

CWP. 45. Don't Wreck Your Shipwreck

Introduction.

Well, hi, and welcome to the podcast. Welcome to coffee with Phil. My name is Phil Strong, and it's a privilege to be with you. Here we are. On episode forty-five, the title of today's episode is "*Don't wreck. Your shipwreck.*" And this should be a fun conversation.

I was recently having coffee with a friend of mine; his name is Scott. And we enjoy getting together. It's always a laugh, and of course, why would you not want to have coffee with Phil? Well, of course. Why would I not want to have coffee with Scott? So, we got together recently. It was a cold day, and we sat outside to avoid the crowds. We had coffee and a laugh. And he's the sort of guy who tells stories like he's a storyteller, and it's always entertaining, and I enjoy that. So, we got to talking, and then Scotty gave this mic drop moment kind of comment that stopped me in my tracks and was the genesis for a whole bunch of thinking that led to this podcast, he said. "Phil. Don't wreck your shipwreck."

I've got to be honest. I sat back in my chair, and I looked at him, and I looked at him in a way that made him stop talking. Which Was an effort in itself a miracle, you could say? And I had a quizzical look on my face. I had that kind of smile that was clearly hiding the depth of the processing that was going on in my head. And I said, dude, that was a clanger. (*in a good way*). Mic drop moment, as I said.

So, what I want to do is unpack what it means in *my world*. What do I think it means when Scott says it to me? Don't wreck your shipwreck? Because I've got plenty of disasters in my world, in the timeline of my life, and in the things that I'm working through at the moment, I could say there's plenty of challenges in his and my life, and I'm going to say to you in the middle of this podcast that not every challenge is a calamity. And I'll get to that in a minute.

So, we're going to have this conversation, and I'm going to bring you back to the eternal truth as a starting point because this is kind of where my conversation went as I started to unpack this comment with my friend Scott.

So, look, I just also need to say that I bet you know someone who has a situation in their life that is a challenge or, possibly even a crisis. And you might want them to know that it doesn't need to be a calamity. So, I want you to think of that person, and I'm thinking of someone right now. I literally just had a conversation. This afternoon, I'm thinking of someone, and I'm going to share this podcast with them so they can get the most out of the circumstances that challenges, and the situations that we are facing. So, who do you need to share this podcast with? Thanks for being one of our supporters, and I look forward to this message going wider as you share it with others.

Take Paul for instance

And so, what I want to start by saying to you is, let's take Paul, for instance. A guy called Paul; short, wobbly legs, pointed nose. Some say that he probably had a nice white beard with flowing hair, but I don't know; I haven't seen any photos of Paul. But the apostle Paul was a significant man in the New Testament story of spreading good news about Jesus Christ.

And so, he's one of my rock star heroes, definitely in the top three for me personally and all the time. Paul the Apostle who wrote most of the large portion of the New Testament. But in the book of Acts, we read the narrative of the story as it was told by one of his assistants or team members.

Luke, the Doctor, was the storyteller, or the one that captured the story. Which we know is the book of Acts, the Acts of the Apostles, and it tracks Paul and his missionary trips, you could say. His highs, his lows, and his challenges. It tracks them and the book of acts. It's actually quite a cool narrative to read. I would encourage you to look at it alongside a map so that you can see just the significant distances these guys travelled to get from A to B. Remembering there was no fast trains, no planes, or helicopters, and sometimes they just walked.

So yeah, I want to zoom right across to the end of the book of Acts, and as I've been reading it, I have come to sort of look at... I just want to give you some highlights of the story because, as you can guess, there's a shipwreck in this story.

But Paul is arrested, and he's called a troublemaker, and he knows that Jesus said to him, "Paul, you're going to go to Rome." And so, he's chatting to the king and to the governor, and he's boldly declaring what he believes to be true. Which they interpret as really a slight on Caesar because Paul is saying Jesus is the king, and they're saying, well, actually Caesar is the king.

