



Book of Acts

Chapter 27

*Theme: Paul goes to Rome via
storm and shipwreck*

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Bible Background Commentary Introduction: The Voyage to Rome Begins

Some commentators have suggested that the “we” here characterizes fictitious sea voyages; but it was used just as often in genuine historical narrative. Greek writing had long included passages describing other lands from the vantage point of ships voyaging by their coasts, and these included genuinely historical accounts. This narrative is clearly eyewitness history; the details of the voyage, including the number of days it took to reach particular harbors given the winds mentioned, fit exactly the report of one who had undertaken such a voyage. This point was shown already in the nineteenth century by an experienced Mediterranean mariner, James Smith, whom most subsequent commentaries follow on the nautical details.¹

This account of Sha’ul’s trip to Rome is considered one of the finest ancient descriptions of a sea voyage.²

McGee Introduction: This sea voyage might reasonably be called Paul’s fourth missionary journey. He was just as active when he went to Rome, he exercised the same latitude, he made as many contacts, and he witnessed just as faithfully as he had on his other journeys. Chains did not hinder him even though he made this entire journey in chains. He is the one who said “Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound” (2 Tim. 2:9). Also he wrote to the Philippians that the things which happened to him worked out for the furtherance of the gospel (Phil. 1:12).

God is in all of this, friend. The trip this time will be a little different from the others. It is to be made at the expense of the Roman government because he is Rome’s prisoner. This is the fulfillment of Paul’s prayer that he might come to Rome.

When Paul appealed his case to Caesar, he was moved out of the jurisdiction of Festus, the governor, and King Agrippa. As King Agrippa had said after hearing his case, “This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar” (Acts 26:32). They couldn’t do anything about it now; they must send Paul to Rome.

In chapter 27 of Acts we have the record of his voyage to Rome. What we have here might be called the log of the ship. This chapter of Acts has been considered the finest description of a sea voyage in the ancient world that is on record today. Sir William Ramsay made a study of Dr. Luke’s writing, and he considers this a masterpiece and the most accurate that has ever been written. So we are coming to another great chapter in the Bible, as you can see.

Those of you who have studied Caesar in Latin may recall the account of the building of a bridge. That has always been a passage that stands out in the memory of all who study Latin because there are so many new words that pertain to the building of a bridge. This chapter in the Greek corresponds to it because there are many technical terms which Dr. Luke uses to describe this voyage.

Let’s take off now with the apostle Paul. We’re going to take a sea voyage to Rome. This is the final and most exciting travelog in the Book of Acts.³

¹ Bible Background Commentary

² Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 27:1). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

³ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:629). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Acts 27:1

And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

[We] Luke is tagging along! Paul will go to Rome, spend some years there in prison, finally get to see the emperor, and we don't know from Scripture, but we have other reason to believe that the case was dismissed; he was freed, went on to other things, Spain, Britain; gets arrested again, back to Rome in prison again, and finally taken outside the city and beheaded. Luke was with him right to the end!

Many scholars believe that Paul had illness and infirmities and that Luke was his personal physician.

ESV: The voyage to Rome (which probably began in the autumn of a.d. 59) is given in great detail and with remarkable exactness, consistent with what is otherwise known about sea travel in that time and place. The keynote of the story is God's providence, especially in preserving Paul for his Roman testimony. At a literary level the story is told to indicate how far and difficult the journey to Rome is, as the gospel heads toward the ends of the earth.

This chapter discusses an enormous amount of technical details about sailing techniques of the period (inferred through the Greek). The ships were single-masted, they did not have a single rudder; instead two paddles on either side, which they used to maneuver.

[**Julius**] Julius became a close friend of Paul because of the miraculous events of the journey to Rome.

And when it was determined, The governor had given orders to carry Paul to Rome, according to his appeal; together with other prisoners who were bound for the same place.

