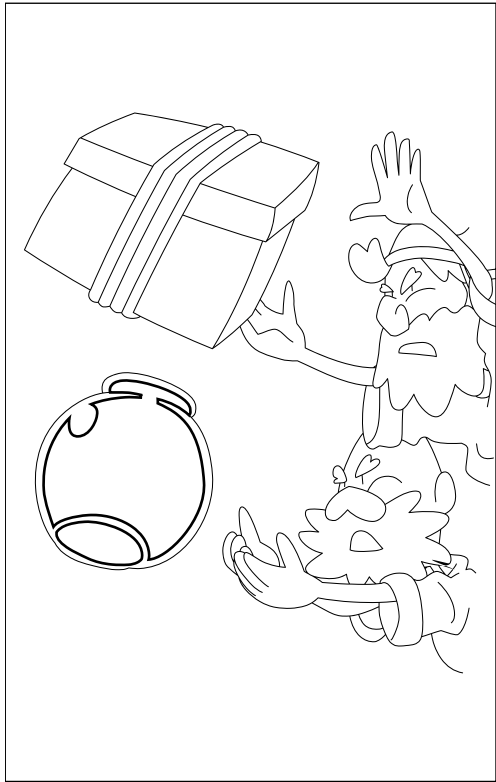


Shipwrecked



Colour me!



Acts 27:9a, 11-25

Paul was a prisoner. He was being transferred to Rome by boat to stand trial.

By now we had already lost a lot of time, and sailing was no longer safe. In fact, even the Great Day of Forgiveness was past. But Julius listened to the captain of the ship and its owner, rather than to Paul. The harbour at Fair Havens wasn't a good place to spend the winter. Because of this, almost everyone agreed that we should at least try to sail along the coast of Crete as far as Phoenix. It had a harbour that opened towards the south-west and north-west, and we could spend the winter there.

When a gentle wind from the south started blowing, the men thought it was a good time to do what they had planned. So they pulled up the anchor, and we sailed along the coast of Crete. But soon a strong wind called "The North-easter" blew against us from the island. The wind struck the ship, and we could not sail against it. So we let the wind carry the ship. We went along the island of Cauda on the side that was protected from the wind. We had a hard time holding the lifeboat in place, but finally we got it where it belonged. Then the sailors tied ropes around the ship to hold it together. They lowered the sail and let the ship drift along, because they were afraid it might hit the sandbanks in the gulf of Syrtis.

The storm was so fierce that the next day they threw some of the ship's cargo overboard. Then on the third day, with their bare hands they threw overboard some of the ship's gear. For several days we could not see either the sun or the stars. A strong wind kept blowing, and we finally gave up all hope of being saved. Since none of us had eaten anything for a long time, Paul stood up and told the men:

"You should have listened to me! If you had stayed on in Crete, you would not have had this damage and loss. But now I beg you to cheer up, because you will be safe. Only the ship will be lost. I belong to God, and I worship him. Last night he sent an angel to tell me, 'Paul, don't be afraid! You will stand trial before the Emperor. And because of you, God will save the lives of everyone on the ship.' Cheer up! I am sure that God will do exactly what he promised. But we will first be shipwrecked on some island."

Commentary

After Paul's return to Jerusalem from his many missionary journeys, he ran into trouble with the Jewish leaders. He ended up in prison for two years, but even there he made use of his time to tell the story of Jesus to two Roman governors and a local king. Finally, as a Roman citizen, he appealed to be tried before the emperor in Rome, which meant a long journey by sea; but Paul knew that this was where God wanted him to go.

It was a dangerous time of year to sail and the people on board soon began to pay the price, losing their cargo as they tried to keep the ship afloat in the storm. Clearly Paul had been praying and God assured him that they would get through, even if the boat was wrecked. That's exactly what happened. They were shipwrecked off the island of Malta with no loss of life, and many of the islanders became Christians. Paul never lost an opportunity to tell people about the kingdom of God!

Paul did eventually get to Rome, where he was put under house arrest to await trial. This didn't stop him meeting fellow Christians to encourage them, writing letters and even making plans to take the good news one day to the ends of the earth.

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Questions

- ▶ Why didn't the Roman officer believe what Paul had told him?
- ▶ Sailing on the high seas in those days was always risky. What were the dangers they had to face?
- ▶ It was a big ship, with 276 people on board. What different jobs might they have done, and how did they work together to try to save the vessel?
- ▶ How did God speak to Paul on board the ship?
- ▶ Do you think the crew believed Paul when he told them that they would be safe?



Visual aid

Create a boat from the furniture and household items around you. Imagine what it must be like to be caught in a violent storm. Perhaps some cushions or pillows can be the cargo you throw overboard.



