

Radiant Church, May 24, 2020
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Acts 27:1-28:16

Under perfect conditions, this trip from Caesarea to Rome would take 5 weeks
It actually ended up taking well over 4 months

Acts 27:1-5 *And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for. And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia.*

Other prisoners: those likely condemned to death in the Roman arenas

Acts 27:6-8 *There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.*

A freighter for transporting grain. Egypt was Rome's primary granary

Acts 27:9-11 *Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said.*

"Fast" - Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur (late Sept/early Oct)
Afterward was the worst time weather wise to sail. November-March, no one sailed
Paul had some experience. He had been ship wrecked 3 times in the past

Acts 27:12-15 *And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there. Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. But soon a tempestuous wind, called a northeaster, struck down from the land. And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along.*

Tempestuous (angry) wind - typhonikos, a typhoon

Acts 27:16-20 *Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along. Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.*

5 steps to save the ship

Pull in the lifeboat (dinghy)

"Frapped" the ship (run cables around the hull, or from bow to stern)

Lowered the anchor (to act like a brake to slow them down)

Dumped some of the cargo

Dumped most of the ship's tackle (equipment)

How does God, through using Paul, save the ship?

First Paul encourages. He says, "Take heart"

Acts 27:21-26 *Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on some island."*

I belong to Him

I worship Him

He clearly communicates with me

Then Paul warns of desertion by the crew. He says, "Stay together"

Acts 27:27-32 *When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.*

Finally Paul tells them to eat something. He says, “Stock up”

Acts 27:33-37 *As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, “Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.” And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. Then they were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.)*

In the midst of the storm and the boat breaking up, Paul calmly eats his meal

Acts 27:38-44 *And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea. Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken by the surf. The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.*

God now turns to using the centurion to save everyone on board

Acts 28:1-4 *After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.”*

Where they finally landed in Malta is today called “St. Paul’s Bay”

“Justice” (“Dikay”) was a goddess, the daughter of Zeus
Pantheists believed everything was cause-and-effect. Paul hadn’t honored the right gods

Acts 28:5-6 *He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.*

In their minds, Paul had defied the gods, therefore, he must be one

Acts 28:7-10 *Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him. And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. They honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.*

Thus begins 3 months of waiting out winter

Acts 28:11-14 *After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead. Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome.*

The twin figureheads on the bow were the Egyptian gods of protection
Therefore, it must've been a good boat to get on

Acts 28:15-16 *And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.*

Paul's letter to the Romans had been received maybe 3 years earlier

This was 2.5 years after Paul had received assurance while in Jerusalem from Jesus that he would go to Rome

What can we get from this adventure?

We can praise God in good circumstances. How about when everything seems bad?
Trust in the providence of God
Rejoice in the saving grace of God
Align with the mission of God

When anchored to God's presence in the middle of a storm
We will display amazing courage
We will encourage and sustain others around us

Sometimes we need to hear ourselves, and other times we need to say to someone:
"Hold on to my faith. I have enough faith for the both of us!"

Paul saw himself as God's property

Like a bride belongs to her bridegroom, and the bridegroom to the bride
Like a child belongs to his father
Because He bought us

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

Jesus never says, "Oops, lost that one."

We belong to him. Everything that happens to us is under His ultimate control

We don't have to panic. We have Him to hope in.