

## 49a ACTS

Let's begin our study of the Word of God this evening. This is the 24th of September, 2004. We are going to finish Chapter 26 and move into Chapter 27 of the Book of Acts.

Let's take a moment at the outset to clear our minds and prepare our hearts. Recognize the importance of the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for another opportunity to spend time in fellowship and in the study of your Word.

We recognize how important it is to keep our thinking oriented to reality, the reality that transcends what we see and what we hear. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate your Word for us and impress it on our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. This chapter has brought Paul before a delegation, a contingent of Roman officials. He has given his great testimony, has recounted for the third time in the Book of Acts, for us at least, Luke has recounted for the third time the story of the encounter on the Damascus Road.

And if you remember, we pick up where we left off on our cliffhanger last time, with Paul asking King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe. Then Agrippa said to Paul, depending on which translation you have, you almost persuade me to become a Christian. And that was essentially the translation that the King James had and the related English translation.

So we have one of the most famous hymns that they play at the altar call or at the invitation at the end of a service in a lot of evangelical churches called Almost Persuaded. Unless somebody plays it properly, it sounds kind of mournful. Almost persuaded, now to believe, almost persuaded.

And the idea being that Agrippa came just that close. If Paul had just had one more sort of punch line, Agrippa would have probably fallen down at the feet of Jesus and become a flaming Christian. But as it turns out, when you look at this in Greek, what is actually being said here is something of a figure of speech.

And so to understand this properly, we need to look at this idiom. It's idiomatic. And the words here spoken by Agrippa, Agrippa says to Paul, And of course it sounds like gobbledygooks, but the first couple of words there, in oligo.

I mentioned this last time, an oligarchy is a rule by the few. Oligos, O-L-I-G-O-S means a little or a few, not much. And en is the preposition that means in, by, with, basically.

So all you have is en a little, en oligo. Then Agrippa says, May is me, you're going to do something to me. Pathos is persuade, from patho, or to think.

But in most cases it has the idea of persuasion. And then Christianon is a Christian. And

poiesai is from poieo, which means to make or to do.

And this is the infinitive form. So, in a little, me, you persuade a Christian to become, or to make, is the literal word order here. Well, as I said, it's idiomatic.

And when you use oligos with the preposition en, it has generally the idea of time. And so you find in your New American Standard, for example, it translates this, In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian. Same thing in the NIV.

You'll have to excuse me if I sound a little cloudy. It's been a bad ragweed day and we were outside all day. So I'm a little bit, I feel a little muggy, a little froggy.

At any rate, why do we care about this? What difference does it make what Agrippa said? He's the king of Lebanon and northern Galilee. He's way off there. Why do we care? Why is this in here? It's one of the most famous quotes in the Bible and unfortunately it's misquoted.

But why do we care? Let me give you the Sam translation of this verse because I would change it just a little bit. It does have the idea of duration, short time. But if I was going to say, if you were giving me a big long harangue, like take my introduction tonight.

You say, look, just in short, what are you trying to say? Right? Well, that's what Agrippa says. Paul has asked him a question, right? Do you believe the prophets? I know that you do. He doesn't answer the question, does he? He cuts to the chase.

Agrippa sees what Paul is doing because Paul has put him on the spot. Remember this room full of people that Festus addressed in a loud voice and saying, Paul, much learning has driven you mad? Well, that same group of people are now listening because the questioner has become the questionee. And Paul, who is the prisoner, is supposed to be answering the questions.

Now he's asking the questions and he has put the ruler on the spot. And so the tables have sort of been turned. And Agrippa is no slouch.

I mean, he's been around a while. He knows what's happening here. And so when Paul says, do you believe the prophets? Remember all of the turmoil with the Jews and Felix had to go back, got recalled.

And if it wasn't for his brother, Pallas, appealing to Caesar, why he'd have been done for. And so then Festus came. So everybody knows that it's a real sensitive thing trying to calm the Jews down.

