



PART 1

PAUL IN CHAINS:

LEADERSHIP

IN ACTION

Chapter Two

TAKING THE INITIATIVE

When Paul's long journey to Rome got under way again after that brief stop in Sidon, the ship encountered what would be the bane of the whole trip: contrary winds. Luke wrote:

Acts 27:4-5 (NASB)

⁴“From there we put out to sea [from Sidon], and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary.

⁵When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.”

A WISE MASTER BUILDER

Here is a third vital principle of leadership: *A leader uses good judgment.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #3

A LEADER USES GOOD JUDGEMENT

According to the world's view, a leader is a risk taker—a dice roller. Leaders *are* often called upon to take a certain amount of legitimate, calculated risk. But a good leader never makes a decision that is a pure gamble. Wise leaders don't wager with their people. They don't subject their people to unnecessary hazards. Paul's advice was good judgment. By spurning it, the crew and the soldiers were gambling with everyone's lives. They were literally casting their fate to the wind, trusting blind luck that everything would turn out okay. **That is not wise leadership.**

I often tell young pastors that the fastest way to lose people's trust is not by preaching a bad sermon. People will forgive that. **The fastest way to lose credibility as a leader is to make a foolish decision that leads people down a blind alley or off the end of a pier.** Too many



young men in ministry make impetuous and ill-considered decisions. They lead without looking where they are going. They don't count the cost. They aren't cautious enough.

You might think that young leaders would make the mistake of being too timid, but in my experience, it is much more common for young men to fail **because they are impetuous**. They aren't sensitive. They don't seek wise counsel.

Good leaders are analytical. They understand when there's a calculated risk, but they carefully assess the risk and plan for contingencies. If disaster is looming and there's no way out, they don't press ahead.

Much was in jeopardy with this decision to sail. The cargo, the ship, and the lives of all on board could be lost. That was precisely how Paul outlined the danger in **verse 10**.

Acts 27:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“**And said to them, “Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.”**

Remember, “**the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul**” (**v. 11**).

Acts 27:11 (NASB)

¹¹“**But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul.**”

All of them wanted to get moving. And after all, why listen to Paul? What did *he* know about sailing the Mediterranean on a vessel like this? Thus the sole voice of wisdom was silenced.

They worked out a solution. It was only a relatively short distance—only about forty miles around the western end of Crete—to Phoenix. Phoenix was a better port than Fair Havens. It had a semicircular harbor with openings on the southwest and northwest, and it was more protected against the harsh winter winds. Perhaps they could at least get that far, and then decide whether to stay the winter or move on.

At first the winds seemed favorable.

Acts 27:13 (NASB)

¹³“**When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and *began* sailing along Crete, close *inshore*.**”

A gentle south wind would have been warm, coming up from North Africa. The day looked pleasant enough as they set out to sea, sailing close by the southern coast of Crete.

It didn't last long. Luke said,

Acts 27:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“**But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo.**”

This was a fierce wind from the northeast. It comes off the mountains above Lebanon and blows the cold winter air in hard blasts across the Mediterranean Sea. It was exactly what Paul had predicted would happen. The wisdom of his counsel was now obvious to all.

It became impossible to turn the ship north toward Phoenix, and the tempest was so powerful that they abandoned that as an option. Luke wrote,

Acts 27:15-16 (NASB)

¹⁵ “**And when the ship was caught *in it* and could not face the wind, we gave way *to it* and let ourselves be driven along.**

¹⁶ **Running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, we were scarcely able to get the *ship’s* [skiff] boat under control.”**

They were now about twenty-five miles off Crete, at the mercy of the wind. Clauda was a small island off the southwestern extremity of Crete. The “skiff” was a wooden dinghy towed by the ship. It was used to do maintenance on the hull and anchors, and in port it served as a tender, shuttling passengers back and forth to shore. (It was the only means they had to get safely to shore when they were anchored in a harbor.) It could also serve as a lifeboat, though it would not have been large enough to hold more than a few of the passengers. Apparently in the high winds, the [skiff] boat was being battered and was in danger of being lost.

So they secured the skiff by hauling it up onto the deck. Luke himself apparently helped do this, as indicated by his use of the pronoun *we*. The skiff was no doubt very heavy, and the high winds would have made the task more difficult. All hands were needed in such an emergency.

The ship itself was in danger of breaking up. Luke wrote, “**When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship**” (v. 17).

Acts 27:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ “**After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on *the shallows* of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along.”**

This was a procedure known as “frapping.” The hulls of ships in those days were assembled with tongue-and-groove construction and sealed with pitch. In crashing waves, the slats would be under tremendous stress, and in danger of coming apart at crucial points. So cables—actually very large ropes—were passed under the ship and winched together on deck to hold the hull together.

An equally grave danger was the possibility that they might be blown off course and run aground. So, “**fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven**” (v. 17).

Acts 27:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ “**After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on *the shallows* of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along.”**



Acts 27:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷“When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven.”

The Syrtis Sands were a graveyard for ships in the Gulf of Sidra, off the African coast west of Cyrene. The water there was shallow, with hidden reefs and sandbanks. So **“they struck sail,”** which means they took down the sail.

Luke wrote,

Acts 27:18-19 (NASB)

**¹⁸“The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo;
¹⁹and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.”**

Everything Paul had warned them about was now coming to pass. Lightening the ship involved throwing the cargo overboard. The tackle was their equipment and tools. That was not a trivial thing, and the decision to do it would not have been made if they had not been in fear of their lives. The cargo and the tackle were their livelihood. But they jettisoned everything they could get their hands on to allow the ship to ride higher, so it wouldn't get swamped by the waves.

They had no means of navigation, and no way of knowing where they were.