And so, he appeals to Caesar, and right at the end of Chapter 26, Agrippa (who's the king) says to Festus (his friend sitting with him). He says he could have been set free if he had not appealed. And there's something about that that appeals to me—just in our lives, in our story. We've got these if-only moments. "If only that had happened. If only that hadn't happened. If only I had said this or done this. If only I'd been more like this. If only I'd been less like this." So many, if only moments. But what I want you to see in this story is the Providence of God. His hand is all over our lives, and we could say if only', but I know God is working things for your good, even though it doesn't feel like it.

And so, your comfort isn't his highest priority, but your inner character. You're the person you are. As God's highest priority that you would become a disciple of Jesus and, in that, become more like Jesus to represent Jesus because, essentially, that's God's heart for each one of his children. So, if only. And then you turn the page, and you read the story of the shipwreck. So, Paul sails for Rome, and they get on the boat, and they head across from Macedonia, and they get on there, and they head west, and they stop several times.

But anyway, it says there. I'm just reading the headlines: There's a storm at sea, and they thought they'd be OK, but the weather changed, and it got quite intense, and then the sailors So these are the guys that are paid to make the boat get from A to B. They couldn't fight the storm, and so they gave up and let it

run with the wind. This terrible storm raged for many days, blots out the sun, and then all hope was gone.

You know what? I've had times in my life where I've sat there thinking. All hope is gone. Maybe you're in a situation right now where you're thinking all hope is gone. I'm here to tell you that. You don't have to wreck your shipwreck, perhaps God's doing something. Perhaps his hand is in your life. I'm confident of it, and I want you and me to realise that there is more to come for us.

So let's keep following the story that we see here. Where is it? In verse 30, the sailors tried to abandon the ship. They lowered the lifeboat. They were going to put it out, and Paul said to the commanding officer and the soldiers. You will all die unless the sailors stay on board.

And now you might think, 'Well, that's because they need the sailors to make the boat work.' Well, clearly, they don't, because the sailors had given up. They'd let the boat be chased by the wind, and the wind is driving the boat where the wind desires, and the key thing that I would learn from this is that I've sat in crisis or challenge, or worse.

You know, I've, you know, I've said this before, kind of saying, you know, I was so far deep in the hole that I had to look up to see the bottom. I learned that from Clarke that comment. I was neck deep in it, and yet the key thing I learned from this and what I've learned through challenges is that sometimes you have to stay. You have to stay where you are. You have to plant yourself in the situation when you've done everything else you can. You just have to stay planted where you are, and so you know I'm thinking. What does that mean for me? How am I going to make sure that I don't wreck my ship wreck? And if the sailors had gotten off, then they would most likely have caused everyone to die. as Paul said.

The next thing I see here is in verse 34, and Paul says, "Look, please eat something now for your own good, for not a hair of your heads will perish." And I call this the promise. I call this a moment in the story where Paul is saying to the people that God has his hand on the situation. Eat, for you will not perish, and that's the promise.

And so when you're in a crisis when you're in a challenge, you've got to find the promise. You've got to reach for it. You've got to get back to the basics of what that promise is that I'm holding on to. And for every situation I'm thinking of, I've got six different people I'm thinking of right now, and every situation is different, so I can't tell you what the promise is. I can tell you there is a promise, and you need to find it.

We keep going through the story. I'm trying to get through this so I can share some stuff with you, but if we get through the story, we get to verse 35, and Paul actually says that he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece for them to eat.

Now this is it; it doesn't specifically say it, but when the Jews... and Paul is obviously the Jew of all Jews, he confessed this. When they take bread, they break it to give thanks. They're doing this as a commitment before God. They're honouring God as the provider of the bread. And we know this because when we take communion, we remember Jesus, who, on the night he was betrayed, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, Do this in remembrance of me.

