

THE BOOK OF ACTS

CHAPTER 27

PAUL TRAVELS TO ROME

THE CHALLENGE OF CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

As Paul travels to Rome and is about to be shipwrecked, Paul has a word from God: none would perish who stayed on board. His confidence and trust are in God, even as the storm rages on and circumstances are declining.

When the storms of life rage around you, and it looks like you are headed for shipwreck, where is your focus? Is your attention on the waves of circumstances that appear to be tearing your life apart, or are they looking to the people around you, being influenced by their reactions instead of being an influencer for the kingdom of God? We have God's Word that ensures joy, peace, provision, divine health, and all the benefits of being a child of the King. His Word confirms the authority we have been given in Christ Jesus and through Him, our ability to overcome any storm that may come against us in life.

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 27 is a description of the first part of Paul's trip to Rome, sailing from Caesarea to Malta.

Paul sails toward Rome by ship. The Romans were the worst sailors of the ancient world. They tried to take the land to sea and made ships as large as a football field, and the ships sank easily. Many of their ships sunk before they even sailed.

The Phoenicians, on the other hand, were the best sailors and were famous for their trade ships and routes in the ancient world. When the Romans went sailing or took over a ship, Roman law applied to the passengers while on board just as if they were on land. Roman ships had one mast in the middle of the ship. Phoenicians ships had many masts. This put all the stress on the middle of the hull and it was not uncommon for their ships to break apart at the center. "Frapping" became common by running ropes around the hull to help hold the ships together ("undergirding" [verse 17]).

Chapter 27 shows the impact of one man who knows and stands on the Word against the attacks of Satan. The entire crew will be saved through the faith of Paul.

THE FIRST STORM (1-13)

Festus and the court decide to put Paul on a ship to Rome with other prisoners. The day after setting sail they land in Sidon, and Paul is permitted to visit the believers there. Then they sail around the tip of Cyprus and come to Lycia. Paul and the other prisoners are then transferred

to a ship sailing slowly to Italy, which would normally take many days. A fierce storm moves in and they sail to Crete where they remain for a time. Contrary to the thinking of the captain and owner of the ship, Paul warns them about sailing to Phoenix to remain for the winter.

Act 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.

And when it was determined (krino: judged, ordained) that we should sail into (toward) Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band (a famous Roman band).

Festus and the court decide to send Paul to Rome by ship in October, the worst time of the year for traveling by sea. But Festus had a reason for sending Paul at this time. This was not a regular sailing vessel, but an old ship that usually carried cargo along the coast. It was not designed for open-sea sailing. This is why they sailed along the coast for the first part of the trip to Crete (verses 1-3).

Julius was an officer Festus did not like. He planned to get rid of Paul and Julius in one move by sending them away in a worn-out ship at the worst time of the year. To Festus, the other prisoners and crewmembers were expendable. Festus does not intend for Paul, the letter he has written, Julius, or any of the crew to actually make it to Rome.

However, Festus does not take into account the will of God. Paul cannot be killed because he has a message to deliver and a ministry to fulfill. All the men will be saved because Paul is with them. This is blessing and protection by association (1 Corinthians 7:14).

Act 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.

The "we" in this verse includes Luke and the rest of Paul's team. This ship will not make it to the Asian coast, but will be deserted in Myra (verses 5-6). Aristarchus, who is accompanied Paul, is accustomed to danger (19:29; 20:4).

Act 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.

And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously (philanthropos: humanely) entreated Paul, and gave him liberty (freedom) to go unto his friends (21:3-5) to refresh himself.

This is a kind and gracious officer. He allows Paul to disembark from the ship to visit with believers in Sidon.

Act 27:4 When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

There was no other direction the ship could sail. It would have been less distance to sail to the western side of Cyprus, but the winds forced this sailing ship along the eastern side of Cyprus.

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

Paul sees his home for the last time.

Act 27:6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board.

