



Navigating Through the Shipwrecks of Our Lives!



I want to share in this Bible Study some important Biblical secrets that have been carefully concealed just below the surface of the text. These secrets relate to shipwrecks, they teach us how to survive a shipwreck and perhaps even more importantly, how to avoid a shipwreck altogether! Perhaps most of you have never even been out to sea on a ship; nonetheless, I am not referring to literal shipwrecks. Instead, I am focusing upon those particularly difficult situations in life that threaten to cast us into the deep!

We will begin by having someone to read the entire 27th chapter of Acts. We are going to learn that The Apostle Paul suffered several shipwrecks during his lifetime; in fact he wrote, “Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, ***thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep***” (2 Cor 11:25). As part of his service to the Lord Paul was actually involved in three different shipwrecks! However, the Bible only records the event of Acts chapter 27.

We may ask, “Why? Why was the Apostle Paul even involved in a shipwreck in the first place?” Doesn’t God take care of his apostles? Why would an apostle suffer any shipwreck at all, let alone three different instances? We are going to learn that God can also use our shipwrecks for His purposes!

It is interesting to learn that Paul suggested in (1 Tim 1:19) that some Christians, “***have made shipwreck***” of their own faith. That passage indicates that Christians can suffer a shipwreck as a result of their own making! Obviously, Christians cause some of their own shipwrecks! But what about those situations where they are completely innocent and still suffer a shipwreck. Let me ask, “Have you ever felt that you



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have been part of a figurative shipwreck?"

Various forms of the word “ship” appear 24 different times in the Book of Acts. However, in the 27th chapter of Acts alone, the root of the word “ship” shows up eighteen different times! This clearly indicates that there is something extra special about the 27th chapter of Acts especially regarding ships and shipwrecks! Tonight we are going to study Acts chapter 27 in the context of the shipwrecks of our lives.

Even though Paul appealed his case to Caesar, he remained a prisoner of the Roman government. This means that somebody else (*a Roman centurion*) decided what Paul would do and where he would go, verse one of Acts 27 tells us that “they delivered Paul and certain *other prisoners* unto one named Julius, a centurion” who put him on the ship headed for Italy.

We are going to observe that sailing at that specific time was clearly against Paul’s better judgment; nevertheless, those circumstances were essentially out of his control. Notice, beginning with Acts 27:6, “6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and *he put us therein.*” We are going to read how Paul suffered a shipwreck while he was a prisoner on his way to Caesar! Paul did not wish to sail; nevertheless, he suffered shipwreck! What are the circumstances behind the various shipwrecks in your life? I am sure that we all have experienced shipwreck-like situations at some point in our lives! More importantly, it is possible, perhaps probable that we will be involved in shipwreck situations in our future! How will we navigate through that next shipwreck?

In order to be prepared, it would be wise for us to take a look at several factors that lead to Paul’s shipwreck. Perhaps we can learn Biblical truths from his experience that may help us to avoid shipwrecks altogether! Perhaps some of our future shipwrecks are going to be the product of our own making. However, as in the life of Paul, some shipwrecks happen completely outside of our control! (*I’m talking here about external factors over which we have very little if any influence.*) However, even in these circumstances, we have choices concerning the way that we react!

Let’s learn some specific lessons about shipwrecks from Paul’s experience on his voyage to Rome! There are at least three specific conditions revealed in the 27th chapter of the Book of Acts, which clearly led up to Paul’s shipwreck. Since these conditions have been preserved for us in the pages of Scripture, perhaps the Holy Spirit wants us to be aware of these conditions and avoid them in the first place. By doing so we may even steer clear of some future shipwrecks altogether. We should certainly anticipate that the devil plans to shipwreck our Christian progress in order to keep us from achieving our God-given destiny.

Impatience (*usually in the face of resistance*): “7 And *when we had sailed slowly many days*, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, *the wind not suffering us*, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; 8 And, *hardly passing it*, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea. (*Perhaps there is something in the name “the fair havens” which means, “Good Harbor!” When God leads us into a safe harbor, we probably should not allow*

