

Bad Luck (Acts 27)

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Preacher: William HC

- [0 : 0 0] Cool, and so I'll invite Isaac and Ivan up for the Bible chapter. So if you'd like to Acts chapter 27, everyone, it's an exciting, exciting chapter, so follow along.
- Cool. So I'm going to be reading from the NIV, and I'm going to read what the narrator is writing, and then Ivan is going to read the speech part, what Paul is saying.
- So a little bit of a long chapter of a lot of names, so we'll sort of just follow along. That's Acts 27. When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the imperial regiment.
- We boarded a ship from Adramitium, about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.
- The next day we landed at Sidon, and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs. From there we put out to sea again and passed to the Lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us.
- [1 : 1 3] When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board.
- We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Sinaitis. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the Lee of Crete, opposite Salmon.
- We moved along the coast of difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lycia. Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous, because by now it was after the Day of Atonement.
- So Paul warned them. Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous, and bring great loss to ship and cargo into our own lives also. But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship.
- Since the harbour was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. This was a harbour in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest.
- [2 : 1 9] When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw the opportunity, so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island.
- The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind, so we gave way to it and were driven along. As we passed the lee of a small island called Cowder, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure, so the men hoisted it aboard.
- Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Cerritus, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along.

We took such a violent battering from the storm, that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said, Look, men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete. Then you had spared yourselves this damage and loss.

[3 : 26] But now I argue you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost, only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the Lord whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, Do not be afraid, Paul.

You must stand trial before Caesar, and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you. So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.

Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island. On the fourteenth night, we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land.

They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later, they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep. Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.

In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors led the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.

[4 : 33] So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away. Just before dawn, Paul urged them all to eat. For the last fourteen days, he said, you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food.

You haven't eaten anything. Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head. After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them.

All. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. Altogether, there were two hundred and seventy-six of us on board. When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

When daylight came, they didn't recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders.

Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bows stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.

[5 : 41] The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping, but the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land.

The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way, everyone reach land safely. I'd like to invite Pastor William to speak to us.

Thanks, Isaac. Thanks, Ivan. Yeah, keep that chapter open, and we're going to hear what God has to say to us from this passage.

I don't know, that was a fun story, wasn't it? I mean, I would have thought in your Bibles you get a kind of an America's Cup yacht type sensation, you know, trying to hoist the sails. Imagine if you could have strapped GoPro cameras onto Luke as he was kind of retelling his story.

And yet in God's kindness, he has preserved this incredible account in his word, in his written word. And so let's pray. Let's pray God keeps us afloat as we hear him speak to us in this incredible chapter.

[6 : 47] Will you pray with me? Our gracious God, we've never been through a disaster like this. And yet we have been through our own struggles.

So even now, would you speak to us? Prepare our hearts to hear how your word and promises can be our anchor and can carry us through storms, can lead us to your gracious salvation.

Be with us now as we hear from your word, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Most of us are familiar with the idea of luck, right? It was lucky that you got here on time.

Lucky there was one shoe, pair of shoes left in the shop and you just happened to get it. Lucky I parked in this spot and I didn't get a ticket. When someone posts good news online, often we might think, how lucky, you know.

Ah, they got the girl, how lucky. Ah, they graduated, how lucky. Or maybe you're about to sit an exam, which you've all just finished, right, successfully. And before the exam, I'm sure you've been telling each other, right?

[7 : 53] You know, you don't say good effort, you say good luck. If your week's been a crazy mess, on the other hand, you might think, what bad luck I've had this week.

But what's been clear over and over again in the book of Acts is that there is no room for the idea of blind luck when it comes to the life of the early church.

When it comes to how God is moving and working and making all things happen, right? And that's what Luke, the author, draws our attention to time and time again. It's not luck that everything has happened as it has.

And here in this chapter, we have the Apostle Paul again. He's been on trial for Jesus. He's been beaten, stoned, left for dead. He's been through a lot, hasn't he? And yet he becomes the unlikely hero on this ship.

Did you notice in the reading how actually Paul was always doing the opposite thing, right? So while Isaac's saying how all the sailors got scared, Ivan's calm voice, we're going to be fine, right?

[9 : 03] And earlier, actually, when Paul says, don't risk it, and the captain, the ship owners, they're trying to risk it. You see, there's opposites happening here. How on earth does Paul think and act so differently to the rest of the company?

