

The Shipwreck

Acts 27:27-44

The “shipwreck” metaphor...

The Finest Hours, a movie based on a true shipwreck story.

Many of us have experienced figurative shipwrecks. You may be in the middle of one right now. Shipwrecks, in any and every form, are terrible and often tragic. And whether it is the *Pendleton* in the Atlantic or the *Alexandrian* in the Mediterranean, the metaphor applies.

The stages of Paul’s and his mates’ unfolding crisis at sea reminds me of the stages of our unfolding crises. Obviously, the circumstances are very different, but **the stages** are very much alike. Let’s watch together the shipwreck of the *Alexandrian* and see if we can relate. Whether it is Paul’s shipwreck or our “shipwrecks,” oftentimes, these are...

The stages of an unfolding crisis:

1. We pray for _____ (27-29).

We may be a long way from the light at the end of our “tunnel,” but in the middle of crisis we pray for the light. Even unbelievers find themselves praying for day: **Verses 27-29**.

Even at dark midnight, the seasoned sailors sensed that they were approaching land. Which, by the way, is most providential. If you take the sovereign hand of God out of it, what are the _____ of that tiny ship finding tiny land in the vast open waters of the great sea? Pretty close to zero. But what about the sovereignty? In this case, 100% certain! As you look on the map, Paul’s ship is providentially driven right on line with the small islands of Malta. It’s most reassuring to know that in the middle of a great storm that leads to shipwreck, that God hasn’t abandoned His own. Jesus is always and forever in your boat.

Some background info: A fathom is about _____-feet, so they dropped a sounding rope that’s knotted every fathom with a lead weight on the end. And the first sounding was twenty fathoms, about 120 feet. A little farther along, they took another sounding and found

they were at fifteen fathoms, about 90 feet. So full of fear that they would crash on jagged, deadly rocks, “they let down four anchors from the stern” to slow the speed of the ship and prayed that day would come *before* a massive ship wreck in the middle of the night.

In the middle of a great storm, night is always hardest. In our great ordeal, when the lights went off and our heads hit the pillow, darkness encompassed us. So we prayed for light. “Lord Jesus, somehow, someway, get us through the night, and then through another day.” And we longed especially for the great ordeal to break eternally into light.

2. We seek to _____ (30).

These sailors have *no intention* to lay out anchors. They have *every intention* to attempt an escape. Knowing the extreme danger of being on board a ship in the grip of powerful waves that are rapidly pushing them toward a rocky coast, they decide to abandon ship and take their *chance* on board the lifeboat. It was an act of selfishness.

But it was also an act of _____. In verse 24, when all aboard, except maybe Paul, abandoned all hope of survival, God’s angel came to the apostle and told him to not to be afraid, that he and all of his 275 shipmates would make it to Rome alive. And Paul believed God. But these hardened mariners don’t believe, so they take matters into their own hands and try to escape. That’s not unusual. When human beings, even saved ones, are in the storm of their lives that’s carrying them toward the rocks of despair, it’s not unusual to seek a way of escape.

But people of great faith in a great God who promised much trouble this side of heaven never give up on God. They _____ with God. Perhaps early they were looking for an escape by attempting to take things into their own hands. But then comes the time when they simply stay with God, and with Spirit-inspired grit, they walk through the pain.

3. We stay in the _____ (31-32).

Julius the centurion didn’t listen to Paul earlier when **the dangerous decision** was made. He’s listening to him now, ordering his men to cut the lines. And there it goes, drifting out to sea... Now, even those who were relying on themselves to be saved, could only rely on God for deliverance. That’s not a bad place to be in. It’s better to choose by

_____ to stay in the ship, instead of being forced to stay because all options are now off the table.

One of the great temptations in the midst of an unfolding crisis is to abandon ship. To give up on God. To trust your eyesight to the point of disbelief, rather than to trust your insight of faith, choosing to believe with all your heart and mind that God will make a way where there seems to be no way. *So no matter what, stay in God's ship!*

4. We find _____ (33-38).

Verse 37: An ancient description of an Alexandrian grain ship: " _____ feet long... Over 45 feet wide... And 44 feet deep."

Verses 33-38: In this time of crisis, Paul's qualities to lead well rise to the top, and because of his leadership, everyone felt much better! When good and godly leaders lead in a time of crisis, because of their good and godly leadership, everyone feels _____. Everyone is encouraged. Everyone one lightens up when good and godly leaders lead. What a huge difference it made having Paul on this ship.

But when bad leaders lead, poor leaders, proud, arrogant leaders, leaders who are not fair, not good, not kind... When they lead in the time of crisis, everyone feels worse. Discouragement sets in. What a difference just one lead bad man or woman makes on your ship.

5. We make it to _____ (39-44).

The soldiers were about to kill all the prisoners because Roman law held them accountable for their escape, and would make the soldiers pay the escaped prisoners' penalties. So once again, Paul's presence saved the day! But, providentially, a compassionate centurion was assigned to take the prisoners to Rome. And Julius respected Paul's character and leadership. And he recognized that they all were still alive because of Paul, and wanting to save him, he ordered his men to stand down.

And then God, in His providence, brought them all safely to shore. And I believe God does the same thing for His godly, faithful children. Through many trials and tribulations we must pass, but we are providentially brought to safety. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound... Through

many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come. 'Tis grace hath brought be safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

If we walk by faith, not by sight, we will more than survive our shipwrecks—we will make it safely to the other side. The other side might mean pleasant years of living for Jesus. The other side might be burdensome but productive lives lived for Jesus. Or the other side might be the way of all who have gone home to Jesus before us. Their shipwrecks providentially took them to the safety of heaven.

One way or another, **our stages of an unfolding crisis** that leads to shipwreck will look like this: We will pray for the light of day. We are human, so we will seek to escape. But we will stay in the ship with Jesus and each other. Along the way we'll find encouragement from God and godly leadership. Then at last we will make to safety on the other side.

The dawn will break...

It will break into sheer light, and we will see the Son! And that is the thing to hold onto. As His beloved children, we're flying toward the Son, always and forever, through many tribulations, into the Son!