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impatience to influence us to prematurely leave that safe harbor.) 9 ***Now when much time was spent***, and when sailing was now dangerous.” Notice also the beginning of verse 7, “And ***when we had sailed slowly many days***;” I don’t know about you, but most people in today’s microwave society don’t like slow sailing especially for long periods of time. Indeed, we must realize that Paul was not on a modern cruise ship designed for leisure; instead, he was on a small boat that held less than 300 people! I rather suspect that because of the waves and the wind, the whole company just wanted to break free from the natural opposing forces (*the wind*); notice that verse seven says, “***the wind not suffering us***.” Obviously, there was natural opposition or resistance to their progress. All too often, we Christians are anxious to arrive at our God-given destiny; and we get impatient! Sometimes, the contrary wind can be a message from God designed to slow us down. We clearly observe in Paul’s experience that impatience is one of the key conditions that definitely leads toward a shipwreck! Impatience usually causes us to get into the flesh and, “***they that are in the flesh cannot please God***” (Rom 8:8). So let’s note that the number one revealed condition in Acts 27 leading up to Paul’s shipwreck was impatience! Now, let’s notice what the next revealed condition is:

Not Listening to Godly Counsel: beginning with the end of verse 9, “***Paul admonished them***, 10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Paul perceived that their ship was going down; would you want to be on a doomed ship? 11 Nevertheless ***the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul***.” Here we have the owner of the ship (*the money man*) and presumably the captain of the ship. In the natural, both of these men should be the most knowledgeable concerning sailing the Mediterranean Sea especially during late fall! In the natural, we would want to believe especially those two men before any “man of the cloth!” The lesson is that the “knowledgeable” are not always those to whom we should listen! Paul was an apostle; he was obviously a man of God through whom a vast reservoir of godly counsel could have been garnered.

In point of fact, we shouldn’t expect that the centurion (*Paul’s guard*) would recognize the difference between a man of God and a man of the world; however, we Christians are seeking wisdom from the Bible and God does expect us to know the difference! We need to seek and listen carefully to the advice of men of God that the Lord brings across our path! We should especially listen to those that feed us from His Word!

We naturally understand that neither the owner, nor the centurion, nor the captain of the ship wanted to suffer the loss of a shipwreck! Nevertheless, because they did not seek godly counsel they suffered loss! We can use their example for our own admonition! From their disastrous experience we can learn to seek out and follow Godly counsel and thereby have the benefit of safety, “***Where no counsel is, the people fall***: but in the multitude of counsellors there is ***safety***” (Prov 11:14)!



Navigating Through the Shipwrecks of Our Lives!



Listening to godly counsel is not always easy; it takes courage for us to seek out and then to follow godly counsel! Most often, the **majority** will choose to do things differently. Notice verse twelve, “And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, **the more part advised to depart** thence also, (Here we find that the **vast majority** of people did not want to be inconvenienced; instead, they were in favor of sailing immediately despite Paul’s resistance!) if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.”

Despite the majority opinion to the contrary, sometimes we Christians must believe in faith that we have heard from God, and that we are going to do what we have heard from Him! It is a truism that one person with God is a majority! We must realize that Noah was the **only** man on the earth who could hear from God! God told him to build an ark! The majority around him probably continually chided him and reminded him that it had never once rained upon the earth! Nevertheless, Noah built the ark! So, the number two condition that leads toward shipwreck as revealed in Acts chapter 27 can be characterized as, “Not Listening to Godly Counsel!” Let’s look at the 3rd condition!

Being Moved by Circumstances: 13 And when the south wind **blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose**, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.” Circumstances often lie to us; they especially lie when satan is involved! You know the lie, “You don’t have to stop at Crete’ you can easily make it all the way to Rome!” We need to realize that circumstances are **never** an indication that God has given us clear sailing! You know circumstances: a good chance of advancement; a great opportunity; we are assured of getting large numbers; others have succeeded at this; etc. No matter how good they look, those circumstances often lie to us!

Neither can we believe the unpleasant circumstances, there are many Old Testament stories from which we can draw, let’s notice the special circumstances in the story from 2 Chron 20:12-17 concerning King Jehoshaphat, “O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for **we have no might against**



this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee (Have you ever been in this kind of a circumstance where you didn’t know what to do? All of us will get to this point some time in our lives!). 13 And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. 14 Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah . . . (skipping some words in that verse) came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; 15 And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, **Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great**



Navigating Through the Shipwrecks of Our Lives!



multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. (We need to learn which battles are ours and which battles are God's. We are only headed for hard times when we engage in battles that are not ours to fight! When I was in college I was an ROTC cadet, I studied battle strategies on a daily basis. If the US Army reserve studies battle strategy, you can be assured that your enemy has very specific strategies designed to work against you!) 16 To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. 17 **Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.**"

We must also remember that the enemy has strategies designed to bring us down! If he can get us to speak the wrong things or to fight amongst ourselves then we will get into the flesh and literally foster our own problems from that point forward! "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, (Husbands are not smarter than wives; Peter is talking here about God's ways! It is the husband's responsibility to avoid strife and confusion and keep the state of affairs focused upon God.) giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; **that your prayers be not hindered**" (1 Peter 3:7). The last part of that verse gives us the real key; regardless of whether or not we are married, during rough times, we don't want to get into strife with one another because our prayers **can be hindered**, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16). The devil **always** tries to get Christians into strife and confusion!