What are the promises that anchor him and can anchor us as well when bad luck comes your way or my way?

That's, I think, what we want to know, and that's what we will find out from Acts 27. So let's dive in. Let's find out. As dramatic as this story is, there's actually a really simple shape to it, okay?

There's the downside in the first half, and then there's the upside of the story, okay? So try and keep those kind of two sections in mind. So we'll look at the downside first.

Paul, he's on his way to Rome, as you know. Last week, we remember, he chose to appeal to Caesar rather than kind of get released and kind of sent back to Jerusalem, where he might have been ambushed and, you know, maybe killed by his Jewish opponents.

[10 : 06] So he says, I appeal to Caesar, and that's exactly where these soldiers are about to take him. And over the past few years, we've heard he's preached the gospel. He's just taken every opportunity.

He's told the gospel of Jesus to high, mighty rulers like Felix and Festus and Agrippa and Bernice. He's pressed on even when everyone has been against him, all this human opposition, and yet Paul keeps going.

And yet now, for the first time, we're not encountering human opposition, right? But it's some kind of natural opposition, right? So the first thing we see in this kind of downside part of the story is bad weather, right?

We've had some crazy weather this past week, and maybe you've been thinking about bad weather. Well, Luke was obviously, as you can tell, he says, we, this is what happened to us. He was obviously kind of on the Uber boat with Paul at this stage, right?

He's with him. He's an eyewitness. And he reports how difficult it was for them to get moving, okay? Right from the moment they set sail, I wonder if you picked it up, right?

[11 : 11] Verse 4, okay, the winds were against us. Verse 7, we made slow headway for many days. Verse 8, we moved along the coast with difficulty.

This was a tough voyage. Now, we don't want to be snobbish. We don't want to say, hey, you guys should have taken, like, a plane. That would have been far easier. Look, ancient first century sailors, they were pretty smart, okay?

If you see Moana, right, you know, that's like, Wayfinder, you know. All this innate knowledge passed from generation to generation. These were skills that you had to be pretty clever to be able to use.

You couldn't be, you know, a fool and sail a ship. And yet ancient voyages, they still took time, weeks and months, right?

No engines to push you ahead. No GPS to chart an exact course. And often they were at the mercy of just which way the wind blows.

[12 : 12] And look, you know, we think it's a problem only for the back in the day. I think recently I heard about how, you know, Air New Zealand couldn't fly from New York back to Auckland. Had to stop and refuel because the winds were against them.

So, look, it still happens. It still happens. And there's a similar thing going here. There's a headwind, okay? So there's a little picture of the Mediterranean, maybe in the previous slide.

And actually the wind goes from the left side of the screen to the right side of the screen, okay? That's kind of where the wind's blowing. So if you're traveling kind of from left to right on the screen, it's pretty easy, right?

You've got the wind behind you. But it's hard work if you want to go the opposite way, right? And so it's this kind of headwind is the reason why they had to, if you can see, right, go from Sidon, you know, to Myra.

Why would you go the long way around and kind of skirt past the southern coast of Turkey? Because that's the only way you can avoid that wind, right? If you've seen the America's Cup boats, when they say upwind, they've got to zigzag, right?

[13 : 12] They're trying to catch, you know, the wind and not go directly against it. It's this kind of zigzagging and sailing that is what they have to do from town to town to town on the coast. And all that work means lost time.

Luke tells us, right, the Day of Atonement about October had passed already. So in other words, it's past kind of middle of autumn, winter's coming, okay?

What happens when you sail in winter? There's more rain, all right? It's colder. It's more stormy. And look, they successfully get themselves to a place called Fair Havens.

And there's a nice tidbit, Fair Havens literally means beautiful harbor. Is it a city that sounds like that? Hangong, anyone? No? So they're wondering what to do next at this point, sitting in this harbor.

And it's here that Paul says his first words. Verse 10. Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo and to our own lives also.

[14:16] Okay, so Paul's just a, you know, he's just a prisoner. But he's been on plenty of ships before, okay? So this is not just some kind of backseat driver comment.

He actually has experience on boats. In another letter to the Corinthians, he says, Three times I was shipwrecked. Okay? So he knows how not to sail.

But in this case, Paul's not the captain. He's not the owner of the boat. He doesn't make the call. And so it sounds like he gets outvoted. And they decide, the boat decides to press on.