Well, here's a room full of Jews. And here's Paul making this powerful argument that pretty much says, if you believe the prophets, what's the problem with believing in Christ? Because Christ hasn't said or done anything that is out of line with the prophets.

In fact, he has fulfilled prophecy.

And if you say, what do you mean you saw a dead guy on the Damascus road? Doesn't the Bible teach resurrection? We talked about being raised up last time and what all that means. So basically, Paul says, if you believe the prophets, what's the problem? So Agrippa says, in short, you would persuade me to become a Christian. That's what he's saying.

He says, well, to sum up your big harangue here, I should become a Christian. You think to make me a Christian. In short, if I believe the prophets, I should become a Christian.

Does this make sense? Do you get the flow that he's saying here? He's just, he's cutting it up. He's not answering the question because it's one of those questions like they ask Jesus. Should we, you know, does your power come from, by what power do you do these things? And Jesus said, well, let me ask you a question first.

John the Baptist, was he from God or from men? And they say, well, you know, if we say from men, the people will stone us because they think he's a prophet. But if we say from God, then we have to agree with what Jesus is saying. And they said, well, we can't tell.

We don't know if he was from God or from men. Jesus said, well, if you can't tell me where John the Baptist was from, then I can't tell you by what power I do these things. And there's a similar little interplay going on here.

And Agrippa sees it, and he's an old politician from way back, and he's not going to get himself trapped in public. So Paul says, do you believe the prophets? I think you do. And he says, so in short, you think to make me a Christian.

And Paul says, in verse 29, I would wish to God that whether in short or in much. And in Greek, this works. The way to say this in English isn't idiomatic with us.

It's in short or in long. In little or in much. But in Greek, you have oligos, which is a little, and megalos, which is much.

And so Agrippa says, in short, you would persuade me to be a Christian. You would persuade to make me a Christian, is what it literally says. And Paul says, I wish to God, in short or in much, in oligos or in megalos, not only you, but all who hear me this day, might become such as I am.

What I find interesting about that is, not just to become a Christian. Paul doesn't say, little or much, I wish to God I could make you all Christians. What does he say? I wish I could make you as I am.

Which is more than a Christian. It's more than a name. It's more than a label.

It's more than a conversion moment. Because the description that Paul is given earlier in

the chapter was the blinding flash on the Damascus road. And he says, if it takes a little time, if it takes a lot of time, I wish to God I could make you as I am.

Which is not just converted, but motivated, continuing, moving forward, living that life. Which is why he changes the language. He says, such as I am.

He doesn't use the word Christian. Except for these chains. And it's a little bit of a light moment.

Because he says, I wish I could make everybody like me. And everybody's saying. And he says, well, without the chains.

And with that, the festivities are over. So the king stood up and the governor and Bernice, because obviously there's really nothing more to be said. And those who were sitting with them, all of their retinue, when they had gone aside, they began talking to one another.

This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment. We know this because we know that many members of the staff, the servant corps, and so on, were Christians. And you know how it is.

If you've ever seen British nobility, sort of their version of Peyton Place. What is it? Upstairs, downstairs, all these other things. People used to treat their servants as though they weren't there.

They talk and have all these private, intimate conversations. And you say, you know, you should not be talking about the fact that you just murdered somebody down the block because you've got three servants in the room. But they're just invisible people.

And all of these things would carry on. And the servants are just pieces of furniture. And they're expected to be circumspect.

And so the servants would come back and say, well, you know, this is what Agrippa said. This is what Festus said. This is what Bernice said.

And they would report back to the church this good news. And so they said, this man has not done anything worthy of death or imprisonment. And Agrippa said to Festus, this man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.

And that set a train in motion. Why is this here? First of all, it reminds us that there is more to being a Christian than being converted. And Paul emphasizes that point.

