

Acts Lesson 27

Acts Chapter 27

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Memory verses for this week: *2 Cor 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 2 Cor 10:4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;).*

Introduction: In Chapter 26, Paul presented his case to King Agrippa and Festus and many others who had gathered to listen. At the end of the chapter, Paul confronted King Agrippa and asked him if he believed the prophets, and before he could answer, Paul said *“I know thou believest.”* King Agrippa’s response was *“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”*

As far as the record goes, we never found King Agrippa coming to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. So many are “almost persuaded”, but like Paul, my desire is that they would wholly turn over their hearts and lives to Christ. King Agrippa at the end tells Festus that he would have released Paul had it not been that he had appealed to Caesar. But Paul was to go to Rome in God’s perfect plan for his life.

Chapter 27 begins the account of Paul’s voyage to Rome, though shipwreck prevented his actual arrival in this chapter. Luke, led by the Spirit of God gives us a great historical detail of what it was like to sail in those days. Paul is encouraged once again receiving comfort from the Lord.

I. Paul Sets Sail to Italy

Acts 27:1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

Acts 27:2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

Acts 27:3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

Arrangements were finally made for Paul to be sent to Rome. Paul, along with other prisoners, were assigned to a centurion by the name of Julius from a military unit named Augustus’ band. The typical voyage to Rome was by sailing to Alexandria and from there to Rome in an ocean worthy vessel.

There evidently was no such vessel available, so the centurion placed Paul on a coastal vessel along with his old associate Aristarchus from the Thessalonian church. Luke also traveled in their company as indicated by the first person we. They began by making short trips, coast hopping, landing at Sidon. There, the centurion kindly allowed Paul to go ashore and refresh himself with unnamed friends.

There are other prisoners besides Paul being sent to Rome. The prisoners are turned over to a centurion of Augustus' band named Julius who would be in charge of making sure they were delivered to the proper authorities in Rome. The ship they enter is Adramyttium and they are to sail by the coasts of Asia. By going this route along the coast, they might later board a ship going to Italy. The first place mentioned that they came to on their journey was Sidon, where the centurion shows a kindness to Paul and allows him the liberty to go to his friends to refresh himself.

I'm sure that it did not take long for Julius to recognize Paul as a man of honesty and integrity. It seems that real Christians have a bit of an aura about them. I believe when you see the glowing face of a Christian, it speaks of the glory of God shining out of the tabernacle where the Holy Spirit now dwells. (In our bodies and hearts of course.)

Acts 27:4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

Acts 27:5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

Acts 27:6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

They departed Sidon and sailed under Cyprus due to the prevailing winds which had shifted to the northwest which were contrary to efficient sailing in the direction they were heading. Nevertheless, they evidently tacked into the wind slowly making their way along the coast of what today would be called Asia Minor (Turkey).

At Myra, a city on the coast of Lycia (southern Turkey today), they found an ocean-going grain ship whose destination was Italy. The centurion there changed ships and placed Paul and his party on the larger commercial ship.

The next place they stopped was Myra. It was here that they transferred to the ship of Alexandria which was sailing to Italy. It says that the winds were contrary. If you've ever sailed in a sail boat, you realize that the wind can be both your ally and your enemy. I've never sailed in a big boat like the one these men were on, but I once owned a small catamaran sailing boat that really taught me a lot about

sailing. I found that you can use the winds to take you any direction you want to go, but you have to set the sails to go at angles with the wind. You might have to go in a Z pattern to get there, but you could use almost the least of wind to move you.

But the greatest danger to sailing is gusty high winds where you can't control the direction of the ship. You normally pull down the sails and tie down the mast, but sometimes the mast has to be let loose. Calm steady winds are the best to travel in a sail boat. Here they said the winds under Cyprus were contrary.

Acts 27:7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;

Acts 27:8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

They slowly sailed for their destination. The winds were not favorable and the ship struggled “many days” to maintain its course. Very slowly, they sailed “under Crete”— that is, it sailed to and sheltered, south of Crete, and anchored at a place called “fair havens.”

Acts 27:9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, Acts 27:10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

Acts 27:11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

Acts 27:12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.

Acts 27:13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.

More time was spent waiting for the winds to change. The fast mentioned likely refers to the Day of Atonement, which typically is early October. It was considered dangerous to sail on the open Mediterranean from October to mid-March. Paul, with remarkable boldness, gave advice to the leadership of the ship, urging them to winter where they were, forecasting danger and damage if they proceeded.

The ship's captain and its owner (who was evidently aboard or perhaps one and the same) convinced the Roman officer to sail, hoping to make it to at least Phenice. Phenice was a better port to winter in. It was further west on the south

shore of Crete. When favorable winds appeared from the south, they after having made their decision set sails and sailed close by Crete.

