaces, temples, theaters, baths, and the best infrastructure.

But for Paul, he wanted to go to Rome to see a young church that he longed to visit. Interestingly, Taylor hit that in Romans 16. Romans 15 and 16, he says, I've been so hindered from coming to you.

I've longed to see you. I hope to see you. Strive with me in prayer that I may be able to come. But on the voyage, the uncertainty is removed.

And he finds out it's the will of God for him to go. Look down in verse 24 of chapter 27. Paul's talking about this vision. He says, do not be afraid.

This is the Lord. You must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you. But you must stand before Caesar.

[ 10 : 45 ] It's a word indicating divine necessity. Now, that's a word that's all throughout Luke. Divine necessity. The idea, it is necessary because God has decided that it is necessary.

And it will happen because God has decided that it is necessary. And he will ordain it to happen. Divine necessity. So what he realizes in this moment, it is not the will of God for him to die in a storm.

It is not the will of God for him to die in a shipwreck. It is not the will of God for him to die of a fever. It is not the will of God for him to die of a viper biting his hand. It's the will of God that he should stand before Caesar and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So it settled all his fears. But we too are to live with an increasing certainty of the will of God. We are to live with an increasing certainty of the will of God for our lives.

How do we find the will of God? That's the \$64,000 question. I mean, that's not a totally massive sum of money, but just kind of a phrase for something that is massive.

[ 11 : 48 ] You know, unlike Paul, we don't wait for God to suddenly speak to us. We go to where God has spoken directly to us in his word. The scriptures, as the point said, reveal the unchanging will of God.

They provide all that we need for life and godliness, Peter says. They tell us what we're supposed to do and think and feel. That's right. The Bible commands you to feel a certain way. They tell us how to live.

It's the will of God that you're holy. You know this. It's the will of God that you love your wife. It's the will of God that you respect your husband. It's the will of God that you love your neighbor and protect his good name from gossip and slander. It's the will of God that you say no word that doesn't build up.

It's the will of God that you always be thankful. I try to apply that one. Rejoice always. Give thanks in all circumstances. First, it's the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

It's the will of God that you don't let the sun go down on your anger. So the scriptures contain all that we need for life and godliness. And while we don't have the Lord speaking suddenly to us, we do have the Lord speaking directly to us right here.

[ 12 : 51 ] So take it up. I dare say 95% of our confusion and discontent would be solved by knowing less of what so-and-so says on social media and more of what the Lord says right here.

Now, I want to be apolitical here, which means not political. So regardless of whether you think President Trump should have cleared the peaceful protest a few weeks ago for a photo op with a Bible in the gardens of St. John's Episcopal Church, one thing we can all agree on is he looked uncomfortable holding the Bible.

Now, late, late show host James Corden brought his dad, a Christian book salesman, and this is just totally hilarious, brought him on to help Trump learn how to hold a Bible.

And this is not really meant to target Trump, but the dad is a pastor. James Corden's dad is a pastor, which is incredible, and you should go watch the video. He talks about you can hold your Bible a number of different ways.

You can do the underarm thing. Now, I'm trying to hold my place. I wouldn't normally do that. So you can switch to other arms. You can do the pizza box so you can open it up and say there's wonderful pizza in there. You can do close to my heart because I'm telling you what's true.

[ 14 : 00 ] You can do a testimony. You can do the open Bible, which is the most important Bible because it prepares you to receive. And then he reads on national television, he reads Psalm 37 and calls James and all the world to trust in the Lord.

But how do we hold our Bibles? Do our Bibles bear the marks of someone living in it?

Do our Bibles bear the marks of someone living in it? They say, maybe a Spurgeon or maybe it's just they say.

I'll just say they say. A Bible, a person whose Bible is falling apart has a life that's not. Do we have a place, a plan, a pattern with this Bible?

I'm not trying to bring condemnation, but this is our friend. This is the word of God. Susanna Wesley famously would throw an apron over her head and sit in the kitchen.

[ 15 : 03 ] She had a small home. She'd throw the apron over her head, and that was her Bible time. And you dare not interrupt it. Do we have a pattern that even the kids would notice? Who do we consult?

The news? The social media? Or the Lord? The will of God. Jonathan Edwards said it like this.

Are we growing our Bibles? He said, resolve to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently as that I may find and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same.

We must not ride on last year's coattails. We need the word. But, you know, the Scriptures don't tell us all we need to know about the word of God, do they?