Okay? Keep going. All right? So they made it to a place called Fair Havens. But let's just keep going further along the island of Crete. Okay? To the place called Phoenix.

So I think in the next slide, you can kind of see what it looks like. So Fair Havens, kind of like there. And they just want to keep shooting ahead, right? Okay? Further west, which is up the screen, to the next harbor.

[15:13] How hard could that be? Well, it turns out to be a bad decision. All right? Seems so good at first. There's a light south wind. So they're kind of going, all right? Going up, up, up.

And suddenly, a huge storm sweeps in from the northeast this way, right? From the bottom right to the screen, upwards. And it just drives the ship way off course.

And now, they're caught in open water, caught in the storm. Okay? It's so terrible. It's so fierce that it's probably useless to hoist your sail. You break it.

Okay? They have to just take everything down. And they're just driven along. Driven along. It actually says, Luke says, they're so desperate to keep this boat together. They have to wrap it with rope.

Okay? And then they let their anchor drag at the bottom. Right? The ship's going too fast. I need to slow this boat down so that we can just avoid hitting things that we shouldn't hit.

[16:09] If you've ever read the story of Jonah, when he hits a storm, there's a lot of echoes there, isn't there? All right? And the sailors get to the point, they're so desperate, they're starting to throw out the valuable cargo they've been carrying on the ship.

Anything that would weigh the ship down, we've got to chuck out. And you know they're desperate when, verse 19, they throw out the tackle. What's a tackle? This is kind of the emergency gear you need to keep going on a ship.

All right? All the spare gear, perhaps even the sail itself, overboard. In bad weather, with bad decisions, this is a bad outcome.

All right? This is a bad outcome. But you know, we reflect on their story a little bit. Sometimes bad outcomes, they don't just happen by accident or in a vacuum.

In verse 12, right, Luke told us a little bit about Fair Havens, if you've read it. It wasn't really the best harbour to spend a winter in. So if you're a ship and you need to spend a long time, you need a place where you won't get kind of pushed hard by the winds while your ship's parked.

[17:14] Okay? Anyone trying to find a car park, you won't park it under a tree with lots of birds. You don't know why. Right? So they're trying to find a suitable spot to park. And they're like, okay, not Fair Havens. And so, you know, maybe they're sensible.

They're trying to find the best harbour to go. But there is a sense, don't you see? Don't you think? That the centurion, the captain, the shipowner, they just wanted to get further faster.

After all, they'd lost so much time already. Perhaps from Phoenix, they'd be in a better spot, right? As soon as they could sail, they'd just gun for it all the way to Rome. Okay? So look, maybe they were in a hurry.

Okay? Maybe that's what's going on. Well, I mean, now they're not going anywhere fast, right? Except through the storm. But maybe they were pressured by money as well. I'll try and explain.

This boat from Adramitium, okay? It was an Alexandrian ship, is what it says. It was carrying a lot of grain, probably. It says in verse 38. And probably a lot of other valuable cargo, all right?

[18 : 17] And in those days, if you were a ship and you could deliver grain to Rome, right? The capital of the Roman Empire. You could feel their bread and circuses and all kinds of fun stuff they did.

If you could bring grain to make their bread, you could expect a big payday, all right? And so you can imagine the ship owner, right, thinking, checking his accounts every day, right?

Every day we're late. That's more mouths to feed, right? Less money I'm going to have. Every inch closer to Rome mattered to their bottom line. And now he's made a gamble and seems to have lost it.

In a hurry. Thinking about money. It's a common sense warning to us today, isn't it? If you and I are always in a hurry, we might forget an important appointment.

We might stop making thoughtful decisions about our time. Or about our health. Or our relationships. How many of us, let's be honest, spend our days rushing from thing to thing to thing?

[19 : 26] How long can we keep that up for? Are we not made from the dust after all? And look, if you and I are pressured by money, it might force you to make bad decisions too.

To pay off a mortgage, you might start to work unrealistic hours. Or to try and buy that toy that you've always wanted. That gets changed every year anyways.

You might start cutting back from being generous to the needs of your loved ones. Or maybe you're just so cheap, right? You know, always trying to get a deal, right? That's part of our culture, perhaps.

And so you buy the cheapest option and then you regret it later, right? You're still pressured by money. It's just the other way. I remember once I had to book a family flight and I'm like, let's go, the cheapest airline.