As soon as they set sail the weather became bad. Anytime you are out in any boat, and the waves start to white cap, it is advisable to get to shore. Once the waves get really tumultuous, it is difficult to maneuver. Paul tried to encourage the centurion to not take this ship because the voyage would be dangerous.

From verse 9, we gather that this time of the year sailing was dangerous on this route. We find that the centurion believed the owner of the ship more than Paul. Most likely, the owner of the ship had cargo to deliver, and there was an investment in making the journey in a timely fashion. It says that the haven there was not commodious to winter in for protecting the ship. For whatever reason, they decided to move on.

J. Vernon McGee in his commentary said this about the trip.

To them the voyage was guesswork. The south wind blew softly, so they “supposed.” The captain was a man who looked to self and to the wisdom of men. Paul was looking to God. Later on Paul would tell these men, “I believe God” (v. 25). Notice he would not say that he believed *in* God, but “I believe God.”

Life is a great sea and our lives are little boats. We can sail our boats by human supposition if we so choose. Friend, there is a storm blowing out there, a bit of a gale. The tragedy is that, amid confusion, world chaos, and darkness, most men are still guessing. There are a thousand human plans for building a better world. Yet everywhere we look we see failure. We need men who *know* God. It was Gladstone who said, “The mark of a great statesman is a man who knows the way God is going for the next fifty years.” We don’t seem to find many such men around today.

II. The Storm

Acts 27:14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

Acts 27:15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.

Acts 27:16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

Acts 27:17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, struck sail, and so were driven.

Acts 27:18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

Acts 27:19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

Acts 27:20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

Shortly after the set sail “a tempestuous wind called Euroclydon arose.” The Euroclydon wind was fierce like a nor’easter on our eastern seaboard. The wind and rains were relentless and pounded anything in its reach. The clouds covered the skies, hiding the sun and making it difficult to determine night from day

The sailing ship was quickly driven off course by the wind. They ran under the cover of a small island and placed cables around the hull of the vessel to strengthen it. Fearing being driven onto a sand bar; they allowed the storm to continue to drive them. The situation became desperate.

On the third day since leaving “fair havens,” they began to cast unnecessary tackle and furniture overboard to lighten the ship. After “many days” in which neither sun nor stars could be seen and a navigational fix determined, the continuing storm caused all hope for their safety to disappear.

As they sailed on the south side of Crete, the storm carried them to an Island called Clauda. They stop here and they under gird the ship to strengthen it. It says the winds were so strong that they lowered the sails and let the ship drift with the wind. As I mentioned earlier, sometimes this is the only thing you can do when the winds reach a certain velocity. You are truly at God’s mercy and just hold on for dear life.

In verse 18, it says they lighten the ship by tossing some of the cargo overboard. When your life is on the line, the precious cargo you are carrying sometimes loses its value very quickly. On the third day, they even through over the tackling. It says many days there were neither sun nor stars, and they began to lose all hope that they would be delivered.

III. Paul’s Message to the Crew

Acts 27:21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

Acts 27:22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

Acts 27:23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

Acts 27:24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

Acts 27:25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

Acts 27:26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

Paul rose before the ship's company and gave a message of hope and cheer. He announced that the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve had appeared to him that night. He told them what the angel said. Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. This angel was no doubt none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, "the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve".

Recall that, Paul had received a similar message while imprisoned, when his life was in jeopardy and all seemed hopeless. It is of interest that Paul referred to himself regarding God as "whose I am, and whom I serve." He had clearly kept his testimony before the weary ship's company. The Lord informed them that there would be no loss of life, though the ship itself would not be saved.

The Lord revealed to him that he indeed would stand before Caesar and all on board the ship would be spared. In simple yet profound testimony, Paul proclaimed that he believed God, that it shall be even as it was told him. Indeed, that promise remains. We can count on what God has said. It always will be even as He has said. Paul concluded his account noting that they would be cast upon a certain island. They later would know that island to be Malta.

Paul comes before the group on the ship and reminds them how that he had told them earlier that they should not have set sail at this time of year. If you think back of the story of Jonah, he too was on a ship in a storm with no hope. But Jonah was running from the will of God, where Paul was doing the exact will of God. Paul then gives them the good news.

He tells that an angel from the Lord had come and told him that he would be delivered to Rome as had been promised, and that not only would Paul be safe, but everyone on board would be. He exhorts them "Be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." We should have this same attitude in life. God has made many wonderful and precious promises to us in the Bible. When Satan buffets us, we should never fear but like Paul, "Believe God that it shall be as we were told." We have an unsinkable foundation in Jesus Christ, and a God who cannot lie.