He says, I wish that by little, by much, in a short time, in a long time, whatever it takes, everyone could be as I am. To have a relationship with the Lord Jesus, to have a life of meaning and purpose, to be moving on that road toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. He says, I wish you all could have this experience, maybe without the chains.

Secondly, it is a point of legitimacy. Luke is writing to Greek-speaking Christians in the first century. And there is increasing persecution.

And there is a lot of opprobrium attached to being a Christian. And there is an accusation of sedition. There is an accusation of breaking the laws of Rome.

If you are a Christian, you are a lawbreaker. You are a traitor in some manner. You are seditious.

And this is put here to remind Christians that Paul the Apostle, the foremost exponent of Christianity to the Greek-speaking world, stood before several different levels of Greek, of Roman justice, and was found to not be guilty of anything worthy of death. And the only reason he goes to Rome is not because he is a high criminal, but because he asked to go. So, it is sort of a point of law, almost.

Luke is an intelligent guy. He is detail-oriented. And he says, look, Paul stood before Agrippa, stood before Festus, stood before Felix.

Nobody could find anything in his presentation of Christianity that was against Roman law. And the only reason Paul went to Rome is because he asked to go. Now, there is a third point that we are going to see beginning here in chapter 27.

Because this starts a new chapter. We only have two chapters left in Acts. And this is the journey from Caesarea to Rome.

And there are shipwrecks, and there are all kinds of adventures that go on. You may have a vague idea of what is going to happen to Paul in this chapter. We have this long period of time in Caesarea.

Felix had kept Paul there. We sort of glossed over that verse where it said that Felix, at the end of the last chapter, was hoping that he would get a bribe. Because there were people from all different stations in life who were coming to visit Paul.

And he was under house arrest there in Caesarea. Two years he sat there, and had sort of a circle of influence, and had wealthy people coming to visit. So Felix sees that and says, hey, he's got wealthy friends.

Maybe he'll decide he wants his freedom, and he'll come slip me some shekels under the table here, and I'll be enriched. Well, of course, Paul had no motivation to do that. And so then, of course, Felix had problems of his own.

But he's been in Caesarea for a long time, two years. Aristarchus, the guy that he picked up when he was on his missionary journey earlier, I think in Thessalonica, has been with him, and has become sort of his manservant and his factotum, his butler, so to speak, his personal servant, and takes care of him. And at some point, remember Luke stayed

back there with Lydia, the seller of purple, when they were going through the journey there.

We had a we section, and then Luke wasn't with him anymore. Well, now in chapter 27, if you notice, we're going to have another we section begin. And right from the outset, Luke says, we, what we're going to find is that Paul is going to take off, and Aristarchus is going to be with him.

You find this out in verse 2, when it was decided that we would sail to Italy. Paul and some other prisoners were entrusted to an officer named Julius who belonged to the imperial regiment. We boarded a ship from Adramidia, about to sail for ports of the province of Asia.

We set out to sea and were accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. On the following day, we arrived at Sidon. Sidon is about 75 miles up the coast from Caesarea.

And of course, you pass Tyre to get to Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and allowed him to go to friends to take care of his needs. From there, we set out to sea again and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were against us.

Even today, and even by air, the way to get to the southern coast of Lebanon, whether it's Beirut or Tyre or Sidon, is through Cyprus. I went in and out of Beirut, I don't know how many times, and every time we went through Cyprus. And there's a big airfield there at Larnaca.

And this end of the island is right where Paul and Luke and Aristarchus and these others sailed right under the lee just south of Cyprus. There's really something to stand there on the beach at Cyprus and look out over the Mediterranean and imagine the old ship going by with the Apostle Paul and company on it. And to have, that's about as close as I've gotten to any sort of a holy land.

Of course, I was on Mars Hill where he spoke to the Athenians. But there is so much old stuff in Athens, you just get tired of it. After a while, it's like one old building is really interesting, but after you've seen about 12, by the time you see like the 20th set of pile of ruins, I understand why Mark Twain told his guide, all you got is these old broken down, show us something new.