Yeah. Wow. Look how many hundreds of dollars we saved. Turns out we had to get extra transit visas. It was the toughest layovers we'd ever done. Never again. Okay. So don't be pressured and be in a hurry.

[20 : 33] And don't be pressured by thinking about money. Bad weather, bad decisions, bad outcome, right? Look at verse 20. This is where kind of the pits of the story is, right?

When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved. Everyone gave up.

Except one guy. Right? Except one guy. Because from verse 21 onwards, we see the upside of this chapter. It's literally their darkest hour, right?

We just heard no sun, nothing. And then in their darkest hour, Paul the prisoner becomes Paul the chaplain, Paul the pastor. Right person at the right time.

He's the only one who's not in a hurry, right? And he's the only one there who's not really pressured by money or time or anything else. And he brings a word of grace.

[21 : 33] He brings desperately needed encouragement to these 300-odd men staring death in the face. Yeah, it's ironic, isn't it? You know, a lot of us will go through life not thinking about God, but when you're stuck in a boat and you feel like you're about to drown, maybe, maybe there's no atheist in a shipwreck.

There's no... And our greatest need, these guys, are ready to hear anything, anything helpful. And so we see verse 21 onwards, Paul starts to speak, right?

He stands up before them and starts to address them. And he's a little bit cheeky to begin with, I think, right? Basically, he's like, told you so, should have listened to me, should have stayed in Fair Havens. But he quickly moves to some encouragement and some hopeful words.

Can you see them, right? Urge you, keep up your courage. Not one of you will be lost. Only the ship will be destroyed. Sorry, person who owns a ship. But look, he tells him why he's so confident.

He shares that just the night before, an angel of the Lord spoke to him. I love the Bible. I believe God's Word is honey for the Spirit, food for the soul.

[22 : 48] And here at PCBC, we love God's Word. We sing it. We hear from it. We tell each other about it. But look, Paul is not in a church service here, right?

He's not in a synagogue. He doesn't have his NIV ready. He's not got his Torah scrolls on him. He's a prisoner. He's got nothing. And so, look, God can do anything. And he offers Paul personal testimony, an amazing revelation.

And Paul is obedient. And he reveals it back to the rest of them, right? And so, Paul, he shares his own personal testimony of God's kindness, his vision. And this is God's good promises being shared out, right?

So, now we're starting to see the good, the upside. This is where good promises start to be shared with others. You see, the storm has not stopped Paul from remembering his relationship with his Lord and Savior.

Paul remembers the promise that he must stand before Caesar. And so, if he must stand before Caesar, he's going to survive the storm. He's okay. And he tells him that. He's not scared of death.

[23 : 55] He knows that it is not luck that they're there. The Lord is in absolute control. And he has determined that Paul will survive this. And so, verse 24, Paul even says, Look, the Lord has even told me he's graciously given everyone on board here to him.

Good promises that the Lord offers. And it's based on these promises that Paul is able to be confident before these sailors and to share his testimony, right? Look, because of Paul's certainty in God's promises, those who travel with him, they will get saved from certain death and destruction.

Does that sound familiar to you? Follow the message of the good news, and you'll be saved from certain death and destruction. And does this storm not remind you of our own condition, our own state?

What are we like? We're like these sailors, tossed in turn, floating, flailing without God's rescue.

Look, the Bible's picture of humanity is not lucky. We are not the lucky people. It is not, we are not the champions. We are not the kings of this world.

[25 : 14] The Bible's picture of you and me is that we are helpless. We are storm-tossed. We are overwhelmed beyond our control. We need someone to throw us a lifeboat.

As we sing it in one of our songs, in the darkness we were waiting, without light, without hope. That is the truth about us. And into this darkness steps a voice, a witness.

Maybe for some of you it was a friend who invited you to church. Maybe for others of you it was a colleague who first told you, I'm a Christian. Maybe for some of you it was one of the preachers here who shared, spoke God's word.

Or a parent, a Sunday school teacher, who patiently sowed some seeds from the gospel. And each of these messengers are pointing you and I to a world that is not ruled by blind luck, but to a God who made the heavens and the earth, who rules the wind and the waves, who makes promises that he keeps, who is a God that organizes every situation in our lives for good, who brings rescue against all odds, who can save each and everyone who calls upon his name.