Activity idea

Imagine that your own home is in danger of being destroyed, like Paul's ship, and that you only have time to save five items. What would you take with you? If you had to leave in an even greater hurry, what one thing would you take? God answered Paul's prayers and saved the most important things—their lives. The ship's cargo or our possessions are always going to be less valuable than human life.



Prayer idea

Paul remembers to pray in the middle of the chaos of the storm at sea. Find some news headlines and ask God to rescue the people from whatever storms they are in. Perhaps the Christians in Crete, who knew that Paul was sailing nearby in the storm, were praying for him.

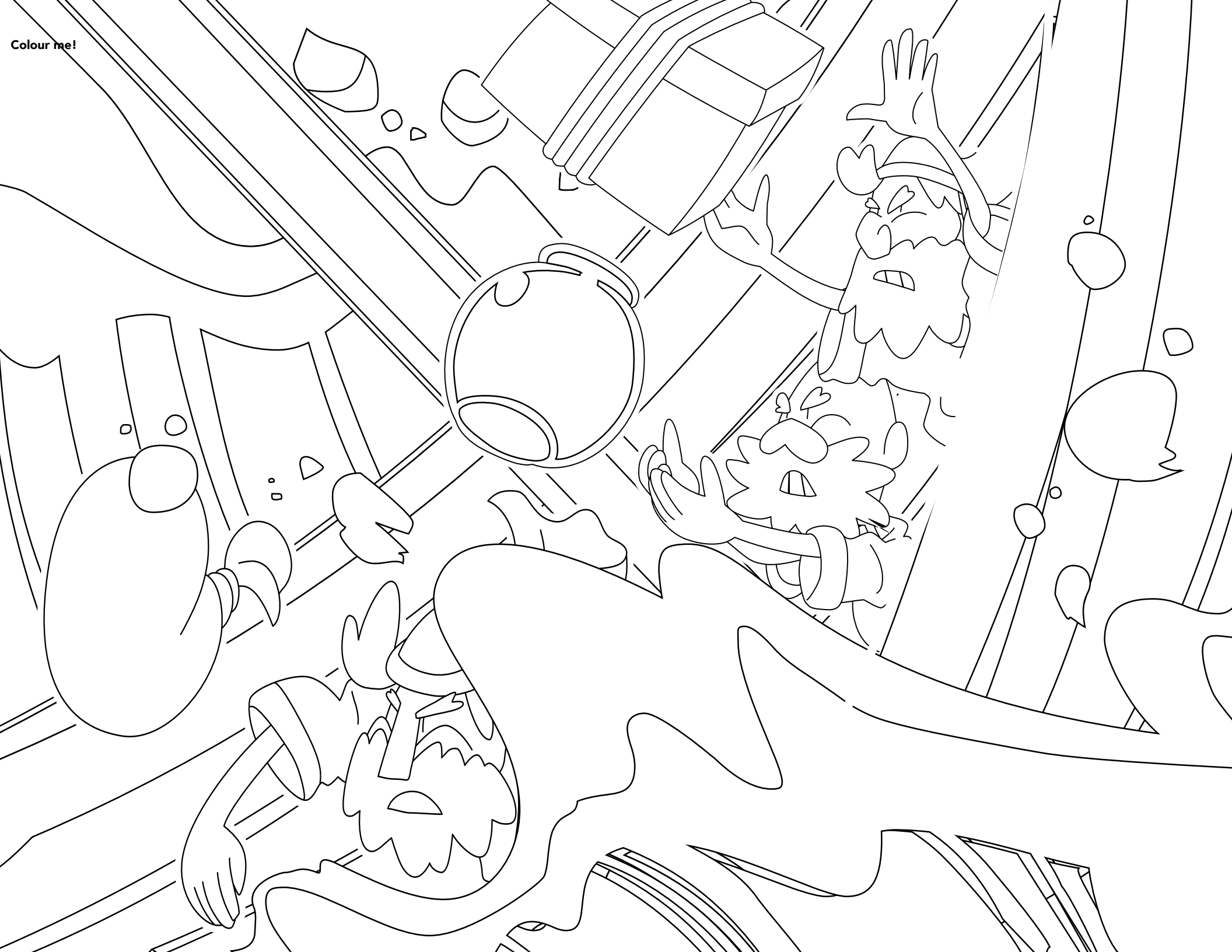
Key verse

Don't be afraid... God will save the lives of everyone on the ship (Acts 27:24).

Old Testament story link

2 Chronicles 20:1-23: Jehoshaphat faces huge threats from his enemies, but remembers to pray to God for help.





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