

~ Lesson 90 ACTS ~

The Voyage to Rome: God's Faithfulness in the Storm**Acts 27**

In chapter 27 we see finally begin his journey to Rome, Acts 19:21; Romans 15:22-24, 30-32. But he doesn't get to Rome in the way that he imagined. He is going to Rome as a prisoner having appealed to Caesar and we will discover that the journey is treacherous, and if it weren't for the Hand of God guiding them, they would have all died in a shipwreck. This chapter is a testimony to God's faithfulness to keep His promise and bring Paul to Rome. As Luke records this account of their voyage to Rome in chapter 27, we see just how exact he is in his writing. To the point that he uses over 40 nautical terms specifically for sailing and navigation and his descriptions are so exact that modern archeologists have used Luke's descriptions in this chapter to lead to a great discovery.

Paul and Luke are being sent to Rome, but God is not just sending His Apostle to proclaim the Gospel. As we discovered last week, God is also sending his written Gospel ahead of them as well. Because as we discovered last week, it is very possible that in between chapters 26 and 27 the Gospel of Luke was written to Theophilus because now chapter 27 begins with a decision to set sail for Italy...

Acts 27:1) And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.

After Festus read Luke's Gospel, he passed a judgement, ἐκρίθη, to send Paul to Rome. But notice who else is with Paul... brother Luke. This ship they are boarding is not some cruise liner that will allow just anyone on board. No, these are merchant ships that Rome has paid to transfer prisoners to Rome. And Rome is not going to just let anyone get on this ship. So why are they letting Luke on board? My guess is Festus is granting him passage because Luke is the one who wrote these trial documents, and he has to continue writing Luke Volume II (the book of Acts) for Theophilus when he gets to Rome.

Notice there are other prisoners on board other than Paul, we'll talk about that in the next verse, and they are all under the control of a centurion named Julius of the Augustan Regiment. This is a different Regiment than Cornelius of the Italian Regiment. Scholars say this Augustan Regiment was a Roman Regiment that was strictly in charge of communications and prisoner transfers to Rome. Mainly to feed Nero's circus in the games of slaying prisoners. Paul is not one of these types of prisoners. Paul was an un-condemned Roman citizen who has made an appeal to Caesar. He was not going to Rome to enter the Colosseum. Luke's grammar makes this clear because he says "ἑτέρους δεσμώτας," as in "other prisoners of a different kind." Luke gives us a name of one of those other prisoners in verse 2...

Acts 27:2) So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.

Aristarchus the Macedonian of Thessalonica is with Paul as well. This happens to be one of Paul's travel companions with him on his 3rd journey. He was with him in Ephesus as one of the disciples who was seized in the Ephesian theater, Acts 19:29. Aristarchus is also one of the seven travel companions who was in charge of the contribution to the poor saints in Jerusalem, Acts 20:4. And now three years later, Aristarchus is still with Paul again traveling to Rome. So how was Aristarchus able to board this ship with Paul and Luke? Unlike Luke, Aristarchus is going to Rome as a prisoner. But not like Paul as a Roman citizen, but possibly as the other prisoners condemned to death. When Paul gets to Rome and begins writing his prison epistles, he mentions Aristarchus as a fellow-prisoner in Col 4:10 and again in Philemon 24. There is no mention of Aristarchus in any of Paul's later epistles, and church tradition states that Aristarchus died at the hand of Nero, so it is possible he was martyred in Nero's circus.

Aristarchus, Luke and Paul boarded this merchant coaster ship called the Adramyttium that ran its course along the coasts of Asia. This is a very similar ship to what Paul used to get from Troas to Patara, Acts 21:1. These were small cargo ships designed to stay near the coast and not the open sea. The centurion planned to take this coaster ship north and exchange it for a large grain ship that would bring them to

Rome. So they begin traveling north along the coasts making several stops along the way at the mercy of the ships itinerary.

Acts 27:3) And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care.

You can see God's favor for Paul with this centurion, allowing Paul to see his friends while they make their stop in Sidon. Trusting Paul that he would return to the ship. These friends that Paul went to may have been the same Christians Paul met near Tyre when they were warning him not to go to Jerusalem, Acts 21:3-4.

Acts 27:4-6) ⁴ When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. ⁵ And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. ⁶ There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board.

This coaster ship hugs the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, fighting the northwestern wind coming against them making sailing difficult and slow. They finally get to Myra, and they find a large Alexandrian grain ship that was planning to set sail to Italy. Notice it is the centurion making the decisions of which ship to board and when. This was their job; to transport prisoners to Rome, and it was their responsibility to find merchant ships as their means of transportation.

This was a grain ship from Alexandrian Egypt, meant for handling the open sea of the Mediterranean. These ships measured 180' long, 45' wide and 44' deep hold. This ship was carrying a total of 276 passengers, Acts 27:37. It had come directly north to port at Myra and then was planning to set sail to Italy, probably traveling west through Greece and then across the Adriatic Sea to Rome. This was a common trade route because Rome had a constant need for grain, and it was supplied mainly from Alexandrian Egypt. They board the large Alexandrian ship and set sail, but notice Luke's description as the storm grows worse and worse.

Acts 27:7-8) ⁷ When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone. ⁸ Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

It seems like the ship wanted to go straight west across the Aegean Sea, but because of these northwestern winds they were forced south to Crete. The Greek makes this more evident saying, "the wind did not permit our straight course onwards." Now they are forced south which was extremely dangerous because now they are in the open waters of the Mediterranean without the cover of land to protect them. So they sail under the cover of Crete around the south to Fair Havens. Fair Havens was not an ideal place to winter, in fact there is no mention in all of Greek literature about a port being in Fair Havens. So there is no way it could facilitate a large Alexandrian ship and the city of Fair Havens was so small it probably couldn't support the 276 people on the ship either. However, to keep sailing meant certain death so Paul stands up to warn them.

