

“Not a hair from your head will be destroyed.” They gave me over to a centurion named Julius. He was in charge of escorting me to Rome so I could stand trial there before the Emperor. He found us a ship that would take us from Caesarea—where I had been in prison for the last two years—to the southwestern coast of Asia Minor. Once we got there he got us on board a grain ship that was heading to Rome. The weather changed on that journey and the winds began to **oppose** us, forcing us to stop for a time on the island of Crete. The feast of the Day of Atonement passed and we were deep into the season of fall, which was the most **dangerous** season for sailing on the Mediterranean Sea. I spoke to the centurion Julius and **warned** him that we **must not** continue the journey. I told him that the ship, its cargo, and all its passengers would possibly be destroyed if they **arrogantly** continued into the sea in this bad weather. But the ship captain—wanting to get his cargo to Rome and **cash in** on his payday and also convinced of the **strength** of human technology and the **intelligence** of man to overcome any obstacle—convinced Julius that we should continue the journey. He said we could at least get to the western end of Crete and wait there till the dangerous sailing season was over. Julius **ignored** my warning and trusted this human **expert**.

So we got back on the sea and it seemed as if the human experts were right, the winds were calm and we were carefully making our way along the coast of Crete. But then suddenly the winds **shifted** and started blowing super strong out of the northeast. The winds pushed us **hopelessly** to the southwest—deep into the Mediterranean Sea. The winds were so strong and fierce that we had to drop our sails. The winds were pushing us rapidly towards Africa and the deadly sand bars off its coast—if we hit those we would be completely destroyed and far from land. So the sailors dropped the anchor and hoped it would slow us down—it did, but only a little. Then the sky started dumping **torrential** rain the next day, so intensely that the ship was filling with water and we were starting to sink into the sea. So we began to throw the ship’s expensive and precious **cargo** overboard to lighten our load. On the third day it was still a downpour and we were still too heavy and taking on water, so they threw the ship’s gear and equipment overboard.

The days and nights rolled by. It was dark and rainy all the time and we lost track of time. Yet the storm raged on. Eventually a deep **despair** set in among even the most sea-hardy. Every single person feared that our complete destruction was right around the corner. So I stood up in the midst of these people who were completely **paralyzed** and **frozen** in their anxiety, worry, and fear. I told them our situation was a direct result of **not listening** to my word of warning that had come from the Creator of heaven and earth. **Because** we ignored the Creator’s Word of warning we were facing this trouble and catastrophe. But I told them not to give up hope—the angel of the Lord had appeared to me in a dream and assured me that every single person on the boat could be saved if we would but **repent** and turn to the Creator in **trust**. The **ship** and all of its **cargo** would be lost forever, but our **souls** would be saved.

This brought new energy into the crew. We had been stuck in this storm for **two weeks** now and so the crew started checking the depth of the sea because they suspected we were getting closer to land. They found that the depth was shrinking rapidly and we were indeed getting close to some shore. They threw **all** the anchors into the sea and hoped they would keep the ship from running into land during the night. Some of the sailors thought they might escape using the ship’s small landing boat that was attached to the side of the ship. They were in the middle of escaping from the ship when I told the centurion Julius that for any of us to be saved we **all** had to **stay together**. He listened and immediately cut loose the landing boat—and we then watched our last **“safety net”** fall away into the sea. All of our human security measures were gone. We were now **completely** in the Creator’s hands. He would save us or nothing would.

As the sun began to rise I gathered the whole ship of 276 people together. I urged everyone to share one last meal together. I assured them that if we trusted in the Creator that **“not a hair from your head will be destroyed.”** Then following Jesus’s example, I took the bread, gave thanks, and then broke it into pieces and shared it with everyone on the ship. Then after eating our fill, we took all the leftover food and grain on the ship and threw it into the sea. We **saved nothing** for tomorrow, knowing that the next day was completely in the Creator’s loving hands. And it was—the ship ended up getting stuck on a sandbar in the morning and as it was being destroyed, all 276 people were able to jump into the sea and either swim or float to shore. We lost **everything** we had, every single thing, but our souls and lives were saved.

When I looked back on this journey, I came to realize that it was a beautiful picture of the whole **journey of faith**. Our lives start with us trying to do whatever we **want**. The Lord meanwhile warns us to **stop** our selfish pursuits. We **ignore** him and it leads to calamity and disaster. But the Lord does not give up on us. He wants to **save us**, but everything we falsely trust in, needs to be destroyed in the process. So he allows us to suffer the consequences of our poor decisions and slowly but surely we run out of options and ways to save ourselves. All of our possessions and idols are taken away from us, one at a time, until we finally hit rock bottom and realize we are completely **helpless**. There the Lord reaches out to us again and urges us to live one day at a time with **love** and **sharing**. He urges us to turn to him and trust in his care, protection, and provision—letting go of our **arrogance** so we might submit to him and each other in complete humility. And when we let go of everything and submit to him, we are **saved**.

“Not a hair from your head will be destroyed.” This is the Lord’s promise to **you** on this day. The Lord is there for you and he will stand up for you and you will be **saved**. But, that journey of salvation will not be fun, easy, or painless. You will have to lose everything you have—**every single thing**. Your ego and sense of self and identity, your belief that you are right, your family, your career, your possessions and wealth—everything. You can try to resist this, but you will not be successful. You will only make things worse for yourself, you will only delay the inevitable. The Lord is going to strip you down, tear you down, and take everything you have—but he does it because he **loves** you and is saving you from yourself, your arrogance, and your poor choices that are in defiance of his Word.

“Not a hair from your head will be destroyed.” What paths have you chosen in life that are in **resistance** to the Creator? What habits do you have that are not pleasing to the Lord? In what ways are you fighting against the Lord’s will? You may be decades down these paths, deeply entrenched in destructive patterns and choices, but it is **not too late** to repent, to change course. It is not too late to throw your dysfunction and bad habits overboard. It is not too late to let go of everything you have. It is not too late to **humble yourself** and surrender yourself to the Lord. Yes, you will lose everything and the storms in your life will get crazy, causing everything you lean on, that is not the Creator, to sink to the bottom of the sea. But the Creator will save your soul. Wake up and realize you cannot fix your life and save yourself. Let go of everything you have and turn to the Lord Jesus in faith and you will be saved. **“Not a hair from your head will be destroyed.” Amen.**