They don't tell us who to marry. I didn't get a word. There's no you shall marry Kim when in the Bible. They don't tell us where to live, who to marry, what to do for work, where to work, how to eat, what to eat.

[16:10] So how do we really know the will of God? And I want to step back just for a moment, then we'll keep moving. But, you know, the Scriptures, they present the will of God in two ways. They present it in precept, the will of God in precept.

And that's just what I've been talking about. That's the word of God. That's everything God loves and everything God hates and everything God wants to have in the world. So when we pray, Lord, let your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, we're praying for this to happen, for people to walk in light of God's precepts, his commands.

Does this make sense? So there's a will of God in precept. But our lives and history unfold according to the will of God in decree. So there's precept, preceptive, and there's decree.

All things work together according to the counsel of his will. Ephesians 1 says, Nothing happens in the earth apart from the will of his decree or command. Many other plans are the mind of a man, but it's the purpose of the Lord that will stand.

Man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps. I think Romans 12 puts these together very wonderfully. If you'll look there.

[17:25] It says, Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. I think that, just hold that up there for a minute.

It puts them together because don't be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewal of your mind, that is, renewing your mind by the word of God, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God in your life, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

So how does this work in real life? And one of my friends said, You know, when we're trying to find the will of God, we're not waiting for an open door. We're not waiting for a funny feeling or a liver shiver or something like that, or an audible voice of God for the bold or the inaudible voice of God, which I don't even know what that means, for the non-bold.

You know, one friend told me, though, that finally the will of God is like trying to decide whether to marry a girl. That's something I can relate to. First off, it would say study the scriptures.

Study the objective word of God. Objectively for me, is the person a she? Would be the first thing there. Is she a Christian? Would be the second.

[18:31] Thing there when you're studying the Christian. Does she love what God loves and hate what God hates? Obviously, I concluded some things about Kim wonderfully there. And then secondly, maybe study other objective biblical measures.

So you're kind of, you're thinking objectively, moving to subjectively. So you're thinking of things like, Does she possess the fruit of godliness? Do counselors in your life encourage you to marry her?

Is she committed to the local church? Does her vision of life align with yours? So you're staying a little bit more subjective, but mainly objective.

And then you move to your heart and you say, Well, do I love her? You know, I mean, do I want to chase her? Do I want to give all that I am and all that I have to her? And if it clicks out of those three or checks all those three, then just do it.

Don't wait on anything else. Just do it. Safest place in the world is the will of God. In the scripture, then our careful steps in these ways. Secondly, storm shipwrecks and snakebites seek to undo the will of God.

[ 19 : 35 ] Storm shipwrecks and snakebites seek to undo the will of God. And these verses are action-packed. After being found not guilty in Jerusalem in Caesarea, Paul appeals to Rome to be tried before Caesar.

And these verses unfold the journey there. If you notice, when we went through, the use of we throughout. So Luke is with Paul. Everything he sees, everything that's in these verses is what he saw with Paul and reports to us.

And these stories are really patterned after sea tales. You know, you might have read The Odyssey or something like that. A sea tale that captures the wonder. Maybe Master and Commander by Patrick O'Brien or something like that.

These are these sea tales. And so I just want to recap the trip briefly. But they set out from Caesarea to Italy. Look at 27, verse 4. Putting out to the sea. The winds, though, were against them.

Verse 27, verse 7. We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty as the wind did not allow us to go further. So they're meeting difficulty immediately. Verse 8. Coasting along with difficulty.

[ 20 : 39 ] Again, they land on the south side of Crete, which is where we began reading. In a town they stayed for several days. And winter was approaching. And so Paul said, don't go.

That's what he meant. Don't go because there will be loss of life. Look down there in verse 10. He says, sir, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss.

Not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our life. Will they sail anyway? And the storm gets worse. Look in verse 14. But soon a tempestuous wind called a northeaster came upon him, struck down.

Verse 18. Violently storm-tossed. They began the next day to throw out the cargo in fighting the storm. And then they say, all hope is lost, seeing neither sun nor stars for many days.

So the idea was that's how they navigated. Before Google, they navigated by the stars and the sun. And so they were lost. And they must look then to someone else.

[ 21 : 40 ] And the Lord speaks to Paul. And that's what we read. The Lord said, don't worry. You're going to Rome and everybody on the ship is going with you. And then there's a shipwreck. And if that weren't enough, then they land on Malta.

