



# COURAGEOUS

## CHRISTIANS

### Courageous Christians: Paul

**God is in control** *(taken from Acts 27 & 28)*

Paul travelled far and wide. He visited many cities and spoke to many who were determined to live as Jesus taught: as believers, as followers of the way and as anointed ones. Many new churches were started and the Holy Spirit was working in powerful ways. Paul continued to come face to face with people who did not like the message of love and grace and they tried to stop him. They thought he was a troublemaker, and he was arrested many times, accused of being disruptive to the Jewish way of life. Paul ended up on trial in Jerusalem. Amazingly, Paul never seemed to be afraid, even when he was speaking in front of Governors and Kings. The presence of the Holy Spirit gave him courage to speak powerfully and clearly. But even the Governors and Kings did not know what to do with him. Eventually, Paul was put on a boat bound for Rome in Italy. Paul was being sent to Caesar!

When the boat arrived on the island of Crete, the weather turned against them. The strong winds and high seas made even sailing along the coast difficult.

'We should stay in port here on Crete,' Paul urged the captain of the ship. 'If we set sail for Italy now, it will be a disaster! We could lose the cargo and even our own lives, the sea is so rough!'

But the captain of the ship, a centurion named Julius, did not listen to Paul. He was only a prisoner, after all! Instead, Julius the captain instructed the pilot of the ship to set sail.

Before long, a hurricane-force wind whipped up the sea and the ship was tossed violently on the waves. The ship's crew were very afraid and began throwing the cargo and ship's tackle overboard to try and make the ship lighter. The wind howled and the rain poured incessantly and it was pitch dark, even during the day. The pilot, crew and even the captain finally gave up hope of being saved. They thought they would drown!



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But Paul stood up and spoke yet again words of comfort, hope and encouragement. Made bold by the Holy Spirit, Paul told them all not to be afraid.

'Not one of us will die,' he said. 'Last night, an angel of the God I serve came to me and told me we would live. So keep your courage – God is on our side! Eat as much as you can. Then, let the boat run aground and swim for the land that is near.' Then, Paul took some bread and broke it and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Everyone there was encouraged and strengthened. As soon as it got light, they jumped overboard and swam for the shore, hanging on to planks of wood from the wrecked ship. Not one of the 276 men on board was drowned!

Paul and the others found themselves on Malta. The islanders there were kind and hospitable and built a fire to welcome them all and help them get warm and dry. As Paul lifted some dry wood to add to the fire, a viper, who had been sleeping in the brushwood, leapt out and bit Paul on his hand. When everyone saw this, they thought he would die from the poison in the snake bite. But Paul just shook off the snake and carried on as if nothing had happened! This gave Paul another opportunity to talk about Jesus and his death and resurrection. He was able to explain and teach all that he had seen and experienced of the living God and he also prayed for many on the island and God healed them. Another church was born!

Paul did eventually get to Rome and he was able to continue to witness and teach about Jesus. He was under arrest right up until he died, crucified just as Jesus was. But throughout it all - all the difficulties and suffering, despite all the lies told about him and all the nights in prison, despite the pain and the beatings, Paul never doubted Jesus and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. He was never ashamed of being a Christian; he spoke courageously about God's power to forgive and heal and make new. He never worried about what anyone thought of him and wanted to be like Jesus more than anything else.

Paul knew that God was in control, always.