

Acts 27: 1

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<PRAY>

Have you ever been invited to someone's house so they could show you pictures of their recent trip? <PAUSE>

Here is a picture of a couple of our Ambassador members on their trip to England. <SHOW PICTURES>

Some pictures need explaining...<PAUSE>

What do you suppose was going on here? <WAIT>

In Acts 19:21, Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "I must also see Rome." Little did Paul realize what was about to happen to him before he would see the great city of Rome. There would be:

- Illegal Arrest
- Roman and Jewish trials
- Confinement
- And this morning we will see him shipwrecked

Paul wanted to go to Rome to preach the gospel but he had not intended to go as a prisoner. But through it all, Paul trusted God's promise that he would be a witness in Rome and that the Lord would see him through his trials.

This morning we are going to look at Acts 27. Dr. Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, spends an entire chapter explaining Paul's travel from Caesarea to Rome. During the trip Luke tells us about a shipwreck and how Paul takes charge of the situation.

Why do you think Luke would spend so much time on what some might think of going to a friend's house and listening to their story of a recent trip? <WAIT>

Luke was not only a good writer, but he was a good historian. If we didn't have the book of Acts, what specific things would be missing from our knowledge base? <WAIT>

So Luke, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit wrote Chapter 27 for a specific reason and this morning I'm hoping that we find a specific reason for it being included in the Bible.

Let's begin reading the story in verse 1.

1 When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius. 2 And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica. 3 The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care. 4 From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary. 5 When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.

Paul must have been accompanied by Luke. Note the word "we" is used throughout the passage. How comforting it must have been to Paul to have friends like Luke at his side during this time!

I find it interesting that the centurion, Julius, was kind to Paul. Verse 3 says that Julius treated Paul with consideration.

Why do you think he would do that? <WAIT>

Prov 16:7 says, "When a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."

This is important because it reminds us that no matter what our circumstances are God is in control. Some of you have troublesome

situations at work, difficult people that you have to deal with. God is in control. Some of you have difficult situations with your families, perhaps your parents or siblings or children. God is in control. Some of you are having difficult medical problems. God is in complete control.

Paul was in the middle of God's will. Even though he was a prisoner, under the control of Roman centurion, God was in control. He never left Paul, he never forsook him.

The centurions in the Bible are usually presented as kind, intelligent men. Julius permitted Paul a visit to the church gathering at Sidon, which refreshed the apostle physically and spiritually. At Myra, they changed ships. Look at verse 6.

6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it. 7 When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us to go farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone; 8 and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

It appears that from the very beginning of the voyage they had trouble with the weather. Verse 7 says that the winds were contrary and that they sailed slowly for many days. The ship finally arrived at Fair Havens.

Since ancient times, writers have pictured life as a journey or a voyage. Most of you have probably read John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress which is based on this theme. Homer's Odyssey was based on the same subject.

We use sailing metaphors in our everyday language. I'm sure you have heard someone say, "I hope you have smooth sailing." Or, let them "sink or swim." When a believer dies, someone might say that "they have reached the other shore."

Likewise, we might say that someone is facing the "storms of life." Luke wrote about the difficulty they had sailing. Although he was

certainly not writing an allegory, we can feel the emotion of the slow sailing. Listen to the tone of his words beginning in verse 9.

9 When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul began to admonish them, 10 and said to them, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."

"The fast" referred to in v. 9 was the Day of Atonement which was in October. Sailing was dangerous for several months after the fall season began, and there was some debate whether or not the ship should continue to Rome. So, directed by God, Paul warned them that the voyage would be disastrous, but the centurion would not listen. Look at verse 11.

11 But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul. 12 Because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there. 13 When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore.

There were at least five factors that contributed to this wrong decision made by the centurion:

First was Impatience:

Verse 9 says, "Much time was spent." Whenever I get impatient, I usually rush ahead and disobey the will of God. Am I the only one?
<PAUSE>

Second was Expert Advice.

The centurion listened to the pilot (master) and the owner of the ship, and not to God's messenger. The centurion had faith - but his faith was in the wrong people! God's wisdom is far above the wisdom of men. The psalmist says that the person who knows the Word of God

knows more than the "experts." James tells us that while knowledge is important, we also need wisdom.

Third was Discomfort.

Verse 12 says "the harbor was not suitable for wintering." The centurion could not see staying three months in an uncomfortable place.

Fourth was Majority rule.

Notice in verse 12 that he took a vote, and Paul was out-voted! In the Bible, the majority is usually wrong; yet today the common excuse is "It's ok because everybody's doing it!"

Finally there were Favorable Circumstances.