And Paul's bitten by a viper. And after three months later, they sail to Rome. Now, why all this detail? Two reasons.

The first is to prove that Paul is innocent before God. Now, if you were here a couple weeks ago, all the trials before that we discussed, in the two weeks before Roman rulers and before the Jewish rulers, proved that he was innocent before men.

But these verses prove that he was innocent before God. So it's very common, or it's a common belief in pagan beliefs, that bad things happen to bad people and prove that they're bad people.

Now, if you remember Jonah last summer, we studied that. When Jonah was on the boat and this storm fell upon him, they'd say, what did you do, man? Because the storm was coming. Does that make sense? So the bad things were happening to bad people to prove they were bad people.

[ 22 : 48 ] And so that's what they thought was happening with Paul. But throughout these verses, bad things happen to Paul, not to prove he's bad, but to prove he's good when God delivers him.

Does that make sense? So God foils the plan of the wind. That's why I was pointing out all that wind. He foils the plan of the wind, which is uncontrollable to humans to rescue Paul.

God foils the plans of the sailors who intend to leave Paul and the other prisoners on the ship at the peril of the storm. God foils the plans of the soldiers who intend to kill all the prisoners after the shipwreck.

God foils the plans of the snake who bites him. God proves Paul's innocent. That's the point of all this. I love the details of the snake. I mean, maybe it's just the fear of the snake that captures all of us.

But, you know, you just think, oh, he made it through the storm. He made it through the shipwreck. And now he's going to be bitten by a snake. God's man's going to be taken out. And did you notice what the islanders said?

[ 23 : 49 ] No doubt this man is a murderer. That proves what I'm trying to say. This bad thing's happened to him. He's escaped justice for a little while. But now justice bites back, pun intended.

Though he escaped the sea, justice that Luke put in there for a very specific reason has not allowed him to live. And then Paul does this true Chuck Norris thing and just shakes off the snake, you know.

Probably shriveled up and died, you know. Most people die by a snake, but the snake dies when he bites Paul. Paul is innocent before God. But it's also to prove to us that nothing in this world can undo what God has promised.

Nothing in this world can undo what God has promised. All this, these three things, the storm, the shipwreck, the snake bite, are meant to signify the worst life could throw at us.

Because they were the worst in the ancient world. The sea was feared historically, not for its greatness. Now we go to the sea and we say, man, it's just amazingly huge. It was feared not for that, but for its unpredictableness.

[ 25 : 02 ] For the ways its waves got huge and being lost at sea. Shipwrecked before the days of Coast Guard and rescue missions meant only one thing.

The loss of the ship and death. So that's why Paul says in Timothy that many have made shipwreck of their faith. Not that they made it through, but that their faith died.

And the snake, is there any creature we fear more? So what God's trying to say is that nothing in this world can undo what he's promised. Not cancer. Not job loss.

Not slander. Not the devil. Not besetting sins. Not failure. Not storms. Not national calamities. Nothing. But it doesn't come easy.

That type of security doesn't come easy. It reminds me of Lucy asking Aslan, who represents the Christ and the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, is he safe?

[ 26 : 11 ] Is he safe? No, Lucy. He's not safe. But he's good. Every follower of Christ has to look down the barrel at that.

He's good. Nothing in this world can undo what he promised, but many things will try. Many things will push us to the brink. And seek to undo the promises that he's made for good.

Count the cost. Jesus said, no one who's not worthy, willing to lose brothers or sisters or children or houses or lands or anything else is worthy of me.

Reminds me of Ernest Shackleton. You've probably read about his journeys to Australia. He posted his advertisement all throughout town.

He said, men wanted for hazardous journey, low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness, safe return, doubtful.

[ 27 : 21 ] Honor and recognition in the event of success. That's why Paul said, I don't count my life of any value nor as precious as myself.

Only I may finish my course in ministry I've received in the Lord Jesus. Because he counted the cost. But don't be confused. The hardships are not because he's cruel. He's not safe.

But he's not cruel. The hardships come because our hearts must be weaned from worldly things. And because he's good and he knows better and is working something more wonderful than we can see.

This is what makes us most afraid. This is why most folks leave Christ. No one leaves Christ over an argument regardless of what they say to you. But sadly, many leave because something so bad has happened which they think nothing good could come from.

