

History in the Making Understanding the Book of Acts-Part Thirty-Nine

Introduction: Finally, after many turns and twists, Paul will be taken to Rome—due to his appeal.

- ✓ Riot atmosphere in Jerusalem led to Roman arrest
- ✓ Romans tried to get Sanhedrin to handle case fairly but their dissension made it impossible
- ✓ When plot to kill Paul was uncovered, sent by night to Felix in Caesarea
- ✓ After years of indecision—Felix handed Paul on to Festus
- ✓ Even with the aid of Agrippa and Festus, no fault was found with Paul

Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." Acts 26:32 NKJV

- ✓ Off to Rome he would go

Acts 27

- ✓ One of the most descriptive pieces of writing in Scripture
- ✓ Actually acknowledged as “one of the most instructive documents for the knowledge of ancient seamanship.”
- ✓ It is clearly an eyewitness account by Luke of ship travel to Rome
- ✓ The story is a riveting historical explanation of Paul’s four weeks on a ship headed to Rome
- ✓ Also provides powerful principles for our spiritual discipleship and spiritual journey

I. The Journey’s First Leg (27:1-8)

A. From Caesarea to Myra

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. 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. 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. 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. Acts 27:1-5 NKJV

1. We narrative resumes (Luke probably hung out in Caesarea while Paul was in custody for 2 years)
2. Escorted by the centurion—Julius
3. Boarded a coasting vessel which would come to port at various ports along the Asian coast—knew they would find a ship bound for Asian coast—ship bound for Italy at one of points
4. Aristarchus from Thessalonica accompanied them
5. First day put in at Sidon-about 69 miles north of Caesarea. (In Sidon port allowed to go ashore and fellowship with the Christian community).
6. Sailed east and north of Cyprus-prevailing winds are weak in summer months-ultimately came to Myra

B. From Myra to Fair Havens

There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board. 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. Acts 27:6-8 NKJV

1. Found a ship (grain fleet ship) from Egypt to Rome
2. Centurion put them on that ship bound for Italy
3. Going was slow and difficult-strong NW wind blowing
4. Even coasting along shore was difficult but came to Fair Havens near Lasea. Would wait there for wind to change

II. Paul's Advice Rejected

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." 11 Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. 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. Acts 27:9-12 NKJV

- A. Had to wait for the wind to change. Became clear they would not make it there by winter. (Dangerous for 9/14-11/11 then all navigation ceased until winter was over. Fast was over Yom Kippur (Tishri 10/October)-seas closed until at least early February.
- B. Paul's personal advice-stay here till winter (later would have revelation).
- C. Helmsman and ship owner thought they could go further-Centurion took their advice
- D. Felt like Fair Haven not suitable for winter-so Paul's advice was rejected

III. Caught in the Storm (27:13-38)

A. Caught by the wind Euroclydon

When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. 14 But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon. 15 So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive. 16 And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty. 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. 18 And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship. 19 On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. 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. Acts 27:13-20 NKJV

1. Finally the wind they had waited for so they set sail

NOTE: If they rounded Cape Matola-to their desired haven in just a few hours

2. Without warning the wind changed again-a typhonic wind
3. The ship was caught-able to secure at island called Clauda-with great difficulty secured skiff (dinghy)
4. Cable under the timbers on board to hold it together
5. Dropped an anchor-slowly drifting but being blown hard by the wind
6. Losing the ship
7. Gave up hope-11 dreary nights and days follow
 - a. Boat was no doubt leaking badly
 - b. Afraid ship would sink

B. Paul's encouragement

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. 22 And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, 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.' 25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. 26 However, we must run aground on a certain island." Acts 27:21-26 NKJV

1. Long time without food (Thrown some overboard, stressful, no way to prep it)
2. Little "I told you so" even in Paul
3. But gave a word of hope and encouragement-all will be well

NOTE: Divine Assurance “The Lord stood by me!”

NOT FIRST TIME-

Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 2 Corinthians 11:25 NKJV

4. God had promised him he would make it to Rome (23:11)—now he says we all will
5. We will come out safe on certain island-Malta

NOTE: Had they missed Malta-200 miles more-ship would not have lasted

C. Land approached

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

1. Surmise that land is near
2. Twenty fathoms-120 feet
3. Fifteen fathoms-90 feet
4. Know rocks are near-anchored-prepare for daylight

D. Sailors attempt to escape frustrated

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, 31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off. Acts 27:30-32 NKJV

1. Take care of themselves first-lowered dinghy into sea; probably it was anchored
2. Paul called them out-needed several hands-don't let them go
3. Centurion now knew to trust Paul's advice-cut rope and let dinghy go to the sea

E. The meal on board

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. 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." 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. 36 Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. 37 And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship. 38 So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea. Acts 27:33-38 NKJV

1. After 14 days-need to eat. Will be saved and heavy work ahead on the island-no harm will befall you
2. Paul broke bread, people all ate-for Christians may have had Eucharistic importance
3. 276 on ship-threw out the rest of the cargo-needed the ship to run up on the shore

IV. Arrived in Malta

A. Shipwreck

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. 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. 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. Acts 27:39-41 NKJV

1. Saw a creek with sandy beach-tried to run back up there
2. This what is called St. Paul's Bay-still looks like that
3. Dropped the anchors-landed hard-ship destroyed

B. Safe ashore

And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. 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, 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. Acts 27:42-44 NKJV

1. Traditional Roman disciples-kill prisoners
2. Centurion wanted to save Paul
3. Paul's vision fulfilled completely

Conclusion: This story has several points to ponder...

1. As the storm arises the reader wonders if natural forces will do what human opponent could not do...thwart the purpose of the Apostle Paul?
2. It is easy to abandon hope when we don't know where we are or whose we are. May today be disoriented in emotional, relational, or physical storms.

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. Acts 27:20 NKJV

3. The source of Paul's hope and strength came from beyond the storm.

NOTE: That kind of faith is essential to our spiritual journey

4. Though God is sovereign we bear personal responsibility as well. We must not, under pressure, resort to passive paralysis.

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. 29 Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come. Acts 27:28-29 NKJV

5. Even in the human storms we must not forget that the foundation of our faith is in the cross of Christ.

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." 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. 36 Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. Acts 27:34-37 NKJV