



ENDURANCE

HEBREWS 10:36

Shipwrecked!

Endurance through death, destruction, and pain,

When I was a kid, **I thought it would be awesome to be shipwrecked.** True – my family didn't own a boat, and we never went on a cruise. I don't know how or when we could have been shipwrecked, but it still sounded amazing to me. After all, **I had seen the movies and TV shows.**

We could be just like **Swiss Family Robinson.** We'd have a three story tree house, a monkey for a pet, a great time swimming in the ocean and my family would defeat pirates in fierce battles. I'd be good at that!

Some of you are looking at me like, "What in the world is Swiss Family Robinson?" It was a great shipwreck movie that didn't require a lot of thought. Think "Lost" but with a boat instead of an airplane and without all the confusion – trying to figure out if John Locke was dead or alive, where the smoke monster came from or why Desmond kept pushing the button. All I felt after watching the finale of Lost was more lost.

Gilligan's Island was much more simple. The Professor would figure out how to get off the island. Gilligan would mess it up. Skipper would hit him with his hat. That was pretty much it.

And – who really wanted to leave Gilligan's Island anyway? They had cool huts and beautiful women. As a kid, I could picture myself stranded on an island with Ginger and Mary Ann.

PIC

The way I saw it, I wouldn't want to be rescued. I'd just be happy with them. And – at some point, realizing we were never going to leave the island, **one of them would give up and marry me**. I'm sure it would be Mary Ann. We would have a beach wedding, and live happily ever after on the island.

Doesn't that sound great? It sure did to me. The problem is – **shipwrecks in real life aren't like shipwrecks in the movies**. You don't end up on a tropical island with beautiful people and fresh fruit. **In real life, a shipwreck results in death, destruction, and pain**. If you asked the Titanic survivors, they would tell you – shipwrecks aren't fun. If you asked the crew of the Exxon Valdez – they would agree – shipwrecks are horribly painful.

If life is a cruise, nothing is more difficult than a shipwreck. You have been there. Maybe you are there.

Everything is going fine – you are at full sail. **Then, suddenly, without warning, you find yourself in a storm.**

VIDEO

When the storm is over, instead of your dream, you find yourself surrounded by devastation, destruction and debris. Your life feels like a total wreck.

Many times, you have no control over a shipwreck.

Things happen. It's part of living in this world. People do the wrong thing. Sickness strikes. Shipwrecked.

But, **there are times when your ship wrecks because of a bad decision.** You should have known better. In fact, you probably did know better. But, now you are there – in the middle of a self-induced **Shipwreck.**

So many people warned you. Your parents never approved of him. Your pastors were concerned. But, you were young and in love. True – he had some different thoughts and beliefs. But, love conquers all – right? So, in spite of all the advice, and in spite of your own fears, you went for it. Now, years later, **all that's left of the wedding is the pictures, a lot of bills, and a broken heart. Shipwrecked**

You knew you were getting in over your head – spending a lot of money. But, your job was good and you expected a big raise every year. And, after all – you couldn't turn

down all those offers for no interest credit cards, could you? Then, it happened. When the economy came to a screeching halt, so did your business. Now you are sifting through an ever-increasing pile of bills. **You get further behind every month. Shipwrecked.**

You didn't plan to be an alcoholic or addicted. Nobody plans that way. While you were in high school, you followed your parent's rules. But, then you were free. Why should everyone else have all the fun? It started out with a few parties. With no parents around, you had a lot of fun – tried a lot of new things. Now – it's not quite as much fun. No one wants to be an addict, but you are. It started so innocently. How did it ever get to this point? **Shipwrecked.**

We are going to spend the **next few Sundays, learning from a shipwreck in the apostle Paul's life.** In his case – it literally happened. A ship went down.

My goal is to equip you to **avoid shipwrecks that are your fault** and to help you **survive shipwrecks that are not your fault at all.** If you are going through a difficult time, you need to change your schedule and be here – all four weeks. If you know someone who is currently shipwrecked – invite them to church. There is hope.

Paul was being held prisoner. His crime? Preaching the gospel – sharing the message that Jesus' love is available for all. Paul spent several years on trial – in various cities, before different officials. Travel was a little different in those days. Paul couldn't hop on Southwest Airlines and be there in an hour.

We pick up the story in Acts, chapter 27. Paul is about to get on a boat, bound for Italy and the next trial.

I love the Bible. We can learn principles for life's journey from the Bible. And – we can learn from the mistakes of others. From Paul's story and the sailors who were with him, we learn **How to Make a Bad Decision.** If you make the same mistakes these sailors made, you will wreck.

27:1 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. 2 We boarded a ship... and we put out to sea... 4 the winds were against us. 5 When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. 7 We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. 8 We moved along the

coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. 9Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous...