1 Cor 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

1 Cor 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

1 Cor 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Heb 6:18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Heb 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Heb 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Acts 27:27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

Acts 27:28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

Acts 27:29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

Acts 27:30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

On the fourteenth day of their ordeal, they were driven by the wind in the open Adria—the open Mediterranean below Italy and Greece. The sailors on board sensed they were nearing land. They evidently could either smell land or could possibly hear the noise of breakers in the night. They immediately sounded and found that the depth had gone from twenty fathoms to fifteen. They obviously were being driven ashore to be broken apart on rocks.

They cast four anchors out of the stern, hoping to stop their drift and waited for dawn. Meanwhile, the sailors made the pretense of setting anchors from the bow of the ship. Their actual plan was to row ashore in a small boat, abandoning the ship and its passengers.

As they were driven up and down in the Adrian sea, the ship men deem that they are near some country. They tested the depth of the water and found they were getting into more shallow water. They were approaching the island of Melita.

Acts 27:31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

Acts 27:32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

Paul, in perceiving what was happening, warned the centurion who ordered the soldiers to cut the small boat away preventing the crew from abandoning the ship.

After they had cast out the four anchors, they waited for daybreak. Some of the men were all about to drop a small boat into the water and make for the shore. Paul tells them that except they all abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. While the centurion had ignored Paul earlier, this time they listen and cut the ropes and let the small boat fall off.

As it was in the days of Noah, only those inside the ship were saved from the flood. When the door closed, no one else was allowed in. In this life, if we don't come to Christ before our death, we have no hope for salvation. Jesus is the haven of rest for all who will come, but we must come His way in this life.

1 Pet 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

1 Pet 3:19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

1 Pet 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

1 Pet 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

1 Pet 3:22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Acts 27:33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

Acts 27:34 Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

Paul admonished the crew and passengers to eat. The purpose of their fasting is not indicated. They may have hoped to appease some angry god. They likely had been seasick in the storm with little interest in food and had no hope of survival. In any event, Paul urged them to eat for their own good. Once again, he prophesied that no one would lose so much as a hair of their head.

Acts 27:35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

Acts 27:36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.

Acts 27:37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

Acts 27:38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

After Paul spoke, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. All the men were cheerful and once again had some hope of surviving the fierce storm. They ate enough food to proceed with their task at hand. They then proceeded to cast the cargo of wheat into the sea to lighten the ship for its impending grounding. The grain in the hold most likely was in some sort of containers which were thrown overboard one by one.

Paul encourages the people aboard to eat. If you want to have strength, you must have your physical bread each day. And if we want spiritual strength and power, we need God's Word every day also. Paul promises that not a hair shall fall from their head, which speaks of the great faith Paul had in God as he mentioned in verses 24 and 25. In the presence of them all, Paul gave thanks to God for the food. I think we show our love towards God when we in humility pray before our meals. God truly is the one who provides for us, and we need to thank him for all his wondrous love and provision each day.

Psa 117:2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

Psa 118:1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.

Acts 27:39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

Acts 27:40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

Acts 27:41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

As the grey light of dawn appeared, they saw the situation they were in. Though they did not recognize where they were, they saw "a certain creek." The word translated as creek (kolpovkolpos) means a branch of water, so there probably was a creek flowing into the bay. Today, that bay on the island of Malta is known as St. Paul's Bay.

They made the necessary preparations to run the ship aground. However, the storm caused them to run aground evidently upon a sand bar. The bow of the ship was firmly stuck. However, the stern portion of the vessel remained in the fury of the breaking waves which began to break up the ship.

Acts 27:42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

Acts 27:43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land:

Acts 27:44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

The soldiers, worrying about their own necks, urged that the prisoners be killed. (Roman soldiers could face death if prisoners committed to their charge escaped.) Yet, God providentially caused the centurion to think kindly toward Paul and for his sake and allowed no prisoners to be executed.

The officer ordered those who could swim to jump overboard and swim to the beach not far away. The rest were ordered to cling to floating debris and make it ashore. "And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land."

When daybreak came, they lifted the anchors and lifted the mainsail to head the ship towards land. At this point, the words of the Lord to Paul were fulfilled. The violence of the waves broke the ship and it broke the ship into pieces. So the people got on pieces of the ship and swam to land. When the storms of life come, we need to look to God for deliverance just like Paul did in this day. The same God who delivered Paul and all these men on the ship is there to deliver us from whatever we face. God had declared that Paul would have the privilege of testifying of Him in Rome. And sure enough, as always, God stood true to His Word.

Acts 23:11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.

