

Here’s a blast from the past - Gilligan’s Island! Remember their catchy tune? *“Just sit right back and you’ll hear a tale, A tale of a fateful trip, that started from this tropic port, aboard this tiny ship.”*

That tiny ship was the SS Minnow. The three-hour tour included the Skipper, Gilligan, a Millionaire, his wife, the Professor, Ginger and Mary Ann. Everyone survived the storm, but the Minnow was beached on a deserted island.

That shipwreck became a sitcom in the 60’s. But there’s nothing funny about fighting for your life in a cold ocean in the middle of a storm.

Thankfully, being shipwrecked is not on our list of life experiences. But the same can’t be said for the Apostle Paul. As Paul, the prisoner, was being escorted onto the ship in today’s lesson, he had already been shipwrecked 3 other times in his life. Acts 27 records his fourth.

Let’s use Paul’s reaction in the face of this storm, as a teachable moment for the storms we face in our own lives. We’ve all faced storms. We’re facing one now. We’ll certainly face more.

The Jews in Jerusalem had brought Paul up on charges for inciting a riot with his teachings about God. As a Roman citizen, Paul was now exercising his right to appeal his case to the highest court in the empire - Caesar. Even though God had already told Paul that he would testify about him in Rome, that didn’t make this trip any less frightening or dangerous for Paul.

If you’ve ever been on a cruise ship, the type of ship Paul was on had absolutely nothing in common with your ship, except that they both floated. These wooden ships were about 180 feet long. That might seem big, but not in the open waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

The combination of sailing after the shipping season closes and strong storms would seem to be a recipe for disaster, even for veteran sailors. The possibility of being shipwrecked - again - had to be on Paul’s mind.

This voyage quickly went from difficult to dangerous. The storm got so intense that they

began to toss cargo overboard. Ropes were wrapped around the boat to reinforce the wooden timbers to keep them from breaking apart.

Can you imagine going through that kind of storm? It must have been terrifying knowing the ship could end up in splinters and you’d be shipwrecked, or worse.

You’ve sailed through plenty storms of your own. You wish life had only sunny days, calm waters and smooth sailing. And some seem to have more sun, while others more storm clouds. But eventually, we all know we’re going to face our own dark skies and stormy weather:

- What do you do when you find yourself in the hospital, and you’re trying to wrap your brain around the doctor’s diagnosis?
- What about those times you should have addressed a family or relationship issue, but didn’t?
- What do you do when your once secure job has been eliminated, way of life has been interrupted?
- What about when your expectations for school, for academics or athletics, for boy-friend / girl-friend, crashes and burns?

And there are plenty of other storms that can shipwreck our life: the death of a parent, an illness with a spouse, a problem with a child, an issue at work or church, not to mention the COVID storm we’re currently sailing through.

Fisherman and ship captains constantly encounter storms in their line of work. They survive with preparation. The most important part of that preparation, never leave the dock without an anchor in the boat.

When storms made it impossible to steer the ship, an anchor could be lowered behind the ship. That’s not a metal anchor with hooks. This “*anchor*” was a large piece of canvas sewn together in the shape of a funnel that would slow down the ship so they crew could survive the storm.

Preparation is even more vital for our spiritual survival. God supplies us with anchors, five of them, that will help us face our own storms.

(1) Our first anchor ... spiritual steadiness. The soldiers and crew, the passengers and prisoners on that ship had reached a point where they lost all hope of being saved. So, God sent Paul a message, a promise filled with hope. Paul encouraged everyone to hold on to God's promise.

Our steadiness during life's storms is also anchored to God's promises. Isaiah 43 is one of the best: **"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you."**

God doesn't promise to take away Paul's storm, or our storms, either. He does promise to bring Paul and us through the storm. God's promises are an anchor for our faith.

(2) A second anchor ... the people God has placed around us. Staying together was key to their riding out this storm. They were tempted to abandon ship and make it everyman for himself. In difficult times we tend to withdraw, lock the door and pull down the shades.

A better choice is to reach out for support from family and friends, especially our Christian family of faith and friends here at St. Paul's. By God's design, we need each other as an anchor, for support.

(3) A third anchor ... physical strength. Imagine fighting a storm for days without any food or sleep! The people on Paul's ship ran their tanks empty. That can happen to us and we end up physically and emotionally drained.

Paul encouraged them to eat. What was God's remedy in 1 Kings when the prophet Elijah was exhausted and depressed? Eat! Drink! Sleep! Take care of yourself with healthy eating and sleeping habits.

(4) A fourth anchor ... mental stability. Paul didn't like the storm that blew them off course. He didn't appreciate hitting the sand bar and having to swim ashore. But rather than complain, he accepted the

situation and tried to do whatever needed to be done.

We can use up so much time and energy complaining about our situation. Asking for the Lord's help is all-important to our mental stability during storms.

(5) Our final anchor ... purposeful living. No matter what the storm, God will use it for our good and for the good of others. Our purpose in life is to serve God and each other. That doesn't change when we find ourselves in the eye of a storm.

Notice how Paul continued to serve the people on the ship as they went through their storm. He prayed for them. He encouraged them. He comforted them. He even fed them.

The people on that ship were watching Paul as he trusted God in the face of this storm. It had to leave an indelible mark on them.

People are watching you, as you navigate through your own storms. What lessons are you teaching them about trusting God and remaining faithful to him in this storm, or that shipwreck? No matter what the situation, our purpose remains the same: serve God and each other.

Storms are in the forecast! Get those anchors ready by listening to God's promises here every week, and reading your Bible's and devotions at home every day.

Storms are in the forecast! The anchors God supplies us with will help us face each storm. One hymn verse describes our most important anchor:

*When you are sick, when death draws near,
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves my soul from death
This is the anchor of my faith!*