

A Godly Man Shipwrecked

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In Acts 27, Luke records an interesting narrative that adds insight into and lessons from Paul. Peter remarks in **1 Peter 2:12**, “*having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*”

Paul appealed to Caesar (**25:11**), and was later placed into the hands of Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment (**27:1**), to sail for Italy. Paul, we’re told, was one of several prisoners under the watchful eye of Julius, but it appears that he was treated more favorably than the rest (**27:3**). Paul’s good conduct won Julius over.

The journey began with difficulty (**verse 8**), and the timing did not present favorable conditions for the rest of the trip. Luke mentions a Fast in **27:9**, and this appears to date the trip somewhere around the seventh month and the Day of Atonement. It was generally understood that from that point (our September/October) to the end of March/April, sailing conditions were not favorable. Beyond this, Paul appears to have received special knowledge regarding the outcome of sailing, saying, “*men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss*” (**27:10**). Consider the remarkable nature of Paul’s presentation. Paul was a prisoner. Who would listen to a prisoner? Although the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsmen (**verse 11**), it seems that he listened willingly to the words of Paul. Paul was different because his honorable character continued to make its godly impact.

Initially, the ship experienced exceptional conditions (**verse 13**). Very soon, though, the perceptions of Paul proved true. A great storm came upon them (**verse 14**), and they quickly lost all sense of control (**verse 15**). Fear prevailed (**verse 17**). They had no concept of direction (**verse 20**). The situation was without hope: “*all hope that we would be saved was finally given up*” (**27:20**).

At this moment, Paul stands up. The first words out of his mouth are, “*men, you should have listened to me.*” If he had stopped there, he wouldn’t have been much more than an annoyance. Folks who live in hindsight without adding insight to the future only pile on the misery. That wasn’t Paul’s intention, though. In **verses 22** through **26**, he gives them hope. He used his truthful words from before to bring courage to a frightened crew. He wanted them to trust his vision from God that not only would Paul make it to Caesar, but all of the individuals on the ship would also be saved for Paul’s sake. God was going to be able, through one man’s character, to save 276 men.

Our character in this world impacts the salvation of others. Jesus tells us,

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (**Matthew 5:14-16**).

Notice how Paul accomplished this with the hundreds who did not know or believe in God as Paul did. **Acts 27:25**, “*therefore, take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told to me.*” He expressed his faith for all to see, explaining that through God, they would find hope. We live in a downtrodden world where men are seeking every cure for the flesh that ails them. Their ship is sinking, and we know the One who can save them.

After two full weeks amid the storm (**verse 27**), they began to sense land, just as Paul had assured (**verse 26**). The sailors did what they could to keep the ship from running aground (**verse 29**), but they could sense that this wasn’t going to end well for the ship. They tried to sneak away on the ship’s boat (**verse 30**). However, Paul knew their plan and told the centurion they had to stay on the ship if they wanted to be saved. These were experienced sailors, and Paul’s words would not have made logical sense. Who wouldn’t abandon the ship and seek for shore? However, they wisely headed the advice and cut the skiff from the ship. Again, Paul’s honorable character helped these men obey God. Paul later writes in **Philippians 2:14-15**,

do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

Paul then encourages the men to eat. He takes the bread and thanks God. Place yourselves in the position of the soldiers and sailors on this ship. Here is a prisoner praising God during this horrific situation. Wouldn't it have been one more goad to wonder about this God Paul serves? Notice **verse 36**, *"then they were all encouraged."* Paul's example encouraged the people. When we stand faithful and thankful to God through difficulties in our lives, we encourage those around us. They see our resolve and faith. They see God's love expressed to us and through us.

Acts 27 ends with this sentence, *"and so it was that they all escaped safely to land."* Paul's faithfulness and godly character allowed God to prove himself before 275 other witnesses. Our actions and words directly impact the perception this world has of God. Therefore, Paul writes in **Romans 12:21**, *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* Our good toward others can and will overcome evil in this world. And for those with eyes to see, it will allow them the chance to view God and have the hopeful light of life illuminated before them.

May the Lord allow, through our submission to him, others to come to know the great everlasting hope we have though the world around us is passing away!