This trip wasn't going well. They were behind schedule and against the wind. They had to change course and head toward a new destination. Sailing had become dangerous and difficult. So – what did they do? Did they stop? No – they pressed on. That's the first step in making a bad decision - **ignore the danger signs.**

I'll never forget a conversation with a good friend. He was about to make a risky, questionable life decision. I was challenging his thought process. He said, "I know this doesn't make sense. I know there are a lot of reasons not to do it. I know this is a huge risk. But, if I don't do this, I'll never get this kind of chance again".

Another friend was heading towards marriage. There were so many danger signs. I tried to talk her out of it. She said, "If I don't marry him, I'm afraid there won't be anyone else."

I've seen it happen so many times. You can see it's headed in the wrong direction – **the danger signs are everywhere.**

- **He's not honest with other people**, but you ignore that. Surely he will be honest with you.
- **She's got a track record of failed relationships.** But, you decide it will be different this time.

- **You have a bad feeling.** You can't get peace over the decision. But, you decide to go ahead anyway.
- **He has failed in multiple other businesses.** But, this one looks so good.
- **He has lasting conflict with his last three business partners.** But, it won't happen to me.

You see the signs. Everyone around you sees the signs. It's been a rocky road the whole way. But, you choose to press on, in spite of all the danger signs.

Here's a good way to know if you are currently doing this. You say things like:

- I can handle it
- I don't have a problem
- I'm not like those other people
- I know what you are saying. I know how it looks. But don't worry about me. I'm OK.

When you ignore the danger signs, you are headed for disaster.

*Paul warned them, 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." ¹¹But the centurion, **instead of listening to what Paul said**, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship.*

Paul gave good advice. “If we go ahead, if we press on with this plan, we are in trouble.” But, the centurion ignored Paul and instead listened to the pilot and the owner. **Simply put – he listened to the wrong voice.** If you **listen to the wrong voice**, you are likely to crash.

I see this so often in students and young adults. They are doing great, living for God. Then, something happens. They aren’t at church as often. They start making questionable decisions. Grades start slipping. What happened? They started listening to the wrong voice.

I tell parents: “You need to find out who the new voice is in your son’s life – in your daughter’s life. They are listening to someone, and it’s not you or me.”

I’ve seen so many students turn their back on God when they started listening to the wrong voice – someone they were dating, or a new friend who doesn’t share their beliefs. They’ve got a new leader in their life, who is pulling them a new direction. **When you listen to the wrong voice, you make bad decisions.**

¹²Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. This was a harbor in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest.

“The majority decided we should sail on.”

That's a recipe for a life wreck - **follow the crowd**. Let the majority decide what you should do.

People do things in a pack they would never do on their own. That's why you see **riots** in the street after a sports team wins a championship. What in the world is that all about? People following the crowd. They don't make a habit of setting cars on fire. But when their team wins, they turn their brain off and follow the crowd.

I have learned. **The crowd doesn't always have your best interests at heart. The crowd doesn't always share your priorities.**

Listen to me – you weren't designed to be just one of the crowd. You are special. You are uniquely created by God – designed for a purpose. **Don't just blindly follow the crowd. When you do – you're headed for a wreck.**

13When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they had obtained what they wanted;

It felt good – a gentle south wind. So – what did they do? They ignored logic, because they thought they had got what they wanted. If you want to make a bad decision and keep going the wrong direction, **trust your feelings**.

“It must be good for me. **After all – it feels right.** If it feels so good, how can it be wrong?” Your feelings are a dangerous way to make decisions.

Your feelings got you into that bad relationship. Now your feelings are keeping you in a relationship you know is bad. You know it’s wrong, but you can’t get out. Why? Because you have feelings for him. Even though you know it is wrong, you just can’t get past your feelings.

Let me tell you – you can’t trust your feelings. Your feelings will cause you to make horrible decisions and major mistakes. You know that – because it’s already happened to you. When you ignore the warning signs, tune out the right voices and instead trust your feelings, you are headed for disaster.

... so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. ¹⁴Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the “northeaster,” swept down from the island. ¹⁵The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along.

They couldn’t go the right way. Why? They had made a series of bad choices, now they were caught in the wind and couldn’t turn back.

When you make bad decisions, just like those sailors, you will ultimately find yourself in a storm – headed for a shipwreck.

You never planned to go there. You never planned to do that. You never pictured yourself in this place, in this situation. But, **bad decisions become bad directions.**

You don't make decision in isolation. Your decisions affect the direction of your life. Every decision affects direction.

That's why I caution students and singles so strongly about who they date. You decide to date someone who believes differently than you because of a feeling. That decision can quickly become a direction in your life.

You go into business with someone who has a bad track record. You decide to ignore the warning signs. That decision quickly becomes a direction in your life. And – when you get headed the wrong direction, it is difficult, expensive and embarrassing to change course.

16As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure.

Now, the wind is blowing so hard, they are barely able to make the lifeboat secure. **They are losing their only means of escape.** Do you know what is interesting to me? **You would think the passage would say, “So they turned around.”** But, apparently they didn't even consider that. When you are caught in the storm, **you can't see a way out.**

- Can't see how I can end this relationship now. Guess I'll keep going.
- How could I lose these friends?
- How could I get out of this business deal now? Guess I'm in it for good.