This ship is also blown off course by the northwest winds into Myra. It was headed toward Crete (port of Fair Havens) and onto Puteoli, (verse 38). This ship would hold 276 people (verse 37).

Act 27:7 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.

And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus (ka-ni-tus), the wind not suffering (allowing) us, we sailed under (around the tip of) Crete, over against (around) Salmone;

After ditching the other ship, this one is more secure but is being slowed down by one of the worst sea storms in history. They are headed into the wind and are now in the last safe port before entering open sea to Crete.

Act 27:8 Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

After passing Salmone, they are protected from the harsh winds.

Act 27:9 Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them,

Now when much time was spent (had elapsed), and when sailing was not dangerous, because the fast was now already past (Atonement [October 10]; Leviticus 23:27; Numbers 29:7), Paul admonished (warned) them,

and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past; "the fast of the Jews"; this was the day of atonement, which was the grand fast of the Jews, on which day they afflicted their souls, in memory of the worshipping of the golden calf; on that day they neither eat nor drink, nor do any work, neither do they wash, nor are they anointed, nor do they bind on their shoes, or make use of the marriage bed; nor do they read anything but sorrowful things, as the Lamentations of Jeremiah, until the setting of the sun, and the rising of the stars; and hence this day is called by them "the day of fasting", and "the great fast, and the day of the fast of atonement, and the fast of the atonement:" now this day was on the 10th of the month Tisri, which answers to the latter part of our September, and the former part of October; so that it was now Michaelmas time, when winter was coming on, and sailing began to be

dangerous; about this time of the year the Pleiades set, which brings on tempestuous weather, and unfit for sailing:

From October until March, ships usually remain in their home harbor because the weather is too unpredictable. Paul will advise them not to sail, but remain in Crete for the winter. He will sense in his spirit the extreme danger of the voyage to the ship, its cargo, and the passengers.

Act 27:10 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."

Paul waits for his spirit to bear witness because of the natural danger of this time of year. He perceives that the danger will be too great. Some believers would want to go on "in faith" and trust God. If something is not directly told you in God's Word, you can only act in faith on what your spirit perceives by the direction of the Holy Spirit. In this case, the Holy Spirit is telling Paul not to go. The crew is tired of Lasea and wants to go on to Rome where times are more exciting. Paul will be overruled by the captain and majority opinion. The will of the majority is not always correct.

Paul went through three shipwrecks during his lifetime (2 Corinthians 11:25).

27:10 disaster, hubris (hoo-bris); Hurt, loss, injury arising from violence, damage caused by the elements, hardship, detriment, trouble, and danger. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, where Paul described the reproaches he endured for the Lord's sake, *hubris* denotes insolence, impudence, a haughty attitude, insult, injury, outrage, persecution, and affront. The word is definitely adversarial. (Compare "hubristic" and "hybrid.")

Act 27:11 Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship Than by the things spoken by Paul.

Once a Roman soldier steps on board a ship, he is the final authority. Roman law is in effect. However, this officer takes the word of the ship's owner over Paul. The owner wants to get his money for the grain, and he wants it quickly. The crew and passengers want to travel to Rome because they are bored.

Act 27:12 And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.

And because the haven was not commodious (accommodating) to winter in, the more part (crew and passengers) advised to and depart thence (from there) also, if by any means they might attain (make it) to Phenice (Phoenix), and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth for the south west and north west (navigational directions).

Phoenix is around the island and a more popular resort city in which to spend the winter. Yet when it is not God's will to move at all, even a small move is a play into the devil's hands.

Act 27:13 When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.

The weather looked calm and perfect to sail into Phoenix. The men are so confident in making this short journey, they do not pull up the lifeboats or frap the ship for high winds.

THE WORST STORM (14-32)

While on their journey, they sailed into a fierce storm. The winds of the storm push the ship toward the island of Clauda. They strengthen the hull against the storm. For the next two weeks, they are blown nearly 500 miles across an open sea. They throw cargo overboard to lighten the ship. Next, the ship's machinery is thrown overboard in an attempt to keep the ship afloat. The storm continues many more days, and all on board are without food during this time. Paul then encourages the crew explaining that an angel has appeared to him telling him all who remain on board will live.