Is he safe? No. But he's good. Safety and security doesn't come from eliminating every threat and silencing every fear. Safety and security comes from giving yourself to someone bigger and scarier than all your fears.

[ 28 : 31 ] Who promises that not one hair on your head will perish apart from his commands. John Piper just says it wonderfully in this quote. The life of the godly is not an interstate through Nebraska, but a state road through the Blue Ridge Mountains of Tennessee.

And we all said amen. There are rock slides and precipices and dark mist and bears and slippery curves and hairpin turns that make you go backward in order to go forward.

But all along this hazardous twisted road that doesn't let you see very far ahead, there are frequent signs that say the best is yet to come. The best is yet to come.

And all the perplexing turns in our lives are going somewhere good. They don't lead off a cliff. In all the setbacks of our lives as believers, God is plotting for joy.

Nothing can undo what God has promised. Safest place in the world is the will of God. Point three, submitting to the will of God supplies peace, provision, and purpose.

[ 29 : 34 ] Submitting to the will of God provides peace, provision, and purpose. A couple of Ps for you alliteration people. You know, it's hard not to be stunned by the fruit of submitting to the will of God in this chapter.

At first, Paul does seem a bit agitated. And I can't defend that. I don't have enough time for that. But he appeals for the sailors to delay the journey. So he's worried about this, right?

But then when the angel appears to him, he's peacefully confident that God will do what he's promised. It's divine necessity. And he will do it. Look down at verse 31. So much so that he tells these men to try to jump off the ship and leave them to the peril of the storm.

Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved. Reminds us of Noah and his ark. Unless you stay in the ship, you cannot be saved. So he was certain and it paid off.

Whereas Jonah's presence in the boat threatened to kill everyone, Paul's presence brought salvation to every one of them. And Luke makes special mention of this.

[ 30 : 36 ] Look down at verse 37 of chapter 27. There were in all 276 persons on the ship. Luke is just... Now, that's not large according to those times.

So it's not like a crazy number. But Luke is noting that God is faithful to his promise. Look in verse 44. He says, When they had the shipwrecked, the rest went on planks or on pieces of the ship.



And so it was that all were brought safely to land. That's the same word for salvation. All were saved from the storm. Even the understated description, the snake bite, seems to underline this peaceful confidence.

Paul's confident in the Lord. Bite me, hang on me, but you will not kill me. I just love that. Not that I could do it. You know, but so he's peacefully confident.

Along with deliverance, the Lord provides for his every need. It seems Paul's left to the mercy of soldiers, but really he's in the good hands of the Almighty God.

[ 31 : 44 ] Same place you are. The Lord provides abundantly. The Lord sends Julius, who takes a special liking to Paul.

He treats him kindly. The centurion saves his life when the soldiers plan to kill him. The islanders on Malta show unusual kindness. Kindling a fire, welcoming them, giving them all that they need.

The chief man on the island receives him, entertains him hospitably, and he heals many. And as they begin to leave, they honor him greatly. We're meant to see this as a contrast. Whereas the Jewish people all throughout the book of Acts have been running Paul out of town.

These islanders, these pagan islanders, greet him warmly. It's the Lord who's behind. You don't welcome foreigners in those days.

That's just what the Lord does when we submit completely to him. He loves to provide in ways that we can't imagine. We talked about it last week, but I think what Paul's living out is what one author calls the manna principle.

[ 32 : 51 ] We talked about give us this day our daily bread, much like manna. Ed Welch describes it like this, which is a word in season for us. Take as much as you want, but don't keep even a crumb for tomorrow.

That's what God told them when they received manna. In various forms, this will become God's plan for human life. It will become God's plan for your life.

God's strategy is to give us enough for today, and then, when tomorrow comes, to give us enough for that day too. Fears and worries live in the future, trying to assure a good outcome in a potentially hard situation.

The last thing they want to do is trust anyone, God included. To thwart this tendency toward independence, God only gives us what we need when we need it.

The emerging idea is that he wants us to trust him for the future, rather than our self-protective plans. I think Paul shifted from self-protection, which is our default mode after Adam, to trust.

[ 34 : 06 ] From independence to dependence. God makes the same promise to you, never seen the righteous go hungry. God promised to provide every need for you, according to the riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

I must never leave you nor forsake you. When my anxious thoughts are many, your consolations cure my soul. That's the way the Christian is to live. He provides for every need. Along the way, the Lord fills Paul's days with purpose.

