

Acts Chapter 27

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."

“We”: The use of the pronoun “we” marks the return of Paul’s close friend Luke, who has been absent since (21:18). He had likely been living near Caesarea so he could care for Paul during his imprisonment. Now he rejoined the apostle for the journey to Rome.

“A centurion of Augustus’ band”: A cohort (regiment), of that name was stationed in Palestine during the reign of Agrippa II (see note on 25:13). Julius may have been on detached duty, performing such tasks as escorting important prisoners.

In the last lesson, we saw Paul actually being found not guilty by all who examined him, but he had appealed to a higher court, and now he must be tried in Rome. We pick up here in chapter 27, where he is finally being sent to Rome by ship after being imprisoned for more than two years. The "we" above lets us know that Luke is with Paul.

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."

“Ship of Adramyttium”: Adramyttium was a city on the northwest coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey), near Troas, where the centurion planned to find a ship sailing to Italy.

“We launched”: From Caesarea, the ship sailed 70 miles north to Sidon.

“Aristarchus ... being with us”: He had been seized by the crowd during the riot at Ephesus (19:29), while accompanying Paul to Jerusalem with the offering (20:4). Aristarchus would be with Paul during the apostle’s first Roman imprisonment (Col. 4:10).

Paul’s companions during his trip to Rome were “Aristarchus” and Luke, the author of Acts. Luke’s presence is evident by his use of the pronouns “we” and “us”. (See the note on 16:10 for the other “we” passages). Aristarchus had come with Paul to Jerusalem (20:4), and he now travels to Rome and remains with Paul throughout his imprisonment.

Paul refers to him as his “fellow prisoner” (Col. 4:10), implying either Aristarchus’s faithful devotion or Paul’s own incarceration. Also, the centurion in charge of the soldiers was himself kind (verse 3), and helpful (verse 43), to Paul.

This Adramyttium was a ship-building city in Asia Minor. This Aristarchus is the same one mentioned (in chapter 19:29), and is part of Paul's party. He was saved on Paul's first missionary journey to Thessalonica. Aristarchus never lost contact with Paul while he was imprisoned and neither did Luke.

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."

“We touched at Sidon” (see note on 12:20). The Christians there ministered to Paul, possibly by providing him with provisions for his trip.

Luke carefully records much nautical detail, which is hardly significant for showing the spread of the church. Three explanations for this extended coverage seem plausible.

- (1) Maybe since Luke is an eyewitness, he carefully records minute detail. (Chapters 16, 20, and 21), demonstrate much the same amplification when Luke is with Paul on those occasions.
- (2) Maybe it is because of Paul’s leadership and counsel even though he is a prisoner.
- (3) Maybe it is to show generally how God governs in the daily affairs of life.

It does not tell us here, but I am sure that Festus and Agrippa had told Paul's jailor and this centurion, that Paul was really an innocent man caught in circumstances beyond his control.

He lets Paul go ashore and visit with friends here at Sidon. Refresh here is used in medical terms, and perhaps Paul needed some type of care that Luke could not give him aboard ship. Of course, he came back to the ship and did not betray the centurion's confidence.

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

“Sailed under Cyprus”: They kept to the lee side of the island (passing between it and the mainland), seeking shelter from the strong winds.

The ship had intended to sail to the west, but because of the strong winds wound up sailing north instead.

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

“Sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia” (see notes on 2:9-10; 6:9).

“Myra ... Lycia”: One of the main ports of the imperial grain fleet, whose ships brought Egyptian grain to Italy.

This was a port they had not intended to enter, but other ships which ran from Rome to this area came, and brought needed goods, and took back things needed in Rome.

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

“Ship of Alexandria”: Part of the imperial grain fleet.

These cargo ships could carry a few passengers also, and this is the type of ship Paul and the others found passage on.

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;"

“Cnidus”: Located on a peninsula in extreme southwest Asia Minor. This port also served ships of the imperial grain fleet. Having reached Cnidus, the ship could not sail farther west due to the strong headwinds. It was forced to turn south and head for the island of Crete.

“Under Crete”: This large island off the southwest coast of Asia Minor provided some relief from the strong northwest winds buffeting the ship.

“Salmone”: A promontory on Crete’s northeast coast.

The winds were blowing the wrong direction for them, and they were not able to go the way they wanted to.

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

“Fair havens ...Lasea”: The ship fought its way around the southeast corner of Crete, finally reaching the shelter of the bay known as Fair Havens.

This was a sailing ship and the wind was their only power to move. It appears right along here that the wind did not cooperate at all. Since the wind would carry them no further along the route they intended to go, they landed at 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],"

“The fast was now already past” See note on (Zech. 7:3; Lev. 23:26-32). Travel in the open sea was dangerous from mid-September to mid-November, after which it ceased altogether until February. Since the fast (the Day of Atonement), of late September or early October was past, further travel was already extremely hazardous.

The “fast” refers to the one required fast of the Old Testament, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-32).

Notice, Paul had been fasting. God has shown Paul perhaps a vision, or perhaps just put these words in his mouth, but he has shown Paul that this ship is in trouble.

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."