Haven't you built anything new and fresh? We're sick of these old tired ruins you keep showing us. It really can just wear you down. Well, so they go under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were against them.

Having crossed the open sea along the coast of Silesia and Pamphylia, we arrived in Myra of Lycia. There the officer found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy. He made us board the ship.

Well, what's going on here? What you have is the transport of Paul through the northeastern side of the Mediterranean on his way to Rome. Here's the thing, here's the thing about this whole deal. You remember when Paul was heading for Jerusalem and the nature of the description of that trip? What sort of supernatural things took place? People would prophesy and come up and say, you had not to be going that way.

Holy Spirit told me to tell you, bad plan. Chains and bad news await you when you go this direction. The nature of the supernatural incursion of God into the life of Paul is by way of resistance, slowing him down.

In this trip, going the direction he's supposed to be going, God is also going to have supernatural incursions into the life of Paul, but they're going to be of a completely different nature. So if we step back for a minute, I have to do this, because when they start giving the travel log and I'm trying to look at the map and I'm thinking, how can I explain this in a way that has any interest to it at all? I think, I can't. It's just, it's geography.

I got bored just, you know, plotting in navigation. They give you, you know, your ship goes here, and you take this bearing and you go here, and it just nearly killed me. Well, this here also.

I mean, there's nothing magical about the places. It's just a travel log. But, here's the thing.

If you step back and look at the trip of Paul toward Jerusalem, it's one kind of a trip. Now we're going to look at Paul starting at Caesarea and heading for Rome. It's a completely different kind of trip.

If you don't get anything else out of this description, just think about the difference between heading to Jerusalem and heading to Rome. The activity of God in Paul's behalf is totally different. Let's just go a little ways down in this chapter and see what happens.

They've changed ships. They went part way. Now these officers, these Roman officers that are accompanying him, are a particular type of guy.

They're not, for a long time they thought that these guys were the frumentari, which was a special elite kind of Roman guard type of guy. Imperial officials that were in charge of transportation. They were kind of like logistics officers for the Roman Empire.

However, they figured out that those guys weren't even around that early. Because Trajan is the guy that put the frumentari in. Trajan is after the fall of Jerusalem.

He's like 98 A.D. So, these guys are not the frumentari. Not that you knew or cared. But, if somebody ever says, well the guy accompanying Paul was a frumentari, you can say, no he wasn't.

They didn't have frumentari until 98 A.D. and you'll come off as being very knowledgeable in ancient history. But, these guys are called speculatores. The Roman Empire had the need for messages and people to travel from one place to another and they needed escorts for them.

Well you can't just, every time somebody blows through town, you can't take somebody out of your sentry there or your legion or whoever is stationed in the area and say, well we've got to strip off a lieutenant or a captain or a major or somebody here to go accompany this guy to Rome. I mean, you'd be forever losing your staff. So, they didn't do that.

They had special guys who were in the Roman Army and they're not assigned to a unit. All these guys do is courier and escort. That's their job.

And, they are called the speculatores. They're a special body of imperial guards. They report ultimately to Caesar and they make this kind of stuff happen.

They're just like corpuscles. They just travel the arteries of the empire, taking stuff from hither to yon. And, it's important to understand that because that's what this Julius guy is.

He is an experienced traveler. He wasn't stuck there in Caesarea commanding a platoon or something. They said, alright, well for a break let's send you to Rome.

This is what this guy does for a living. He mails stuff around, carry it, courier it. He's the guy with the handcuff on his briefcase going from Rome back and forth.

So, they say, alright, this time, this trip, we're going to handcuff you not to a briefcase, we're going to handcuff you to this Jew. And, we're going to let you take him up to see Caesar. Julius says, okay, fine, it's just another trip.

So, that's how he begins. It's just like speculator, the word speculator, and then put ES on the end, speculatores. Special body of imperial guards.