Now, why is this important? Because in the midst of a challenge, in the midst of a crisis, we need to stop and remember they were under the covenant of Jesus, and the reminder, God hasn't forgotten that, but

the reminder for us of the covenant is that. We would take the bread, we would break the bread, and we would give thanks to God. And we would know that he is God; Paul is not. But we're under the covenant; we're protected. We're under the hand of God because we're acknowledging Jesus as the son of God who came as man as a sacrifice for us. And I think that's really, really significant. So you put that into your situation and decide what you want to do with it.

The final thing that I just want to observe from the story it says here in verse 43, the commanding officer did not want the prisoners to be killed because the soldiers wanted to kill them all, and the commanding officer says no, we're not doing that. Everyone who can swim jumps overboard and makes for land, and then the others who couldn't swim waited for the ship to become a piece of wood, plank, or debris, and then they held on to that, and they all escaped safely to the shore, even in the midst of the shipwreck, even in the midst of the storm; none perished.

And so I would call this God's Providence. His hand is clearly on the situation, and so that's an interesting story. You can go read it for yourself. It's in the book of acts. You can find it in Chapter 27. Just Google it. If you don't have a Bible, I'm sure any device will lead you to it.

So what's the point in this? Well, here's a story of a shipwreck that could have been shipwrecked. There was a purpose that God had in this process, and the outcomes you'll read over the page I don't want to get into that today, but I would ask you this: if you go back to verse 30, it says the sailors tried to abandon the ship. They lowered the lifeboat. As though they were going to put out. And then what would have happened if they actually had abandoned it? I think the entire situation would have been different. I think that God wanted every single person to come through the storm to come through the shipwreck. And I think if they hadn't done that, then they clearly would have all died. So that's a story for you to consider. And I leave it to you to do that in your own time.

But I want to move on. I want to make this really practical because I've been reflecting on numerous situations. And I would just give you one of those right now, and I would say to you that not every challenge is a calamity.

Not every challenge is a calamity

Not every challenge is a calamity, and the one takeaway is that if you don't remember anything else from this podcast and look, I don't expect you to remember everything. That's why we give you the transcript. It's why we give you the notes. You can actually read. You can download, copy, and paste. You can remember later. You can put it in a notebook. That's the whole reason we do that for you guys. So don't forget that you've got access to those resources, and we're happy to provide them for you.

Here is the one key thing that I absolutely want you to take away from this podcast when you're facing a challenge or crisis. Or a shipwreck. Here's the question: Who do I choose to be in this story? Who do I choose to be in this story? You know, I talk. I ask people all the time about this, and I ask them, Do you really honestly want to be remembered as a victim in this story? The poor me woes me; everyone is out for me. It's not fair. Is that who you want to be in your story?

Or do you want to be the villain? Do you want to be the guy that's lashing out at people, hurting people, and taking your brokenness and your poison and pouring it out for others to drink from? Is that really who you want to be in this story?

So in the midst of your circumstances, I'm inviting you to stop right now. And if you have to pause this, shut me down. I don't care. Because I actually want you must get this right. Who do I choose to be in this story? Ask yourself that question. Go on. I dare you to ask that question.

I want to give you an example because, as you know, I've been wrestling with this a little bit and working through what I've had to do to make sure I don't wreck my shipwreck. And I'll be honest with you, there's been times when I absolutely have, but hopefully older and wiser.

But I had a situation. It was a leadership crisis. It was several years ago when there was a culmination of a whole lot of negativity that got revealed in a meeting. It was kind of a pseudo-board meeting council meeting that I was sharing and hosting, and there were accusations being fired at me, left, right, and center.

Obviously, when everything feels bad, everyone blames the leader, and I believe it rests on the leader to resolve and lead. I don't necessarily believe that the leader is always the cause of the problem, but let's say everything rises and falls on leadership, so I accept that challenge.

This leadership criticism got directed at me in a public meeting, and someone said you may be spirit-filled, but I'm not so sure your spirit led. The accusation was that while I was a church leader and a good Christian believer and someone that you know was born again and filled with the spirit of God, this person was saying you're doing what you want to do. You're not doing what God wants you to do. You're not even listening. You're not asking the right questions. And there was an undercurrent to the conversation that was incredibly painful to listen to, and more than that, there were some people in the room that, to be honest, I would have rather protected them from being exposed to that conversation.

