



When the time came for Paul to face trial in Rome, he and several other prisoners were placed in the custody of a Roman officer named Julius, a captain of the Imperial Regiment.



They set sail and the next day docked in Sidon. Julius kindly let Paul go ashore to visit friends who provided for his needs.



Putting out to sea again, they encountered strong headwinds that made it difficult to keep the ship on course. Passing by Cyprus they sailed along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, landing at Myra.



The commanding officer found an Egyptian ship that was bound for Italy and put Paul and the other prisoners on board.



After several days of slow and difficult sailing they finally neared Cnidus.



However, the wind was against them so they sailed south to Crete and finally arrived at Fair Havens.



The weather was becoming dangerous for sea travel. Paul spoke to the ship's officers: 'I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on - shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well.' But the ship's captain wanted to set sail.



Since Fair Havens was an exposed harbour, most of the crew wanted to sail up the coast to Phoenix, which was more sheltered, and spend the winter there. So they pulled up anchor and sailed close to the shore of Crete. But the weather changed abruptly, and a 'northeaster' - a wind of typhoon strength - swept across the island and blew them out to sea.





The sailors couldn't turn the ship into the wind, so they gave up and let it run before the gale. They bound ropes around the hull of the ship to strengthen it. They also lowered the sea anchor to slow the ship down.



The next day, as gale-force winds continued to batter the ship, the crew began throwing the cargo overboard.



The following day they even took some of the ship's gear and threw it overboard.



The terrible storm raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last all hope was gone. No one had eaten for a long time.





Paul called the crew together and said, 'Men, you should have listened to me and not left Crete. But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down.'



'Last night an angel of God stood beside me, and said, "Don't be afraid, Paul, for you will stand trial before Caesar! God in His goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you. So take courage! We will be shipwrecked on an island.'"



About midnight on the fourteenth night of the storm, the sailors sensed land was near. They dropped a weighted line and found that the water was 120 feet deep. A little later they measured again and found it was only 90 feet deep.



They were afraid they would be driven against the rocks along the shore, so they threw out four anchors from the back of the ship and prayed for daylight.



The sailors planned to abandon the ship by lowering the lifeboat.

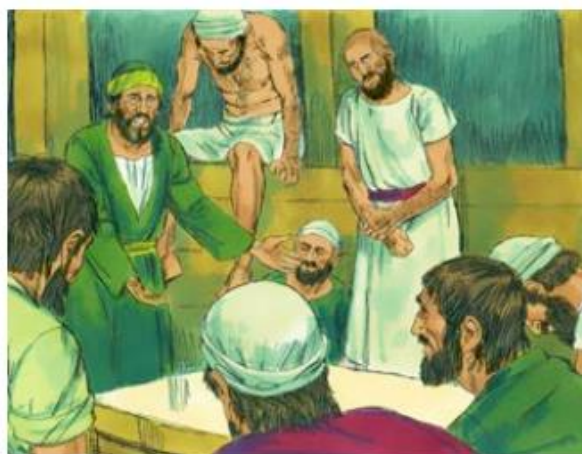




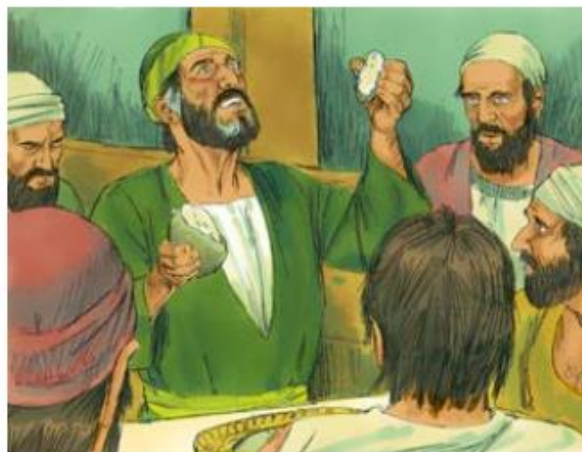
Paul said to the commanding officer and the soldiers, 'You will all die unless the sailors stay aboard.' So the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.



Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. 'Please eat something now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish.'



Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God, and broke off a piece and ate it. All 276 on board were encouraged and began to eat. The crew lightened the ship further by throwing the cargo of wheat overboard.

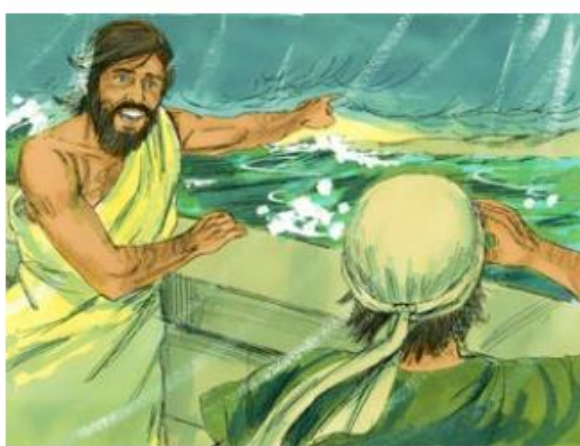


When morning dawned, they didn't recognize the coastline. *(It was the coast of Malta).*





When they saw a bay with a beach they wondered if they could get to shore by running the ship aground.



So they cut off the anchors and they lowered the rudders, raised the foresail, and headed toward shore.



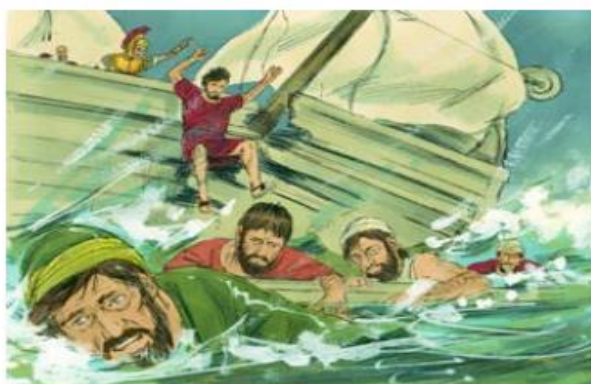
But they hit a shoal and ran the ship aground too soon. The bow of the ship stuck fast, while the stern was repeatedly smashed by the force of the waves and began to break apart.



The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners to make sure they didn't swim ashore and escape. However, the commanding officer wanted to spare Paul, and stopped them.



Then he ordered all who could swim to jump overboard first and make for land. The others held on to planks or debris from the broken ship.



Just as the angel had said, everyone made it safely to the shore.