“Voyage ... much damage”: Because of the lateness of the season, and the difficulties they had already experienced, Paul wisely counseled them to spend the winter at Fair Havens.

This ship going down could cost many lives. Paul has told this to the centurion. This centurion knows that Paul is a man of God and should listen.

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

“Centurion” (see note on 10:1). Because the ship was part of the imperial grain fleet (see note on verse 5), Julius, not the helmsman nor the ship’s owner, was the ranking official on board.

“Owner of the ship”: The ship’s captain.

This was a natural thing to do, because the captain of the ship knew these waters better than Paul did. Paul was not speaking in the natural; however, he was speaking in the spirit. He had brought the warning that God had given him, that is all he can do.

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] a haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west."

“Not commodious to winter in”: The professional sailors deemed Fair Havens an unsuitable location to wait out the winter (see note on verse 9).

“Phenice”: Located 40 miles from Fair Havens with a harbor that provided better shelter from the winter storms.

Commodious means inconvenient or not favorable. Against Paul's advice, they take up anchor and try to sail to a more favorable port to winter in.

Acts 27:13-14 "And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained [their] purpose, loosing [thence], they sailed close by Crete." "But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon."

This Euroclydon was a terrible storm from the east. This bad weather had to do with the oncoming winter. It seemed they hung to the coastline for safety.

This is a strong, dangerous windstorm greatly feared by those who sailed the Mediterranean.

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

This is just saying there was no way of going the direction the captain wanted to go without capsizing the ship, so he just let the wind carry them where it would. They were moving, if not in the right direction.

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

“Clauda”: An island 23 miles southwest of Crete.

“The boat”: Taking advantage of Clauda’s shelter, the sailors began to rig the ship for the storm by hauling the ship’s dinghy on board.

Going wherever the wind would take them, they soon found out was no good at all either. It took them near this island Clauda where there was dangerous quicksand.

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."

“They used helps, undergirding the ship”: A procedure known as frapping. The cables, wrapped around the hull and winched tight, helped the ship endure the battering of the wind and waves.

“Quicksands”: A region of sandbars and shoals off the coast of Africa, much feared as a graveyard of ships.

“Struck sail”: The sailors probably also took down the sails, since putting out an anchor with the sails up would be self-defeating.

All this time, the captain has lost his plan for this trip. Now all he is trying to do is to save the ship, its cargo, and its passengers.

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

“They lightened the ship”: Throwing all unnecessary gear and cargo overboard would lighten the ship, enabling it to ride more easily over the waves.

Here, we see the captain having the cargo thrown overboard to try to save the lives of his passengers and himself.

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

This is a desperation move of the captain, when even the tackling must go overboard.

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."

It appears that things have gotten so bad, that the captain, and all the passengers, and crew have decided there is no use. The ship is going to sink and they will lose their lives.

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."

We see here, that Paul told them before they left Crete, that this trip would be extremely dangerous. They ignored him and went on anyway.

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."

This was a relief in itself, but how did they know that they could believe what Paul said? We see in the next verse why.

(Verses 27:23-24): The last of 6 visions Paul received as recorded by Luke (9:3-6; 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 22:17-18; 23:11).

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

Many of these people on this ship are not even believers in God, but Paul has brought a glimmer of hope. To those who know God, this is like a pardon from the death chamber. They all thought certain death lay ahead.

Paul's God has sent a message of hope. I am sure that some on board wondered, what kind of a man was going on this boat that the very Angel of God would come and talk with him?

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."

"Brought before Caesar": The angel reaffirmed the promise Jesus Himself had earlier made to Paul (23:11).

If he didn't have a reputation for being a man of God before this trip, he now does.

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

Paul expresses his complete faith in what God has told him, here. Paul's faith will encourage others aboard, especially Luke, and Aristarchus.

Acts Chapter 27 Questions

1. Whose hands was Paul delivered into for the trip to Rome?

2. How do we know Luke went along?
3. Where was the ship from that they went on?
4. Besides Luke, who was another disciple who went with Paul?
5. At Sidon what courtesy did Julius show Paul?
6. Why did they sail into Cyprus?
7. After they had sailed over the sea of Cilicia, what did the centurion do at Lycia?
8. Where was the ship from?
9. Where did the ship land near Crete?
10. In verse 9, we find Paul had been doing what?
11. What had God shown Paul, that he warned them of?
12. Why should this centurion have listened to Paul?
13. Who did the centurion believe instead?
14. What very foolish thing did they do?
15. What port were they trying to make to winter in verse 12?
16. What does commodious mean?
17. What was the name of this terrible east wind?
18. When they could not steer the ship, what did they do?
19. What did they fear near the island called Clauda?
20. What was the first thing they did, thinking they were about to lose the ship?
21. On the third day of the storm, what did they throw overboard?
22. In verse 20, what despaired them so that they thought there was no hope?
23. In verse 21, what does Paul tell them?
24. Why did Paul tell them to be of good cheer?

25. Who had stood by Paul in the night and told him he must be brought before Caesar?

26. What else had he told Paul that was good news to all aboard?

27. What act of faith did Paul show in verse 25?