I just find this so interesting. Life has gone sideways. You know, Paul is in this terrible storm, shipwreck, you name it, viper time.

And he sees purpose. He sees the purpose of God. How many days was he on the ship? They estimate five, six months total.

How miserable were the conditions? How easy would it have been to give in to despair and discontentment? But he submits to the will of God. And do you see what happened?

[ 35 : 10 ] I mean, you could just read this chapter again, and we can't do it right now. But, you know, he counseled them not to take the journey, and they dismiss it. But before long, he's the one they all look to. Paul just must have this incredible personality, such that he's one of the prisoners, and everybody's taking his orders by the end of it.

He encourages them. He assures them none of them are going to die. He leads them. He warns them. He feeds them. He breaks the bread and says, eat. The Lord's going to provide for you. He prays for them. He promised them not one hair will perish.

Then when he gets on the island, he keeps working. He visits. He prays. He heals. He helps all who come to him. He might be bound. The Word of God's not bound through him. He's helping these people, often submitting completely to the Lord.

And your station in life opens up endless possibilities. But when you protect and hold on to your plans, it often goes poorly.

The safest place in the world is the will of God and submitting ourselves completely to him. So have you done it? Have you submitted your life completely to the Lord?

[ 36 : 20 ] Have you refused to live according to your own wisdom? Have you refused to keep your life under your control? Are you all in?

Or checking Zillow at night? Are you holding anything back? Are you willing to follow him even if he never gives you what you want? If it's not scary to you, or if it was never scary to you, then I don't think you've done it.

This is the Almighty God. Sorry, I love C.S. Lewis.

Now, I've told this story before, but I think it's so perfect for this moment. But talk about Jill, who comes along in the silver chair, comes along and finds herself in the presence of Aslan.

Finds herself in a world that she doesn't know, in the world of Narnia, and thirsty, telling about her encounter with Aslan. And when she's walking along, she finds this side of water, and I quote, but although the side of water made her feel ten times thirstier than before, she didn't rush forward and drink.

[ 37 : 41 ] She stood still, as if she had been turned to stone. Like when you saw a snake or a mouse run across the house. And she had a very good reason.

Just on the other side of the storm lay the lion. And finally, the lion spoke to her and said, if you're thirsty, you may drink. They were the first words she had heard.

She wondered what to do. And then the voice said again, if you are thirsty, come and drink. And she says, this voice, it was unlike any other voice.

First, it was from a talking lion, you know. And she had seen his lips move this time. So she was, sir, it was a lion. But the voice was not like a man's at all. It was deeper and wilder and stronger, a sort of heavy, golden voice.

It did not make her any less frightened than she was before, but it made her frightened in a different way. Are you not thirsty? Said the lion. I'm dying of thirst.

[ 38 : 47 ] Said Jill, then drink. Said the lion. May I, could I, would you mind going away while I drink? Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl.

Will you promise not to do anything to me if I do come? Said Jill. I make no promise. I make no promise. Said the lion. Do you eat girls?

Said Jill. I've swallowed up girls and boys and women and men and kings and emperors and cities and realms, said the lion. I dare not come and drink, said Jill.

Then you'll die of thirst, said the lion. There's no other stream to go look for.

She says. Or he writes. It was the worst thing she had ever had to do. But she went forward to the stream, knelt down and began scooping up water in her hand.

[ 39 : 55 ] It was the coldest, most refreshing water she'd ever tasted. You didn't need to drink much of it for it quenched your thirst at once. She got up and stood there with her lips still wet from drinking.

Come here, said the lion. And she had to. I think there's something similar to coming to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's a sense in which you take your hands off the wheel.

And you forfeit over your life. You say, Lord, come what may, I'll follow you to the end.  
Come what may, I'll confess your name to the end.

Come what may, you will not find me doubting you or turning from you. Yeah, obviously coming to Christ first means finding life in him.

[ 41 : 03 ] That's the life that we offer through the gospel. True joy, true freedom, true deliverance from our greatest problem, which is our sin and alienation from God. And so the man Christ Jesus was put forward in our place, but following him doesn't merely mean believing in something he said, but becoming like him in the way he lived.

And following him all the way to the end. The safest place in the world is the will of God. God, Jesus Christ.

You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at [trinitygraceathens.com](http://trinitygraceathens.com).

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