

Sail On

Trusting God When the Storm Won't Stop

Acts 27:1–44

Focus: Paul survives a raging storm at sea by clinging to God's word and guiding others through chaos. This study teaches that even when you are not the captain, you can lead through faith. Storms may tear the ship apart, but God will bring you through, on pieces if necessary.

I. Why This Study?

A. Objective:

1. To explore Paul's leadership in crisis while being a prisoner on a doomed ship
2. To highlight the sustaining power of God's promises in prolonged uncertainty
3. To encourage believers to serve, lead, and trust in storms they cannot control

B. Relevance:

1. Life often places us in situations where we are not in charge but still responsible
2. Many people feel tossed about by economic, social, or personal storms they did not cause
3. This passage affirms that faith does not require control to be effective, and leadership is not limited to titles or position

II. Context of Acts 27:1–44

1. Paul is en route to Rome as a _____ under Roman custody.
2. Julius, a centurion of the Imperial Regiment, is responsible for his transport.
3. They board a grain ship sailing from Alexandria, bound for Italy. The voyage grows increasingly dangerous due to the late season.
4. Paul warns the crew of impending disaster, but his warning is ignored in favor of the pilot's _____ and the shipowner's _____.
5. As the storm hits with hurricane force, known as a Euroclydon, the ship is battered for days.
6. The crew begins to despair.

7. In the midst of it all, Paul receives a word from God through an angelic visitation: no life will be _____, though the ship will be destroyed.
8. Paul shares this word, encourages everyone to eat, and ultimately guides all 276 people on board to safety as the ship breaks apart and they reach the shore on pieces.

B. Key Takeaway:

You do not have to be in charge to be _____. God can use your _____, _____, and _____ to bring calm to chaos. When the storm will not stop, trust the promise that you will survive.

III. What Can We Learn from Paul in the Storm?

A. God Can Speak Through You Even When You Have No Authority (vv. 1–12)

1. Paul is a prisoner, yet he still speaks with _____ authority.
2. His warning in verse 10 uses the Greek verb *theoreo*, meaning to perceive or discern with insight.
3. Though ignored, Paul’s discernment proves _____.
4. The professionals relied on data and experience, but Paul relied on _____.
5. Leadership in storms is not about rank but _____.
6. As theologian Lesslie Newbigin wrote, “The true authority of the church is the authority of the one who serves.”
7. You do not need a pulpit, title, or platform to offer wisdom. You only need ears that hear God and a heart willing to speak.

B. Panic Does Not Disqualify You from Being Used by God (vv. 13–20)

1. When the storm hits, everyone panics.
2. The Greek word *cheimonos* for storm implies a violent winter wind, more than just a heavy rain.
3. The ship is driven along uncontrollably. The sailors try various strategies—undergirding the ship with ropes, throwing cargo overboard, even abandoning ship—but nothing works.
4. Eventually, Luke writes, “All hope that we would be saved was disappearing.”
5. The presence of _____ does not equal the absence of _____. Spiritual maturity is not measured by _____ detachment but by returning to trust after fear has done its work.
6. Dr. Thema Bryant reminds us, “Healing is not perfection. It is returning again and again to what grounds you.”

C. God's Word Is Your Anchor in Prolonged Chaos (vv. 21–26)

1. After days without food or direction, Paul stands and speaks a word from God.
2. An angel appears to him and says, "Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar." The Greek verb *dei* (it is necessary) signifies divine necessity.
3. Paul's survival is not based on his swimming ability or the crew's skill, but on divine purpose.
4. Paul tells the crew, "Take courage, for I believe God that it will be exactly as I have been told."
5. The word *pisteuo*, to believe or trust, emphasizes firm conviction. What Paul believed is what he spoke.
6. In seasons of swirling uncertainty, the promises of God are the only _____ that holds.
7. Mystical theologian John of the Cross once wrote, "Faith is the dark night through which we come to know the brilliance of God's promise."

D. You Can Lead Others to Strength in the Middle of the Storm (vv. 27–38)

1. As the ship is driven across the Adriatic Sea, Paul becomes the de facto leader.
2. He urges everyone to eat, reminding them they need strength for what is ahead. He blesses the food and breaks bread in front of them all.
3. The Greek phrasing mirrors Jesus at the Last Supper.
4. This moment becomes _____. Amid _____ and _____, Paul models _____ and _____.
5. Clinical psychologist Dr. Bruce Perry notes, "In times of threat, regulated people regulate others."
6. Paul's grounded trust steadies 275 other souls. In your workplace, family, or community, your _____ might be the stabilizing force for others adrift in fear.

E. The Ship May Break but the Promise Will Hold (vv. 39–44)

1. Eventually the ship runs aground and begins to break apart.
2. Soldiers plan to kill the prisoners to prevent escape, but God uses Julius the centurion to protect Paul.
3. Everyone reaches land safely. Some swim, others float on broken pieces of wood, but not one life is lost.
4. Your survival does not always look _____. Sometimes God delivers you on _____.

5. Your faith, your reputation, or your peace may feel fractured. Still, you arrive.
6. As spiritual director Ruth Haley Barton writes, “In the breaking, there is still enough grace to carry us to shore.”

IV. Scholars’ and Theological Insights on Leading in the Storm

- A. Lesslie Newbigin: “The church exists for the benefit of those who are not its members. Its authority is not dominance but service.”
- B. Dr. Thema Bryant: “Panic is human. Returning to peace is sacred.”
- C. John of the Cross: “To reach satisfaction in all, desire satisfaction in nothing. To come to possess all, desire to possess nothing.”
- D. Dr. Bruce Perry: “A regulated nervous system in one person can provide co-regulation for an entire group.”
- E. Ruth Haley Barton: “Strength is born in the silence of trusting what you cannot yet see.”
- F. Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “Being a Christian is less about cautiously avoiding sin than about courageously and actively doing God’s will.”

V. Prayer Focus

1. Pray for endurance during long and relentless storms
2. Ask God to use your voice and presence to bring peace to others
3. Thank God for promises that hold when everything else seems broken
4. Pray for discernment to lead well even when you are not in charge

VI. Key Takeaway

The storm may rage. The ship may break. But the word of God will stand. Even in seasons where you feel powerless, your faith can lead others. Trust that God will bring you through, even if the only thing left to hold on to is a piece of the promise.

VII. Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. When have you felt like you were in a storm beyond your control? How did you respond?
2. In what ways can you lead others through chaos, even if you do not have formal authority?
3. What promises from God have anchored you during uncertain seasons?
4. How do you discern when to speak up, like Paul did, even when others may not listen?
5. Who around you might need your steadiness to help them survive their storm?