When we are moved by outward circumstances, deception usually can and will set in! Notice the outward circumstances that are revealed in Paul's experience, "13 And when the south wind blew softly, **supposing that they had obtained their purpose**" (It was not true, but we believed that it was true; it is during times like these that we get deceived!) In this instance the wind blew softly and they "supposed" that they had obtained their purposes! Like those who were influential in Paul's ship, we Christians can also be misled by natural circumstances! We must always remember that deception (*lying*) is one of the main strategies of the devil!

The third condition leading up to a shipwreck is "Being Moved by Circumstances!" Now, let's quickly review what we have learned so far about Paul's shipwreck; we have observed three primary conditions that were present and led up to his shipwreck (1) impatience; (2) not listening to Godly counsel; and (3) being moved by circumstances.

Up to this point we have observed conditions that generally are under our own control. Now, let's continue with Paul's experience and take note of what we can expect whenever we find ourselves in the proverbial storm at sea and the situation has gotten out of our control.

The first thing that we find is identified in verse 16, "when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, **we let her drive.**" They thought to themselves, "Oh well, Que sera, sera! What ever will be will be! We might, as well give it up; it is hopeless for us now!" Have you ever experienced a feeling of hopelessness while in your storms? We observe in Paul's experience that

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Navigating Through the Shipwrecks of Our Lives!



when things seemed to get to the worst point, they developed the attitude that they simply would let the ship drive! This is exactly one of the main strategies of the enemy; he wants us to simply give up and quit.

However, not long after completely giving up they had a major change of heart; so, they next decided to take things into their own hands, “17 Which when they had taken up, ***they used helps***, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.” Here we find that they returned to their skills in the natural and they did everything they knew from their past experience in order to ride out the storm! The scripture says, “they ***used helps***.” However, nothing worked for them! Likewise, it is common for us during a dreadful situation to try to take things into our own hands. Nevertheless, we usually discover that no matter what we attempt, we are unable to fix the problem.

So what did they do, they let go of everything that they had learned! Have you ever been in this kind of a position? There was a point in my Christian life when I thought everything that I was taught about God was wrong! As awful as it may sound, I considered throwing out the baby with the bathwater! When nothing seems to be working and we are so tired we don't know where to go or what to do, we just want give up! “18 And we ***being exceedingly tossed with a tempest***, the next day they lightened the ship (*In times like this, a person just wants to get rid of unnecessary baggage in hopes that this will solve the problem!*); 19 And the third day ***we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship***. 20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, ***all hope that we should be saved was then taken away***. All hope was lost; have you ever considered your situation to be absolutely hopeless?

Next, we discover that Paul (*the servant of Christ*) actually began to gain respect in the eyes of those that were on board with him; they were reminded that he had predicted the shipwreck in the first place, “21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ***ye should have hearkened unto me***, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. 22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for ***there shall be no loss of any man's life among you***, but of the ship.” Notice that Paul warned of great loss of life in verse ten, “not only of the lading and ship, ***but also of our lives***;” realize that Paul first warned that there was going to be loss of life! However, here Paul reveals in verse 22 that nobody would die! Something must have taken place between those two instances; what was it?

Notice what it says in verse 21, “But ***after long abstinence*** Paul stood forth in the midst of them;” What we discover is that Paul had been ***fasting and praying*** it was only then that something important changed in Paul; prayer and fasting was the circumstance that changed his situation! Now verse “23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, 24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; ***thou must be brought before Caesar***: (*Paul was given a word; he could not die and also stand before Caesar.*) and, lo, ***God hath given thee all them that sail with thee***” (*Paul must have also been involved in intercessory prayer for other people, the angel explained to him that God would give him their lives too!*) He had not been praying just for his life alone; the

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2/5/2008



Navigating Through the Shipwrecks of Our Lives!



angel's message implies and we can also conclude that he had been praying for the lives of those around him! It is certainly not a stretch to believe that he must have been in prayer for their lives! Likewise, when we go through trials, we must get involved in fasting and prayer not only for ourselves but for others who are also affected. As a result, God will not only save us, he will save those around us!