They were prominent in times of military intrigue. Well, that makes sense because they're sneaky guys. They know how to get in and out of towns, they know all the ports.

They've got frequent flyer miles and all that. So, they were not assigned to any particular division of the Roman army. Instead, they had a special unit of their own and they were assigned to various police and judicial functions.

So, they embarked in Caesarea and they got on this one ship and they only went a little ways and now they're trading ships. This is where the fun begins. This was like the little plane that takes you to the big airport and now you get on the big plane.

If you've ever done that, we have little puddle jumpers. When we used to live in Lawton,

Oklahoma, there are no big airplanes that come into Lawton. They have little crop dusting type of planes.

So, you get on a double prop deal and go to Oklahoma City or go to Dallas, then you get on your big 747 and go where you're going. Well, this is what Paul has done. He was on this little coastal vessel.

Now, he's on a big ship. So, what happens next? They found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy. Now, where's Alexandria? Egypt.

This is an Egyptian ship. It's going to have Egyptian people on it. It's got an Egyptian registry.

Anytime you think about Egypt, you think about its symbolic baggage in the Word of God, right? Because that is, you know, out of Egypt I have called my son. Abraham's been to Egypt. Jacob and his sons were in Egypt.

Moses brought them out of Egypt under God's mighty hand of deliverance. And it is a metaphor. It is a picture of the unbelieving world from which God's redeemed are blood bought, baptized out across the Red Sea, start their journey to the place of blessing, the place of function, the place of fulfillment.

But salvation takes you out of Egypt. Well, now, here's an Egyptian ship that is taking Paul. And so, what would this represent if you were just letting your imagination run a little bit? He's already in Roman hands, but now he's in Roman hands on an Egyptian ship.

How much Jewish influence is there going to be now? Just very little. The Egyptians have very little use for the Jews. That's why, you know, the little Jewish enclave down there had to live like monks, because the Egyptians just didn't want to have anything to do with them.

So, he's on this Egyptian ship, Alexandrian ship, sailing for Italy. He put us aboard it. Verse 7, We had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus.

Since the wind did not permit us to go farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmoni. Once again, travelogue. We start glazing over, right? But what do you notice here? This is the second time that the wind has been contrary.

Who controls the wind? God does. This journey, Paul is not being blown on a set of grease skids toward Rome, is he? This is what strikes me. When Paul was headed to Jerusalem, it was his own plan.

And he didn't have any trouble getting there. Remember, he picked the ships. He

decided when and where they would stop.

He called the Ephesian elders down to Miletus and gave them a rant and then went on. And it was just as easy as could be to go to Jerusalem. No resistance.

And he got there and it was a complete fiasco. He's been locked up in house arrest for two years. Now he's going to Rome.

Jesus said, You've testified for me now, Jerusalem. We got that out of your system. Now we're going to send you to Rome.

Now that he's going to Rome, the journey is difficult. It's not smooth. The wind is blowing in his face.

They have to go the wrong way around Cyprus. Now they have to go the wrong way around Crete. So they sail into the shelter of Crete off Salmona.

And with difficulty sailing past it, we came to a place called Fair Havens, verse 8, near the city of Lasea. Now, when much time had been spent, this reminds me of our life as believers. Because we have calling from God that involves going down the narrow road through the straight gate, right? We're supposed to be asking and seeking and knocking.

We're supposed to be thinking as we get in a situation, as we face a decision, I'm a Christian. I'm supposed to be living my life differently than the average American citizen would. It ought to make a difference.

I study the Word of God three times a week for a double session. I have notes. I have a Bible that's marked up.

I've heard things. I know things. I know about the indwelling of Christ.

I know about the indwelling of the Father. I know about the hope. I know about the promise of the millennial kingdom and the kingdom of the Father.

I know that it makes a difference. And I'm being measured and I'm being evaluated on how I navigate my daily life. I can't just do this like some ordinary schmo that doesn't know any better.