It is so dangerous. **You are headed the wrong direction and you keep heading the wrong direction.** You can't see a way out of the mess you are in. So – since you can't see a way out, you just keep going.

17When the men had hoisted it aboard, they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together.

I'm not a professional sailor. In fact, I'm not even an amateur sailor. But, I do know this. **When you start tying your ship together with rope, that's not a good sign.**

When you are in a storm: **Everything around you seems to fall apart.**

And - what do we do? Everything around us is falling apart. But, **we don't blame it on our decisions. That would hurt too much. Instead, we blame it on the wind and the storm.**

Some of you have made the same bad decisions over and over. You've chalked it up to bad luck, or bad people. It's time to realize – you are making bad decisions. That's why you are in the storm.

- The reason why I keep going back to **drugs** is my decisions. I am deciding to stay around those people. It's not my friend's fault. It's not my parent's fault. It's my fault. I make the decisions that determine my direction.
- The reason why I keep ending up in **failed relationships** is my own fault. I am making bad decisions. I chose each of those people. I obviously have a broke chooser. My decisions are determining my direction.
- I am in **financial trouble** because I made some bad decisions. I ignored the warning signs. My decisions. My direction.

When you consider the sequence and the decisions you have made, it shouldn't be a surprise when everything seems to fall apart.

Fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along.

The sailors have now officially given up. "We can no longer steer this ship. We are no longer in control. **We have made so many bad decisions, that now all we can do is ride out the storm and see where we end up.**" They lower the anchor, hoping it will slow them down and let the storm take them wherever it wants.

That's what happens. When you are caught in a storm, you **struggle to get back on course.**

I sat at lunch with one of my friends. **He told me the story of his failed marriage.** It was a familiar story. They knew it was going bad, but couldn't seem to get headed in the right direction. Two good people – people I love. They just couldn't get back on course.

That's the danger of bad decisions. You chose to listen to the wrong voice. You chose to ignore the warning signs. You chose to trust your feelings. Now, you are caught in a storm and can't seem to get back on course.

It's so much easier to go the right direction from the very start than it is to change directions. It's difficult to get back on course.

¹⁸We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. ¹⁹On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.

The storm is so strong they begin to lose everything. Understand – **the cargo is the point of their journey.** When they throw it overboard, they are risking everything. When they reach their destination, the owner isn't going to be happy. They might go to jail. They will be ruined financially.

What do we learn? When you are in a storm: **You pay a high price.** Physically, emotionally, financially, spiritually – the cost is high. If I passed the microphone around this morning, you could tell your story.

- My bad **relationship decision** cost me years of my life – and so much emotional pain.
- My bad **business decision** cost me everything I had.
- My **lies and deception** cost me the trust of everyone I care about.
- I chose to **walk away from church and from God.** It cost me so much. I'm still paying the price.

20When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

The storm went on for many days. It lasted so long they gave up. No hope. Over. Done. Finished. It happens. When you are caught in a storm: **you lose hope.**

The storm keeps going. It seems like it will never end. What do we do? We lose hope.

- **It will never be better.**
- **I guess I'm just a loser.**
- **There is no hope for me.**

- **I might as well give up my dreams.** They can never happen now.
- **Even God can't love me and forgive me now.** I'm finished.
- **I'm not even sure I can find a reason to live.**

That is what happens to us in the severe storms of life. We know we are headed for a shipwreck and we simply lose hope. Maybe you have been there. Maybe you are there today.

21After the men had gone a long time without food,

Not a good thing. Not only are they on a ship held together with ropes and hundreds of miles of course, they are hungry.

Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete;

At this point, no one argues with Paul. His plan sounded really good now. They thought they knew better. Obviously, they didn't. Their sequence of mistakes led them to this place.

"Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. 22But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed.

In the middle of the storm, right at the worst point, Paul says: “It’s true. You made a bad decision. You’re going to pay a high price. You’re going to lose a lot. But, I’ve got good news for you.”

Here’s the good news: Even though you are in a storm of your own making, your decisions determined that direction – in spite of all that, **God gives second chances.**

You don’t have to spend the rest of your life caught in a storm. It’s true – it has cost you a lot and will cost you a lot. But, it hasn’t cost you your chance with God. He still loves you. He still reaches out for you.

God isn’t waiting in heaven with a stick, wanting to punish you. God gives second chances.

When should I give up? When God gives up. And – there is no give up in God. God gives second chances.

This morning, you are here – in the middle of a storm that is your own fault. Do you know what? **I’m not here to lecture you or condemn you. God’s not here to condemn you.** Instead, I want to offer you a second chance – a way out.

I know it sounds incredible, but it is true. You can choose to turn back. You can stop the direction your life is headed. You don’t have to continue on this path. There is still hope. God gives second chances.

Some of you are on the path – headed toward that storm.
Turn around now!