

Acts 27—A Journey in the Center of God's Care

I. Franck for Bancroft Church in the Park, August 23, 2026.

Intro: have you ever been in danger on water? (Honduras adventure illustration)

-Paul's journey in Acts 27 filled with nuggets of insight about God's power.

-Also, one of the best documented events in the New Testament with names of people, places, and ship's equipment clearly stated. Probably the best documented sea voyage in all of ancient Roman history.

- Let's go on a journey with Paul and see what God has to teach us.



Predicament/Prophecy/Peril/Provision/Proposal/Perspectives

A. Predicament: Acts 27:1-9 first:

27 When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. ² We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

³ The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs. ⁴ From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. ⁵ When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. ⁶ There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. ⁷ We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. ⁸ We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. ⁹ Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Day of Atonement. [\[a\]](#)

- Paul is a prisoner—headed for Rome. Like Jesus, accused but not guilty in Jerusalem.
- Lots of documented details:
 - Heading for Italy with a Centurion named Julius (Imperial Regiment)
 - A ship from Adramyttium—sail to ports along coast, then to sea.
 - Aristarchus (a believer) is with them. He had been with Paul in the riot in Ephesus. Later, he will be a prisoner with Paul in Rome.
 - In Sidon, the Centurion lets Paul get help from the believers.
 - They sail to Cyprus in the eastern end of the Mediterranean—still there today. Several harbors mentioned along the coast of Asia Minor. Then to

Crete—another big island in the east of the Mediterranean. They get to Fair Havens and Lasea on Crete.

- Weather generally bad, and it's Late September-early October (Yom Kippur—Day of Atonement)

B. Prophecy: Acts 27:10-12:

So Paul warned them, ¹⁰“Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also.” ¹¹ But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship. ¹² Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. This was a harbor in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest.

- Paul receives a prophecy—peril and disaster is coming! Loss of ship, cargo, and perhaps lives as well. What does the Centurion do?
- The ship's pilot and owner say they must carry on to a better harbor, Pheonix, on Crete.
 - The Centurion is generally favourable to Paul—we saw this.
 - He may recognize that Paul is a godly person, but he needs to obey the owner.
 - The Bible is filled with words from prophets and filled with examples of people ignoring them.
 - Perhaps we have heard advice from godly people we have ignored.

C. Peril: Acts 27:13-20:

¹³ When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. ¹⁴ Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island. ¹⁵ The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. ¹⁶ As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure, ¹⁷ so the men hoisted it aboard. Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor^[b] and let the ship be driven along. ¹⁸ We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. ¹⁹ On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. ²⁰ When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

- They start sailing with a gentle south wind—along the southern coast of Crete
- It changes to a hurricane, and they are driven out to sea!
 - Several nautical details- hoist up the lifeboat; put ropes around the ship's hull; lower the sea anchor/or sails; go with the wind. You who have boats, you know what these things mean.
 - We start to see a sequence of loss—the second day start throwing the cargo overboard! (**illustration of man with trunk of 200 silver dollars**).

- Still in trouble! On the third day, they start throwing over the ship's tackle—what is this? Ropes, sails, extra things that are normally to make the ship run. For us it might be an extra gas can, equipment, whatever. Not stuff you get rid of unless you are in serious trouble.
- Days go by—no sun, no stars, just raging wind; “***we finally gave up all hope of being saved***” (v.20)—what a powerful statement! Does that include Paul? I think it does—he may have thought that God is taking him home. But God has another plan.

D. Provision: Acts 27:21-26:

²¹ After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: “Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. ²² But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. ²³ Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me ²⁴ and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ ²⁵ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. ²⁶ Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.”

- Paul now has a visitor. God sends an angel.
- Paul identifies several realities: they should have stayed in Crete, but...
 - The angel was sent by God whom he serves.
 - They will all be saved, but not the ship.
 - He, Paul, must stand on trial before Caesar. (would you tell others?)
 - God is going to preserve them all, but the ship will be lost.
 - They must run aground.
 - They should have courage, and Paul has faith this will all happen. What an interesting chance to share your faith—in a catastrophe!
- The ship will be lost. How much are we willing to lose to save our soul? When we die, which will we wish we focused on?
- God is close to meet us in our time of peril.

E. Proposal: Acts 27:27-44:

²⁷ On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic^[e] Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. ²⁸ They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet^[d] deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet^[e] deep. ²⁹ Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. ³⁰ In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. ³¹ Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.” ³² So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away.

³³ Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. “For the last fourteen days,” he said, “you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven’t eaten anything. ³⁴ Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.” ³⁵ After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ Altogether there were 276 of us on board. ³⁸ When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

³⁹ When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. ⁴⁰ Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. ⁴¹ But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.

⁴² The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. ⁴³ But the centurion wanted to spare Paul’s life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. ⁴⁴ The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely.

- It’s now day 14 of the storm! Paul takes on the role of a leader here. He tells the Centurion to cut the lifeboat away when the sailors are trying to escape (a whole story there)—why does the Centurion listen? He has a new confidence in Paul and his God.
- Paul also speaks to the whole crew (vv.33-37. There are 276 people on board—obviously a good-sized ship!
- He tells them what God has told him and urges them to eat (they had kept some grain from the cargo). He ‘breaks bread before them’—I think a kind of communion. “They will all survive” he tells them.
- A series of events, but the Centurion now wants Paul and the other prisoners to survive—how remarkable! The Centurion is taking the risk here. Everyone gets to shore. Do you wonder if the Centurion became a believer? Did the other prisoners have a change of heart as their lives were spared? Did the other soldiers and crew have an awakening? What an amazing series of events!

F. Perspectives:

- This is not the end of the story. I leave you with a challenge. Read the next chapter, **Acts 28**. God is going to continue to work powerfully in the lives of the people of Malta, which is where they are. Not only spiritual healings, but physical will follow. And an unusual protection for Paul from a snake--a viper—*symbolic*? Viper goes in the fire. Read it and see God at work!
- What about you? Where are you on your journey? Have you experienced a storm, a shipwreck, a pounding of the surf? Do you have a snake attached to your arm?
- Are you a prisoner with your life hanging by a thread on the whim of someone in charge of you? Trust in God—call out to him! God rescued Jonah by a whale but

here brings Paul through a shipwreck to safety—he will do the same for all who reach out to him.

- Closing Illustration—**Prisoner from Maplehurst** who was saved and released.

Let's pray