Verse 13 says "When a moderate south wind came up." The very wind they needed came along and seemed to prove how wrong Paul was.

When I was 12 years old, my dad took me deer hunting. The day before we went hunting, we put out a pile of beets and apples. Then we put up a cloth blind where my dad and I could stand behind and have a perfect shot at a deer when he would come up to eat the feast before him. The next morning, my dad and I took our position inside the blind and sure enough, at 7:15 in the morning a young buck walked up to the pile of apples and beets and began to eat. My dad motioned for me to raise up my gun, aim and fire. The deer immediately fell to the ground.

As we walked to the deer, my dad stopped me and said something I will never forget. He said, John, in life there are going to be times when something looks too good to be true just like this deer thought. If something looks too good to be true, be careful; because two guys might be hiding behind a blind waiting to shoot you. <PAUSE>

The wind seemed good to the captain but he should have listened to Paul. Each of the five factors: Impatience, expert advice, discomfort, majority rule or even favorable circumstances can work against us

today. We need to be careful to obey God's Word by faith, even when circumstances seem to tell us differently. Ignoring God may get you into a storm. Look at verse 15.

14 But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo; 15 and when the ship was caught in it and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and let ourselves be driven along. 16 Running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, we were scarcely able to get the ship's boat under control. 17 After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along. 18 The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo; 19 and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 20 Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.

The balmy south wind soon turned into a terrible storm, as is usually the case when we disobey the Word of God. "Euraquilo" is part Greek and part Latin, a word that means "east wind and north wind." Note that Luke uses "we" in this section, indicating that all the crew and prisoners were busy trying to save the ship. First, they pulled in the little boat that was behind the ship. Then, they put cables around the ship to help hold it together. The next move was to pull down part of the sail, leaving enough to steady the ship. The next day they began to lighten the ship by throwing out some of the cargo; and by the third day even the "furniture" or tackle was thrown out. All of this was necessary because people did not believe the Word of God!

The story continues. Verse 21.

21 When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, "Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss. 22 "Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 "For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, 24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before

Caesar; and behold, God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' 25 "Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told. 26 "But we must run aground on a certain island."

In this section we see Paul standing up and taking command, reminding the men that their plight was the result of not listening to God's warning. But Paul had more than a rebuke for them; he also had a message of hope from God. God had promised Paul that he would minister in Rome, and Paul believed God's Word. It is faith in the Word of God that gives us hope and assurance in the storms of life. God had also told Paul that the ship would be wrecked upon a certain island, but that all the passengers and crew would be saved.

Let's read the rest of the story. Would someone read the end of the chapter beginning in verse 27? <WAIT>

27 But when the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching some land. 28 They took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found it to be fifteen fathoms. 29 Fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak. 30 But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the ship's boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow, 31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved." 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it fall away.

33 Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing. 34 "Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish." 35 Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. 36 All of them were encouraged and they themselves also took food. 37 All of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy-six persons. 38 When they

had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.

39 When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could. 40 And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach. 41 But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the force of the waves. 42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would swim away and escape; 43 but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, 44 and the rest should follow, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land.

Three days after Paul told the crew that God was going to save them, at midnight, Paul's words came true. The sailors heard breakers and knew they were getting near land. They took several soundings and learned that the water was indeed getting shallower and that land was near. Now a new fear arose: would the boat be dashed on the rocks and everybody killed?

As a safety measure, four anchors were put out, only to be taken in later on. Some of the sailors tried to escape on the small boat, but Paul stopped them. Note that Paul said in v. 31 "you cannot be saved" and not "we" as though he were thinking only of himself and his friends.

After two weeks, light began to appear, and Paul encouraged the men to take some food. The effects of the storm, the necessity for constant watch, the lack of food from lightening the ship, and perhaps the desire to fast to please their gods had kept the passengers from eating. Without shame, Paul gave thanks before 275 people and set the example himself by eating.

As day broke, they saw a creek on an island, so they cast off the four anchors, and, hoisting the sail, headed for this haven. The front of the ship stuck in the mud, while the stern was beaten by the waves. Satan was again at work as the soldiers planned to kill all the prisoners, but the centurion believed Paul this time and told all on board to make for land the best way they could.

The last statement in 44 vindicates the truth of God's promise: "They escaped all safe to land." They were on the island of Malta.

God spared 276 people because of one man - the Apostle Paul! God was in complete control.

So why did Luke include this detail of Paul's shipwreck in Acts 27? I believe it is to remind us that God is faithful and in complete control no matter what the storms of life may bring.

What a blessing to know that. What a blessing that we can trust him completely.

<PRAY>