He can do it. And this is the God who Paul is proclaiming right this moment before all these people. And in verse 25 and 26, when Paul suggests two things to the sailors, right, keep up your courage, guys.

[26 : 45] All right. I have faith God will make all this happen as he told me. And then he also suggests, look, we need to run aground on some island, right? The only way to stop a ship with no rudder, no nothing, you know, it's like driving a car without a steering wheel.

You just got to crash it into something safely. And so those are the two suggestions. And look, now that they've heard God's good promises, the upside continues.

They start to make good decisions. Okay. Verse 27, 29, it says, all right, two weeks later, they've been tossing and turning. One night, the sailors sense that land is coming.

Right? Maybe the, like the clouds are changing. I don't know how it works. I'm not a wayfinder. But look, they sense land is coming and they start to pray. Okay. See how the sailors have started to turn.

All right. Two weeks with Paul, you know, what could that do for their faith? But now the crew on the ship have suddenly got important choices to make. Okay. If there's land, if we're ready to crash on something, what are we going to do next?

[27 : 47] Right. This is, they've got important decisions to make. Well, firstly, should the sailors stay? Right. If I'm a sailor and I don't want to be on the ship, this is the time to get out.

Right. There's one lifeboat. And it sounds like some of them, they want to get out on this lifeboat and just leave the rest to their own devices. Okay. Fend for yourselves. Goodbye. But here we start to see some good decisions being made.

Paul, he tells the centurion, look, it's probably best if you don't let our drivers go. So, please, don't let them go. So, verse 31, the centurion tells the soldiers, cut away the lifeboat.

We're going to stick this out together. And it's a crucial decision though, right? If everyone's going to survive as the Lord has planned, they've got to do this together. All right. And what happens? Verse 31 onwards, day breaks.

Okay. Sorry, verse 32 onwards, as day breaks, Paul actually gives another good decision. He says, look, let's eat. And you're like, what a curious thing to say right now. Let's eat.

[28 : 50] But it's a really good decision, right? I mean, in their case, they hadn't eaten for two weeks. They're really hangry right now. And you're not going to be able to crash a boat in the right place in that situation.

And look, sometimes I want to encourage you, put your physical needs first. Put your physical needs first. If you and I are going to remind ourselves of God's good promises, if you're not going to make good decisions, look, being in a hurry, being under pressure, won't help.

But, good sleep, and a nice meal beforehand might. Slow us down, and feed us well, Lord. Look, off record, if you need to, bring an apple to church.

It's okay. I will let you eat it here. It's totally fine. Look, here in the most unlikely of places, Paul, look, he takes this moment, he breaks bread, he gives thanks, he eats.

All right? What a picture, a mirror image of the Lord Jesus who provides and breaks bread with his followers. And look, another chance, right, to point everyone to God's grace and not blind luck.

[30 : 04] And so now, instead of a selfish scramble off the ship, right, you know, a little bit like Hunger Games style off the ship, it is this unlikely mix of people who are sharing a meal together.

What a transformation, right? And remember, who is in this group, right? So, I haven't talked much about the different people. I don't think it's as important. But look, there's 276 guys here, all right?

There's a lot of testosterone. There's a best of Caesar's soldiers. There's, there's really tired sailors that they just want to get off this ship. And then there's Paul, right, and his faithful companions.

There's Luke, who's writing the story. There's Aristarchus, one of his faithful traveler and companions. But there's such a random mix of people. The only thing they have in common is what?

They just want to get onto dry land. And yet the ordeal has changed at least one person, one person's perspective. And that's the centurion. His name's Julius. And look, it tells it the start of the story.

[31 : 04] He's in charge of the imperial regiment. So he must be an important soldier, okay? Kind of maybe closely connected to Caesar himself. And you have to wonder what went through his mind.

Okay? Day after day, watching his prisoner, Paul, be the most calm, the most composed, trusting his God. Maybe sometimes our testimonies don't have to be so vocal.

It can just be us living out God's good promises and making good decisions, showing the way of wisdom to our friends and family. Looks like Julius must have been touched, because in those last three verses of our story, Luke actually tells us, don't kill the prisoners.

Right? It sounds like he's taken a liking to Paul. He wants to spare his life. I like this guy, so just don't kill anyone, please. Right? Not today. And so Luke ends the chapter, incredibly, in this way, everyone reached land in safety.