But look, it is what it is. It was a public meeting, and, well, it was certainly a meeting of quite a few people, and so I would, I would say, you know, in that situation I'd choose who I want to be in this story?

Do I want to be the guy who gets on my horse, waves my sword, and charges at the accuser to chop their heads off? Do I want to take them down? Do you want to dress them down? Look, trust me. I've been in plenty of situations. I've had to think on my feet. And have the ability to respond to conflict in multiple different ways, not always as the peacemaker. So I have to choose: do I want to be the peacemaker? Do I want to be the villain? Do I want to be the attacker? Do I feel like I have the right to defend myself? And am I going to put this person in their place? You know what comes out of that?

And so, what I learned from that is that I have to choose... The right response, and I don't always get that right. But in this situation, I decided not to attack. I decided to listen. I decided to seek the peace that was necessary for us to progress, as well as understanding and not being critical when I say this, is that behind every comment like that, there's a whole lot of hurt or unmet expectations, which I was very keen to get on the table.

So what comes out of a tough situation like that for me? Well, what comes out of it is, you know, personally. Firstly, there's some hurt that I have to deal with. And so I've got to take that hurt, and I've got to take it to the healer—the one who's the true healer. And I've got to find a pathway through forgiveness. I've got to find a pathway through understanding God's grace. And living in that grace And that's on me. And I did choose to do that. But it took me a while. It took me a while to walk through that, but I chose to walk through that. But I chose to embrace the learning. I chose to embrace the truth that was hidden in the accusation, because there were some things I had to discover. I had to go on a personal journey of discovery.

[I took]... as a result of that meeting. We went (me and the board). We went into a full leadership review, and it was invasive and painful. I was not publicly exposed, but I certainly was exposed to my leadership team in a way that was really uncomfortable.

But I actually said that to them, guys. Because it was all men in In the room, I said to them, "If I'm the problem, let's fix the problem. Now that either means we remove the problem or we remedy the problem because we need to make this organisation stronger, we need to bring it back to the place of healing that God has, and it's only going to start if the head of the organisation is help. You know, because the head's sick. Then the body is sick", and so that's it.

It's been a long journey; it's not yet finished. It's one that we're working on, but you can be sure that that was an opportunity where I could have completely wrecked the shipwreck.

I could have attacked. I could have defended myself, you know. Like I said, I had the ability to talk my way out of any situation, and I could have chosen to hide the issues that were there. I could have chosen to ignore the fact that there was some harsh criticism happening, and I could have completely bypassed the undoing and the deep work that God wanted to do so that he could rebuild in a healing, healthy way. In order to see a greater outcome.

And so it's just a personal example with me saying, who do I choose to be in this story, and what am I going to do to get the most out of this challenge? That feels like a shipwreck right now. The storm was raging. The boat was falling to bits around me, clutching on to a piece of debris and swimming to the shore so that I could recover.

Well, what I wanted to do was finally give some real practical stuff. And again, these points will be in the notes. So you might not remember them all, but you can certainly review them if you want to. I'm going to close with this. What does it look like to wreck the shipwreck? And what does it look like to embrace the shipwreck?

What does it look like to wreck the shipwreck?

So firstly, let me give you just a list of seven things that I have chosen to do in the past two completely wreck the shipwreck. The first one, number one is you can just avoid the pain. You could ignore the situation. That's right in front of you. You. Could ignore and or avoid the pain and I know people that seek to avoid pain in every aspect of their lives. And I don't think that's going to help you to get the best out of life.

#2. Ignoring feedback. Sometimes we are so insecure in the situation that we're in that we choose to ignore the feedback because we don't want to embrace the truth with regards to that, and that's a similar point to the one that's coming shortly.

