



PART 1

# PAUL IN CHAINS: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

## Chapter Three

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## TAKING COURAGE

When Luke described the storm as “no small storm” in [Acts 27:20](#), he was not kidding.

[Acts 27:20 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> “Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.”

### “I BELIEVE GOD”

I’m not at all pessimistic about the true church. I’m optimistic about it, because I know God’s truth will triumph. I believe the church will be exactly what God intends it to be—glorious. Christ Himself loved the church:

[Ephesians 5:25-27 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

<sup>26</sup> so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

<sup>27</sup> that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”

That is going to happen. Christ’s purpose for His church will not be thwarted.

If you look at the visible manifestation of the church in the world today, there might seem to be a lot of reasons to be discouraged. But if you look beyond that, understand God’s purpose for the church, and lay hold of the promises, you can say as Paul did to those disheartened sailors on that ship:

**Acts 27:25 (NASB)**

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.”

That’s part of leadership. Remember, the apostle Paul was on his way to Rome in chains. He might have been the *least* likely person on the ship to be optimistic. But as a true leader, he saw beyond the temporary circumstances and fixed his hope on the promise of triumph. And he drew courage and confidence from that. Such optimism was contagious.

## GOD MAKES HIS SUN RISE ON THE EVIL AND THE GOOD

Something else gave Paul great hope and enthusiasm: He saw these circumstances as an opportunity to introduce unbelievers to his God. He wasn’t the least bit timid about mentioning “the God to whom I belong and whom I serve” ([Acts 27:23](#)).

**Acts 27:23 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> “For this very night an angel of the **God to whom I belong and whom I serve** stood before me.”

God was the source of Paul’s **authority, his wisdom, his hope, his optimism, and his enthusiasm**. Why would he be apprehensive about saying so?

Paul was eager to introduce God to these people. Under the circumstances, they might have thought they needed to prepare to meet Him. Paul wanted them to know Him first as Savior, rather than as Judge. So he was bold.

He knew, of course, that the prophecy given to him by the angel would come to pass. And when it did, the glory and the credit went to God. As we noted earlier, **the precise fulfillment of all Paul’s predictions also established Paul’s credibility**. But it did much more than that. It put the focus where it rightfully belonged: it made these men see in a graphic way that God was sovereignly in control of their lives. They needed to glorify Him as God and be thankful.

Every one of those men owed their lives to the mercy and grace of God. They had made a foolish and reckless decision to sail from Fair Havens. But God was going to preserve their lives. And He was doing it for the sake of Paul. The angel told Paul in [verse 24](#), “**God has granted you all those who sail with you.**”

**Acts 27:24 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> “Saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, **God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.**’

The unbelievers of this world don’t know how fortunate they are to have believers around. **Who knows how many people have been spared from judgment and disaster for the sake of godly people?** A friend who happened to be on a flight I took a few years ago told me he felt especially safe on that plane with me, because he knew the Lord still had work for me to do.



That doesn't mean it's impossible for me to die in an accident someday, but there's a true sense in which that principle applies. Even the ungodly sometimes benefit from God's grace to His people. That was precisely the case with these men on Paul's ship. He was guaranteed ultimate safety because God wanted him in Rome. Everyone in the ship benefited from that.

The same principle runs continuously through the pages of Scripture. God's people in the midst of an ungodly community actually protect that community from disaster. God told Abraham He would have spared the entire cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of ten righteous people in their midst ([Genesis 18:32](#)).

**Genesis 18:32 (NASB)**

<sup>32</sup>“Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy *it* on account of the ten.”

Later in Genesis, Laban begged Jacob not to return to his own country: “Please stay, if I have found favor in your eyes,” he said, “for I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake” ([Genesis 30:27](#)).

**Genesis 30:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup>“But Laban said to him, “If now it pleases you, *stay with me*; I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account.”

The same principle is evident again in Joseph's experience. [Genesis 39:5](#) says of Potiphar, “The LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field.”

**Genesis 39:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup>“It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field.”

And even when Joseph was cast into prison, [verse 23](#) says,

**Genesis 39:23 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup>“The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.”

So even the prison master was blessed because of Joseph.

And the men in Paul's ship were blessed because of him. Though they were lost at sea, without a clue where they were or where they might end up, they now had hope. They had a leader in whom they could be confident. They had someone who was not afraid to step up and take initiative. They had someone who had demonstrated good judgment, who could speak with authority, who knew how to strengthen others, and who gave them encouragement and enthusiasm. All Christians should be leaders like that.



As the story proceeds, we'll notice that the centurion, the sailors, and all the people on the ship begin to defer more and more to Paul's leadership. It was evident to all that the hand and the blessing of God were on him.

It is natural for God's people to want to follow someone like that. **Pessimism**, **indifference**, **fear**, and **confusion** melt away in the presence of such leadership.

## Chapter Four

# TAKING CHARGE

So Paul had some good news, and he had some bad news. The good news was that not one life would be lost. The bad news was that the ship would run aground on an island. As everyone on board already sensed ([Acts 27:20](#)), they were headed for certain shipwreck.

They were in precisely the kind of crisis situation that calls for a **strong, clearheaded, courageous leader**. And the one man best qualified to fill that position and most prepared to step into it was the guy who had the prisoner's cabin at the bottom of the ship's hold. The irony of that must have occurred to the ship's captain, to Julius the Roman centurion, and to all others who were in positions of authority on board. Paul had no official position, but he certainly wielded a greater authority than any of them. He took his orders from God, and he spoke for God. By now that was becoming clear to all.

**True leadership is tested and proved in crises.** The real leader is the one who can handle the stress. He is the one who can **solve the problems**, **bear the burdens**, **find the solutions**, and **win the victories** when everyone else is merely **flustered**, **confounded**, and **perplexed**.