What a story. From bad weather to good promises. From bad decisions to good ones. From certain death to salvation. You know, this is not luck.

[32 : 16] Right? For this ship to go 700 kilometers west and kind of crash into an island, okay, in the middle of the Mediterranean, that is not luck. That is God's miraculously sovereign hand.

He is a provider. He is the one who knows exactly what they need, and he carries them safely to shore. And let me leave us with kind of three quick lessons, I think. Three things that I kind of picked up from this chapter.

And perhaps three things that you could do too. Firstly, in the storms of life, we should repent, because God still rules over everything. Look, to go through the joys of life and just ignore God's goodness, as we've sung, that is tragic.

But I like to argue too, to go through your suffering, your hardships, and to ignore God's providence, the fact that he is still in control, ordaining things, is I think a mistake as well.

I think, friends, we need to trace God's hand in the good times and the bad times too. When you're shaken by a medical emergency, when you're pressured by the demands of unbelieving family, if you're alone this Christmas again, don't curse your bad luck.

[33 : 36] Instead, talk to your sovereign Lord, who knows, who is orchestrating everything in ways that we don't realize. That's what God's word calls us to do, right?

Again and again. To turn away from any desire in us to live life based on chance and luck and turn and cling to the living God who is sovereign over everything.

So in the storms of life, repent because God is still ruling over everything. Secondly, in the storms of life, I want us to remember that it is actually faith in God's promises that is our anchor.

Not our stuff. Not our relationships even. It's our faith in God's promises that should be our anchor. Look, our treasures might not be sitting at the bottom of, you know, the Mediterranean Sea like these poor guys, but maybe you have some stuff in your life that you are clinging on to.

You think it's what keeps you safe. But God wants us to cling tightly to His word, His promises instead. How are you going with that? Look at verse 25 again with me.

[34 : 49] And you tell me if this is not a man who has faith in God, who is clinging not to stuff, not to other things for security, but to the living God Himself and His word, His promises.

It's so clear from His testimony, isn't it? God wants us to do the same. What's your faith like then? What promises of God have you been clinging on to recently?

Do you believe them? God wants us to do it. I want you to do it. My suffering hurts, but thank you, Jesus, that you suffered in my place. My wallet is light, but thanks, God, for your indescribable gift of Christ.

My friendships seem shallow, but Holy Spirit, thank you. You dwell in my heart through faith. Can you see that? Anchor your faith and all of God's promises, all that Christ offers you.

Because finally, in the storms of life, rest assured, His grace will bring us safely home. We worship the same God who graciously gave all 276 souls on board to safety.

[36 : 07] This is the same God who offers incomparably rich grace, Ephesians 2.7, expressed in His kindness to us through Jesus Christ. And so we hold on and we live by grace, His grace.

It will bring us safely home. Think of our church, how storm-tossed it feels like sometimes to be part of this church. Look, if PCBC were a ship, we'd need more than rope to hold us together, I think.

We need a miracle. We need God's grace. How do we know God's grace is enough? We look at the cross. We see it.

We see it in what Jesus did for us, the plan of salvation. Look, it was not bad luck that Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus, right? It was not a short straw drawn when the authorities came together and said, crucify Him.

At the cross, we see God's wise and sovereign purposes and we see Jesus, our anchor. He is the lifeboat that will never get cut off from us.

[37 : 12] He is the captain who hurled himself into the biggest storm and rescues us from our sins. At the cross, He was shipwrecked for you.

That's the good news. And so you cling onto His broken wood, cling onto Him by faith alone, rest in His provision by grace alone and you will be saved.

Grace will lead you safely home. As John Newton's hymn famously puts it, we sang it just before and hopefully we'll sing it again, through many dangers, toils and snares.

I have already come. His grace has brought us safe thus far and grace will bring me home. Whatever storms come our way, PCBC, let's be assured, His grace has brought us safe thus far.

His grace will bring us safely home. Let's pray. Lord, help us to come away from this passage remembering that it's You alone who rule over all things.

[38 : 25] Our restless hearts, our weary souls, grace. And it's Your grace that will lead us safely home. So help us to celebrate this grace as we continue to share lives together.

Help us to tell of this grace to our friends and family, our dying world who desperately need it. We thank You that this season of Christmas we celebrate the amazing grace, the gift of our Lord Jesus given for us.

We pray all these things in Christ's name. Amen.