Now let's look at verse 25 and notice how Paul encouraged those around him, "Wherefore, sirs, **be of good cheer**: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. I have good news for you too! No matter what you have been through, Jesus knows and He is with you! Even though some things may seem to get worse at times, God is with you! He claims, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, **thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end**" (Jer 29:11). God has a destiny for each of us if we will just seek out His providence.

Now notice the turning point of the story! Continuing with verse 25, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast **upon a certain island**." God works His plan! He has a plan (*an expected outcome, a destiny if you will*) for each one of us! As we pay close attention, He will incrementally reveal His plan to us! Notice that they were to be cast upon a "**certain**" island! Now we must realize that they (*the ship owner and the captain*) had made decisions that led to a shipwreck; nonetheless, we see at this point that Jesus got involved and did not just send them to any island; instead, they were supposed to run aground at one specific place! We realize that God sent them to that specific place in order that they may save even more people. This is why it is so important that we keep our love walk intact. God wants us to be used for the good of all of his children. God saves us out of our circumstances in order that we can be used to help others out of their circumstances!

Now notice what happened even after all of this wonderful revelation from an angel. Things did not change immediately. Often during our problems, especially after getting a revelation that we are in God's will, we naturally expect that things will immediately change for the better! Nevertheless, notice Paul's state of affairs; "27 But when the **fourteenth** night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight (*Things always seem to get worse at midnight!*) the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; 28 And sounded, and found it **twenty fathoms**: and **when they had gone a little further**, they sounded again, and found it **fifteen fathoms**." It is almost natural for us to expect that once God spoke to Paul sunny skies and easy sailing would ensue! However, God did not send them easy sailing! Notice verse 27, "when the **fourteenth** night was come;" things got better, but only by degrees. Notice in verse 28 that the depth of the water was, "twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms." Yes, things got better but only by degrees, not all at once!

Let's just read through to the end of Paul's shipwreck; and then we will consider the overall lesson, "Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. (*Their goal was that the anchors would cause a drag on the ship and keep it from being driven upon rocks.*) 30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, (*At this*

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2/5/2008



Navigating Through the Shipwrecks of Our Lives!



point, the professional crew planned to abandon ship!) going to when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, (*The Old English is not the easiest to understand here, but apparently, the crew lied about putting out more anchors; instead, they let down a life boat from the front of the ship in an attempt to abandon ship.*) 31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. 32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. (*At this point it appears that Paul was acting like the new captain of the ship!*) 33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. 34 Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. 35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. 36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. 37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. 39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. 40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. 41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. 42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. 43 **But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose;** (*The presence of God's servant Paul, kept many others alive!*) and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: 44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." (Acts 27:29-40)

After they got to land (*with everybody alive*), the barbarians who inhabited the island graciously helped the shipwreck victims. Further, Paul was greatly used of God; indeed, he began to manifest the gifts of the Holy Spirit including the working of miracles and actually became like a "god" in the eyes of the natives! Through him, Jesus healed **all** that were sick!

Shipwrecks are not intended to destroy us; notice the words of the Psalmist, "12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; **we went through fire and through water:** but thou broughtest us out into **a wealthy place**" (Ps 66:10-12). No matter what the trial, it is designed so that God can bring us into a wealthy place! This wealthy place is a place



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Navigating Through the Shipwrecks of Our Lives!



of abundant living! What do I mean by abundant living? It is an increase of knowledge, an increase of revelation, an increase of anointing, an increase of wisdom, an increase of understanding, an increase in contentment, an increase in peace of mind, an increase of the very presence of God in our lives! This is the place into which God wants to bring us after we survive the shipwreck! No matter the fiery trial, no matter the shipwreck that we have endured, God has promised to protect us and use our circumstances to save those around us; further, He will save those to whom he sends us!

So what have we learned? In order to stay away from potential shipwrecks in the future (1) we must not be impatient; (2) we must seek godly advice; and (3) we must not be moved by outward circumstances. And, in those situations where we are obviously in a shipwreck perhaps not of our own making: (1) we must not give up; (2) we must not try to take things into our own hands; (3) we must pray for others who may also be affected; (4) we must not expect God's turnaround to always happen immediately; instead, we should expect things to get better by degrees, finally, (5) we will need to realize that once we have come through the shipwreck, God will use us to save others!