Act 27:14 But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.

But not long after there arose (ballo: throw, thrust) against it a tempestuous (tuphonikos: typhoon) wind, called Euroclydon (euro: East, Europe; clydon: north, a northeasterly wind)

The wind pushes the ship away from the shores of Crete, not along them. They are being pushed toward the island of Claude and the ship and crew are unprepared for this violent storm. There are two long sandbars off the coast (verse 17) of North Africa, and the ship was now in danger of becoming stuck and battered to pieces by the wind.

Act 27:15 So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive.

There would be a danger of the ship breaking in half because it was not undergirded (frapped) for violent weather.

Act 27:16 And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty.

And running under (around the tip of) a certain island which is called Claudia, we had much work to come by (hoist up) the boat:

This is the shore boat that has been sitting in water and is now being pulled on board the ship. The shore boat will be very important later (verse 30).

Act 27:17 When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven.

Which (boat) when they had taken (pulled) up, they used helps (hoists), undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall (stick) into the quicksand (sandbar), strake sail (exchanged sails), and so were driven.

The crew used ropes and hoists to strengthen the hull of the ship so it will not drift apart if broken. When this is completed, they take down the main sails and put up a small storm sail allowing the ship to be taken by the wind. They will hold on for their lives for the next two weeks as the ship is blown over 480 miles across the open sea from Crete to Miletus. The wind will now blow them parallel to the sandbars directly west toward Italy.

Act 27:18 And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.

Act 27:19 On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

Now the passengers are unloading the ship. This is the machinery on deck for the functioning of the ship. Apparently, the ship is leaking from the pressure on the mainsail and the frapping equipment was no longer needed. The captain's objective is just to remain afloat.

Act 27:20 Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.

Because of the storm, the passengers and crew have not seen the sun for almost 11 days and have become despondent. This storm is not only furious, it continues for many days beyond any normal storm known in the Mediterranean. All hope is gone, and everyone resigns themselves to die. Also, the food supply has been depleted which adds to the misery.

Act 27:21 But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.

But after long abstinence (no food) Paul stood forth (up) in the midst of them (crew, passengers, captain/owner), and said, Sirs (anhr: noblemen), ye should have hearkened (taken my advice) unto me, and not have loosed (set sail) from Crete, and to have gained this harm (to passengers) and loss (to cargo).

Paul is establishing his credibility as a prophet. The captain will listen to him from this time forward. He is not saying "I told you so," but letting him know if he had been right before, he would be right again. Paul's commands will be responsible for the saving of the people though the ship will be destroyed.

Act 27:22 And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

And now I exhort (advise) you to be of good cheer (be encouraged): for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

Paul encourages everyone to "be of good cheer." These are the same words the Lord spoke to Paul when he was discouraged in the Roman prison (23:11). Paul will give them a word from the Lord to once again restore hope (verse 20).

Act 27:23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,

Paul states an angel stood by him. He wants to establish his office and God's confirmation of it so these men will listen to his commands. God will preserve Paul and all those around him. These people are being blessed by being in Paul's presence. Paul makes a distinction between the new birth in his life and service to God. The new birth is not service.

Act 27:24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must (it is necessary) be brought before Caesar (Nero): and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

Even Paul had begun to worry. Paul is the one on this ship who is predominantly under attack by Satan. His faith is keeping the ship afloat. If fear is permitted to enter, Paul's faith will not work, and this ship will be lost. An angel appears to Paul to bolster his confidence, and the other passengers benefit.

Paul is "salt" on this voyage and preserving the entire crew. Paul's ministry is not yet completed. His faith is active again. He will stand before Caesar, and he has complete confidence knowing no devil or storm will destroy him.

Act 27:25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.