Acts 27:9-10) ⁹ Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, ¹⁰ saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

By now they had been sailing for probably over a month since they left Caesarea, and as we have seen, sailing had become increasingly more difficult. Now Luke tells us, **sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over**. This Fast was Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement which would have been the first week in October in 60ad. This day had already passed, so now it's probably mid to end October and sailing during this time of year was treacherous because they were approaching the time of year when all sailing on the Mediterranean stopped from the first week in November to mid to end February.

Paul begins expressing his concern, not necessarily saying “Thus sayeth the Lord,” but because Paul was no stranger to sea fairing and had already been in multiple shipwrecks in his life, 2 Corinthians 11:25, he had seen the dangers of sailing in bad conditions and boldly warns them not to continue. But they don't listen to him,

Acts 27:11-12

- They probably know they can't make it to Rome, but they at least want to take a chance to reach a better, more suitable harbor called Phoenix.
 - Financial greed and the duty of Rome are driving these decisions.

Acts 27:13-17

- V.14 This word “tempestuous” is τυφωνικός, typhoon. This wind was so bad they even had a name for it... Εὐροκλύδων, Euroclydon.
- V.15 The ship gets caught in this storm and can't take the beating of the wind so they “let her drive,” ἐφερόμεθα- to be carried about.
- V.16-17 They came to a small island called Clauda, and their they secured the skiff (dingy), and used cables around the hull to secure the planks from splitting apart.
- V. 17 They were concerned about being pushed out to the open sea and running into the Syrtis sands off the shore of Africa.

Acts 27:18-20

- V.18-19 Things have gone from bad to worse and now their only hope of survival is to lighten the ship by throwing everything overboard.
- V.20 This went on for many days, 14 days to be exact, v. 27, without any navigation because they can't see the stars.
 - They set their course into the wind, hoping they wouldn't be driven south into the Syrtis sands, but they really don't know where they are.
- All hope to be saved was lost, but little did they know God's Hand was keeping them on course toward a little island called Malta. And God assures Paul of their safety.

Acts 27:21-26

- V.21 Paul is not rubbing it in by saying I told you so, but rather making the point that they need to listen to him now.
- V.23 God gave him a message, this time from an angel from God
 - V.23 Of whom I am and whom I serve
 - V.24 “You must be brought before Caesar.” Notice the angel is very specific that Paul would go before Caesar himself.
 - Luke never says if Paul stood before Nero, and there are no early church writings that affirm this either, but I believe he did based on this promise.
- V.24 It is by the grace of God, literally a gift of grace, χαρίζομαι, that not only Paul, Luke and Aristarchus would survive, but all 276 souls on board.
- **V.25- Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.**
 - This is how we as Christians should respond to the storms in our life. We have His written Word, and I believe everything written in His Word; every promise just as it was told me and I hold fast to His Word.
- V.26 Prophetic utterance... we must run aground on a certain island. And indeed, they do, on the island of Malta.

Acts 27:27-32

- V.27 they are being driven, διαφέρω, being carried thoroughly, by the wind, but the whole time God's hand is carrying them to Malta
 - Malta is over 500 miles from Clauda and the probability of them running aground this tiny island after being driven by the wind is only explained by God's guiding Hand.
 - The sailors sensed they were getting close to land. They probably heard the sound of waves crashing against the rocks of Malta
- V.28 measuring the depth by lowering a lead bell shaped weight tied to a rope
 - 1 fathom = 6' (20 fathoms = 120'; 15 fathoms = 90')
- V.29 quickly coming to land they drop four anchors to hold them from crashing into the shore
- V.30 knowing they are close to land, the sailors try to abandon ship by escaping in the dingy
 - They act like they were putting more anchors out, but really trying to escape
- V.31-32 Paul taking charge speaks up and they are listening to him now
 - They had to stay in the ship to survive.

Acts 27:33-38

- V.34 Paul is trusting in God's promise that everyone will be saved, v.24-25
- V.35 Paul publicly gives thanks and breaks bread before them
 - Mostly pagans on this ship, but Paul is leading by example, and they follow
- V.36 remember, the storm has not slowed down, but yet Luke portrays a calmness that has come over everyone on board.
 - When the storms of life are crashing on you, give thanks to God and trust in Him and He will give you peace, [Phil 4:6-7](#).
- V.38 knowing they are close to land and there is no promise to save the ship, they finally throw out the wheat to lighten the load.

Acts 27:39-44

- V.39 at night they could hear the waves crashing against the rocks. This is why they lowered the anchors.
 - But now in the day, they are able to see a bay with a beach that they can run aground and not get smashed against the rocks.
- V.40-41 they cut the anchors, loose the rudders, and hoisted the sails trusting God to bring them to shore
 - It is very possible that Archeologists have discovered these very anchors that were cut loose by using the clues that Luke details for us: a bay with a beach; a sandbar where two seas meet; seabed about 90' deep; a place the sailors didn't recognize. With this description they were able to recover these anchors. www2.cbn.com/news/world/apostle-pauls-shipwreck-tale-four-anchors



- V.41 the storm is still raging, and the ship is being broken up by the violence of the waves
- V.42 the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners because according to Roman law, if a prisoner escaped, that prisoner's sentence would be placed on the Roman soldier.
- V.43 But the favor of God was on Paul and the centurion commanded them to swim to safety.
 - Another instance of Rome saving the Apostle Paul's life
- V.44 God's promise fulfilled... all escaped safely to land.