Because I do know better. And I do not want to be one of those that shrinks back to perdition, to loss. But I want to be one of those who by faith and patience inherits the promises.

So, we don't want to go to Jerusalem. Everybody's going to Jerusalem and it's the wrong way to go. We want to go to Rome.

We want to go where God told us to go. We want to fulfill our calling, right? Well, guess

which direction is easier to travel? It's easier to go to Jerusalem. You can pick the ship.

You can pick the time. You can pick your friends. You can pick where you stay.

You can pick the time that you walk into the temple and then you're just going to get mugged and it's all going to be fruitless. God will pick the ship. God will pick the escort.

God will decide which way the wind is going to blow and you will have resistance. It will be a difficult journey. The wind will blow in our face a lot of times.

I will say, I wonder why I'm not getting there quicker than I am. But, this is so much more interesting. This chapter coming up, chapter 27, is one of the most interesting chapters in the whole New Testament because of what takes place.

Because now God is actively working in and through the Apostle Paul and amazing things are happening. Instead of people coming up and talking to Paul, Paul is coming up and talking to people. Instead of God acting, trying to communicate through people to Paul, God is going to be acting in Paul to communicate to people.

Instead of supernatural activity to send Paul a message, there's going to be supernatural activity in the life of Paul that is going to send the world a message. It's a big difference. The journey to Jerusalem was all about Paul.

The journey to Rome is all about God and the grace of God and the power of God and the testimony of Christ in the mouth of the Apostle Paul. It's a totally different dynamic and you can see it even in these little details. Look at this in verse 9, When much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the fast was already over, Paul advised them saying, Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss.

Wow, Mr. Cheerful. I perceive this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives. Paul basically poked his head up and said, Men, we're all going to die.

This journey will be a complete and total loss. Nevertheless, the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. Well, this is nothing new for us.

How many times do we speak and people are persuaded by somebody else's advice? Who knows more, the short, bald-headed, beak-nosed Jew in chains or the helmsman who's been sailing this route for 10 these many years? So naturally, they listened to the helmsman and the owner of the ship than the things spoken by the prisoner. Because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised them to set sail from there also if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, opening toward the southwest and northwest and winter there. When the south wind blew softly, supposing

they had obtained their desire, just kind of enticed them out into the open water.

Oh, look, we have a favorable wind. We'll make the nice port where we can winter. Putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete, but not long after, a tempestuous headwind arose called Euroclidon.

This is... or Euroquillon, a northeaster. Anyway, this is a typhoon, basically. This is the Mediterranean version of a typhoon.

So, when the ship was caught and could not head into the wind, we let her drive. We let her run before the wind, so to speak. Running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty.

Everything is with difficulty here. Nothing is going smoothly, is it? When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship, and fearing lest they should run aground on the surface sands, they struck sail and so were driven. And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.

What did Paul say at the beginning? You're going to lose the cargo, and we're going to lose our lives. Well, the first thing to go is the cargo. On the third day, we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

Now, you know what the ship's tackle is, right? This is what makes the ship go. These are the lines, the halyards, the blocks, all of the stuff that makes the ship go. And they're so frantic because they're shipping water over every gunnel.

They're getting green water over the bow. I mean, they're just in danger of sinking. They say, anything we can throw.

And so the running gear of the ship, they are throwing it overboard. They're throwing it over the hatch covers. They're throwing it over anything that will move that's not bolted down.

They're just chopping it with axes and throwing it off to lighten the ship. If you throw the ship's tackle overboard, you're in just about as dire straits as you can be. You're basically saying, if we get through this storm, we're going to have to wait for somebody to come tow us.

But we threw it overboard with our own hands, willingly, desperately, anxiously. Let me help you throw the ship's tackle overboard. Now, how many times have we been in a situation where we were this desperate? And we said, I will do anything to survive this tempest.