This encouragement comes directly from God. Even though Paul speaks the words, he is delivering God's word to the men. This word will be received and acted upon and come to pass. God's Word never fails and is always fulfilled.

Act 27:26 However, we must run aground on a certain island."

This certain island was Miletas (Acts 28:1).

God has a plan for Paul, the people with him, and the inhabitants of the island. They will be evangelized by the healing and saving power of God.

Act 27:27 Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land.

But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen (crew) deemed (suspicioned) that they drew near to some country (land);

At this time, Paul and those on board the ship are completely at the mercy of the wind and waves. Adria is a port on the Mediterranean between Italy and Macedonia, which crosses the path of Paul's ship. This area is near the island of Miletas.

Act 27:28 And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms.

And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms (120 feet): and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms (90 feet).

A weight on the end of the rope is dropped to determine the depth of the water. By knowing the water is becoming shallower, they know they are moving toward shore.

Act 27:29 Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come.

Being near a shore is no indicator of safety. The coastline is unknown and the crew waits for daylight to see what conditions await them. They throw out the anchors located at the rear of the ship to keep it from being torn apart.

Act 27:30 And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow,

And as the shipmen (seamen) were about to flee out of (desert) the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour (pretense, look like) as though they would have cast anchors (anchored) out of the foreship (front),

The lifeboat looks like a good means of escape, and the crew decides to make a run for their lives under the pretense of anchoring the front of the ship. However, they are caught because Paul is observing the entire scene.

Act 27:31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."

Paul says, "All must remain on board the ship for God's promise of their safety being spared to come to pass."

Act 27:32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.

Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

THE SHIPWRECK AT MILETAS (33-44)

Paul encourages everyone to take a little meat and bread. They then throw the wheat overboard. They see a shoreline and decide to head the ship toward the shore. The ship becomes grounded in a sandbar. Two currents come together ripping the ship apart. The soldiers decide to kill all the prisoners, including Paul, but the centurion stops them. Some swim to shore and others float on the wreckage from the ship.

Act 27:33 And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing.

They have not thrown all of the food overboard; they saved a small amount. Paul now asks them to eat the food for strength to make it to shore. Paul has taken command. In fear, no one has eaten and they have lost track of time. Fear of death has kept them from eating. When people are in fear, they need a leader to instruct them in doing the simplest of things.

Act 27:34 Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you."

Paul is using common sense along with the discernment of the Holy Spirit.

Act 27:35 And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat.

We are not told that Paul witnessed to these people, although he probably does. When Paul takes food, he prays and blesses it in front of them all (1 Timothy 4:3-4).

Act 27:36 Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves.

They followed Paul's leadership and also ate the food available.

Act 27:37 And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship.

Act 27:38 So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea.

After eating they all went to work, both the crew and the passengers. Since wet wheat is heavy, they throw out the wheat so the ship will not sit low in the water and become stuck before reaching shore.

Act 27:39 When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible.

They see the shore, but this is an uncharted island. They have no map of where to land.

Act 27:40 And they let go the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore.

And when they had taken up (cut off) the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands (which held the rudder fast), and hoisted up the mainsail (storm sail) to the wind, and made (moved) toward shore (the beach).

Act 27:41 But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves.

And falling into a place where two seas met (strong currents), they ran the ship aground; and the forepart (bow) stuck fast, and remained immovable, but the hinder part (stern) was broken with the violence of the waves.

The ship gets stuck on a sandbar that has been formed by the two currents coming together. The waves are splitting the ship in half.

Act 27:42 And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape.

Now that the ship is stuck outside the harbor, the soldiers want to kill the prisoners, including Paul. Paul has already prophesied this would not happen, but they don't care. Now that they appear to be safe, the centurion will again assume command.

Act 27:43 But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land,

Paul is now responsible again for sparing lives. This time it is the prisoners. Those who can swim are commanded to dive in and head toward shore first.

Act 27:44 and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.

The centurion takes command, and they all make it to shore safely.