

Shipwreck to Salvation

Week 36: Sept 3-9 – *Acts 27, 28; Ephesians 1, 2*

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Helpful Resources

Map of Paul's Missionary Journeys

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

In our reading this week, we finished the book of *Acts* and started Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In 54 verses, Luke (the author and historian of *Acts*) recorded Paul's adventures across the Mediterranean Sea and eventual shipwreck on the island of Malta. Why did Luke spend so much time covering that event? Was it really that significant? He thought it was important, for God gave Paul opportunities to minister to the people involved.

However, there's more to the story. The shipwreck in *Acts 27* is a picture of salvation, full of symbolism, and the symbolism becomes clearer when viewed in light of *Ephesians 2:1-10*. In this review, let's take a closer look at Paul's shipwreck and its connection to what God has done for us in salvation. In the process, we will reinforce Paul's teaching to the Ephesians.

- Symbols in the Shipwreck
 1. **Prisoners to Be Judged** (*Acts 27:1*): Paul and other prisoners were going to Rome for judgment. We, too, will stand before God one day for judgment (*Rom. 14:12; Heb. 9:27*).
 2. **Loss of Life** (*Acts 27:10*): Paul perceived that their journey would end badly for them. Likewise, apart from salvation in Christ, our lives will be lost (*Jn. 15:6*).
 3. **Helpless** (*Acts 27:15*): The ship was caught up in the wind, and the men "gave way to it." Though we think we are in control of life, we are not. We are helpless before God.
 4. **Saving Ourselves** (*Acts 27:18, 19, 30-32*): The sailors attempted to save themselves and the ship by throwing things overboard and lightening their load. When that didn't work, they planned to escape in a boat. Paul told them, "Unless they remain in the ship, they cannot be saved." We cannot save ourselves. We are completely at God's mercy.
 5. **Hopeless** (*Acts 27:20*): Luke wrote, "No small storm was assailing us, and from then on, all hope of our being saved was abandoned." Apart from Christ, we are hopeless.
 6. **Disobedience** (*Acts 27:21*): Paul reminded everyone on board that they should've listened to him. It was because they discarded his words that they were in the situation. It is our sin and disobedience, our rejection of God and His words, that condemn us.
 7. **All Those Sailing with You** (*Acts 27:22-24, 44*): God told Paul that no one with him would be lost. Christ, too, was told that all those given to him would be saved (*Jn. 6:39*).
 8. **Faith** (*Acts 27:25*): At some point, the men on board the ship had to trust Paul at his word. We, too, can only be saved if we put our faith in Christ to do what He says He'll do.

9. **Destroy the Ship** (*Acts 27:26*): Paul told everyone on board that to save themselves from their situation, they must destroy the ship. The old self must be destroyed so that the new self can emerge (*2 Cor. 5:17*).
 10. **Not a Hair Will Perish** (*Acts 27:33, 34*): Paul promised everyone that not even a hair would perish. Those who trust Christ with their soul will not perish but live forever.
 11. **Breaking of Bread** (*Acts 27:35*): Paul gave thanks, broke bread, and fed the men on board. Jesus did the same in the upper room on the last night with His disciples.
 12. **Kill Them** (*Acts 27:42, 43*): In a desperate move, the soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so no one would escape. The enemy (Satan) does not want anyone to escape his control, but Christ speaks on their behalf and delivers them from Satan's domain.
 13. **The Serpent** (*Acts 28:1-5*): After landing safely on the island (salvation), a snake bites Paul, but Paul throws him in the fire. Though Satan persecutes the Church, he will eventually be destroyed, cast in the fire of hell (*Rev. 20:10*).
- Encouragement from *Ephesians 2:1-10*

After reading of Paul's shipwreck and its connection to our salvation, it was timely to read *Ephesians 2*. Note many similarities between the passages.

"You were dead in your trespasses and sins. You formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. You too lived in the lusts of the flesh... and by nature were children of wrath. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love... even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.

"For by grace have you been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

We were once on a lost ship, but in His mercy, God has delivered us from our helplessness, hopelessness, and certain death, by His power and not our own, to live with Him forever. Now, we get to participate with the Lord in bringing others safely to shore.

The Bottom Line

Christ has rescued us from a hopeless situation, to give us new life and a new mission.

Questions to Consider

1. How did you feel about the ending of *Acts*? Would you have written it differently?
2. The letter of *Ephesians* has been called a mini-Romans. What similarities do you see?
3. Re-read *Ephesians 1:3-14*. Of the eleven spiritual blessings that Paul listed, which one is the most encouraging to you? For which are you most thankful? Explain why.
4. Re-read *Ephesians 2:10*. What does Paul mean that we are God's workmanship or masterpiece. What are the implications of such a statement?