I will cut off my nose to spite my face. I will do whatever is necessary. This reminds me of when you have a flat and you're in the middle of nowhere and your spare has no air,

and so you run on the rim.

And you know that this is not good for your car. You're going to have to buy a wheel at a minimum. But you say, I have got to get out of this wasteland even if I tear up my car doing it.

You're in the middle of the desert. Your car overheats. The oil light comes on.

You say, well, I can't stop here. And you just drive. You just do whatever it takes.

You say, if I can get there, even if my car is a smoking ruin, it would be better than stopping here. So, now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and no small tempest beat on us. I wish you could just catch this in Greek.

It's very eloquent. When he says no small tempest, he's saying you can't believe the tempest that was banging on us here. Hadn't seen the sun or stars.

All hope that we would be saved was finally given up. All hope. Now, look at verse 21.

After long abstinence from food, Paul stood in the midst of them and said, Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. Now, I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you but only of the ship. Now, go back to verse 10.

Paul said, Men, this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but of our lives. That's what the apostle Paul said. He prophesied.

If you go on this voyage, you lose the ship, you lose the cargo, we will all lose our lives, right? You need to draw a circle around verse 10 or at least the number there and then run a line down to this verse. Verse 22. I urge you to take heart.

There will be no loss of life among you but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, Do not be afraid, Paul, you must be brought before Caesar, and indeed God has granted you all these who sail with you. Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.

However, we must run aground on a certain island. Now, when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight, the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. They took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms.

You know a fathom is six feet, so twenty fathoms is what? 120 feet. A boat probably draws maybe ten at most. This is a larger vessel, it probably draws ten, so they've got plenty under the keel initially.

When they had gone a little farther, they took soundings and found it to be fifteen fathoms. So it's shoaling rapidly. Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.

Who do you suppose they prayed to? Well, it wasn't the God of Israel. As the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved. Remember that initially he said all life will be lost? Then he said God has given us all the lives? Now he says, unless you keep these men in the ship, we're all going to die.

So the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off. So they had dropped the skiff, these men were going to clamber over into it and then make for shore and leave the ship to itself. Paul says, you better not let those men get on the skiff or you'll never see them again and we're all going to die.

So they just cut the skiff away. So they had no skiff and the sailors can't leave. What's interesting about this, it's a fascinating story, but here's the point.

Initially, Paul says all lives will be lost. Then he says all lives will be saved. Then he says, unless you do what I say, all lives will be lost.

Now, what does this do to your Calvinists? Well, it just makes them pull their hair out. I mean, does God have a decree or not? God decrees that if you make the right choices, you'll be saved. That's what God decrees.

God does not decree your choice. That's why there is this going back and forth because it depends on what they choose. Paul makes an issue here.

He says, unless these men stay in the ship, we're dead. Even though God says, He's given me all the lives in the ship. You have to do what I say or I don't get you.

We've seen the same thing over in Exodus with Moses, haven't we? Our choices, here's the bottom line. Our choices determine what God is going to do with us. There is the promise of deliverance.

We start out with the promise of certain destruction, don't we? We are hell bound. We are conceived in iniquity. We are born in sin.

We are hopeless, helpless, useless. We have seven strikes against us. When we come to faith in Christ, we are born again.

We are saved. We are delivered from damnation. But, our eternal fate depends on what we choose, what we prioritize, how much we care about the things of God.

There is the promise of blessing. There is the promise of reward. There is the promise of

great privilege, great opportunity, great service in the kingdoms to come.

But, it depends on what we choose, just like these men here. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul? If you live only in this life and you don't look at the next, the cargo, the ship, and all the lives are going to be lost. If we look ahead, if we listen to the words of the apostle, we save our lives.

We are going to arrive intact. We are going to arrive having accomplished the things that God has for us. We are going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we are going to see what happens here as they are on the verge of running aground on these rocks.