Sometimes we soften the price that we should pay, you know, we ask people to let us off lightly or cheaply. And you know what I've learned that sometimes God wants us to pay a heavy price to learn a lesson. You know and David says, *"I'm not going to sacrifice something that doesn't cost me."* What he meant by that was, there is more work that God wants to do and he's going to give us the best chance to do it. So don't let... Don't let yourself soften the price that you need to pay.

And here's another one to wreck a shipwreck is sometimes we protect ourselves or... (this is really common for parents.) They try and protect their kids and wrap them in cotton wool. And they deny them the opportunity to learn a good lesson.

There's been times where kids have had some horrible situations; you know, for them, it's been a real challenge or crisis, and I've been sitting with them. And I've got a choice. I can either wrap them up and remove it and protect them, or I can let them walk through it, and I'll walk through it with them. And allow them to grow stronger as a result of it. I've spoken about this before, and I think we fail our kids when we don't teach them to fail well. When everyone gets past and everyone gets a merit absolute rubbish, let's teach our kids and let's learn ourselves to fail well so that we can learn and grow as a result of it.

And #5, we deny the truth. We just live in a place where we're not willing to accept something that's true. And by true, I have this little saying. I say what's true for you might not be true for God. So let me clarify this. When you're denying God's truth or God's view of the situation, the way he sees the world. When you deny that you're going to move to number six, you're going to live in a false reality, which means you're going to be deceived. And the worst thing about being deceived is that you don't know you're being deceived. When you're living in this world that you've created, you're just not even aware that you're living in a false reality. And that's the worst possible outcome for anyone.

And finally, #7. The way that you can truly wreck your shipwreck is that you can be very quick to take offence and live offended, and then you become a victim, and then you never ever move out of your crisis. Getting the gold that God's got for you so that's how you wreck your shipwreck.

So I'm going to finish on the positive. And how do you embrace the shipwreck? I want to come back to my hero, the apostle Paul in Acts Chapter 27, who embraces the shipwreck, and I want to finish with these five things: how can you embrace the shipwreck and not wreck it? So what does Paul do first?

Number one, he allows the process to develop. Don't panic. Don't abandon ship the moment you know if you're on a roller coaster, and so on, the first turn, you decide you didn't like it, and you tried to jump out. It's going to go really bad for you. So... So, allow the process to develop, trust God, and see what's coming.

Secondly, I just love the way Paul broke bread on the ship in the midst of a storm. And what does that mean? It means bring Jesus to the centre of your situation. However you choose to do that, for me, I'm taking it from the story. Break bread and have communion. Remember Jesus. He is the son of God, who

became the son of man in order so that sons of men could become sons of God. When you bring Jesus to the centre, you're allowing him to rule and rein in your crisis.

#3. It says that they chucked the baggage overboard. You know what you could do. (Well, let's speak to me.) Do you know what I could do? Let's get rid of some baggage in the middle of the storm. Let's get rid of some baggage. What's the baggage that you're carrying that's no longer necessary?

#4, they looked out for Daybreak. It says in verse 39: When morning dawned, they saw a beach; watch for the daybreak. You know, storms may come, but the sun still rises in the morning, so watch for daybreak. Your season will turn. Your challenge will change. So watch for Daybreak. that's #4 number.

#5. Finally, I would say this: It says there that everyone escaped to safety. #5: No one left behind. No one left behind. Take an attitude that you're not going to abandon ship. You're not going to abandon your family. Not going to abandon your friends. You're not going to wreck the ship wreck. You're going to allow the process to develop, and you're going to ensure that no one gets left behind

Ohh well, all of that came out of a coffee with Phil, where Scott said to me, Don't wreck your shipwreck, and that's been a very interesting journey for me to go on. And as I reflect on several situations, I just give thanks to God for friends that invigorate. So I hope your life is... going not so much swimmingly, but that the shipwreck or the challenge that's around you is one that you can embrace in order to find what God's got for you in this season. So thanks for listening. Thanks for subscribing. Make sure you follow us on every podcast channel that you have. We want to reach more people. Thanks for sharing, and I look forward to catching up with you real soon. Take care.