Clarke: We should sail—By this it is evident that St. Luke was with Paul; and it is on this account that he was enabled to give such a circumstantial account of the voyage.⁴

Into Italy The country still bearing the same name, of which Rome was the capital.

Barnes: Of Augustus' band. For the meaning of the word "band," Matthew 27:27, Acts 10:1. It was a division in the Roman army, consisting of from four to six hundred men. It was called "Augustus' band" in honour of the Roman emperor Augustus, Acts 25:21, and was probably distinguished in some way for the care in enlisting or selecting them. The Augustus cohort or band is mentioned by Suetonius in his Life of Nero, 20.⁵

⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament

⁵ Barnes' Notes on the New Testament

BBC: [Augustan] (NASB, NRSV) was often an honorary term, and one cohort known in Syria-Palestine before and after this period bore that name. Centurions could be moved around; this one may have had his full company of eighty troops (Acts 27:31), although it might be hard to fit eighty more persons on the average Mediterranean cargo ship (cf. Acts 27:37). The “other prisoners” may have been sent for trial as Roman citizens, but a higher number of those sent normally were convicted criminals to be killed in the games for the entertainment of the Roman public.

LAN: Use of the pronoun *we* indicates that Luke accompanied Paul on this journey. Aristarchus is the man who was dragged into the theater at the beginning of the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:29; Acts 20:4; Philemon 1:24).⁶

McGee: This is the beginning of the voyage to Italy. Paul, along with other prisoners, is put in the charge of a centurion by the name of Julius. I would think it safe to say that Paul was the only one of the prisoners who was a Roman citizen. Probably the others were criminals who were sent to Rome for execution. Many of them would become gladiators and would be fed to the wild beasts. In that day there was a constant stream of human life from all corners of the empire that was being fed into the mall of this public vice there in the Colosseum in Rome. These prisoners would be utterly hopeless men. What an opportunity this gave Paul to bring the gospel of hope to this class of men. You will remember that the Lord Jesus Himself said that one of the reasons He came was to set the prisoners free—free spiritually, delivered from their sins and delivered from their guilt.

This centurion, Julius, was a very courteous pagan, as we shall see.⁷

Chuck Smith: So Julius is another Roman centurion we're introduced to, and interestingly enough, in the scriptures we're introduced to several centurions, and all of them were very commendable men. The Bible really speaks in a very favorable way of each of the centurions. There was a centurion who came to Jesus for the healing of his servant. And Jesus said, "I will come to your house." And he says, "Oh no, Lord. I understand what authority is about because I'm under authority and I have under me men. And I can say to this one, go and he goes and I can say come and he comes. I understand what authority is about, and I'm not worthy that you should come to my house, but you just speak the word and my servant will be healed. I understand authority and I understand your authority. You just speak the word." And Jesus said, "I haven't found this much faith in all of Israel" (Matthew 8:7-10). The centurion at the cross, at the death of Jesus said, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).⁸

Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us: Paul was accompanied by **Aristarchus** and Luke (notice the **us** of verse 2 and beyond) on this voyage. While some have thought that they went “undercover” with Paul as his “slaves,” it is just as likely that

⁶ Life Application Notes

⁷ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:630). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ Smith, Chuck. "Acts 26-27." *The Word for Today*. Blue Letter Bible. 1 Jun 2005. 2010. 2 Feb 2010.

Aristarchus paid his fare as a passenger and that Luke was on board as the ship's doctor.⁹

Acts 27:2

And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; *one* Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

[**Aristarchus**] - may have been Paul's slave. He certainly spent a lot of time with Paul. In Chapter 19 he was the one that the mob grabbed in the whole scene; and he was also the one who was with Paul on his last visit to Jerusalem; and he is mentioned in Paul's letter to the Colossians as a very dear.

Clarke: Aristarchus, a Macedonian—We have seen this person with St. Paul at Ephesus, during the disturbances there, Acts 19:29, where he had been seized by the mob, and was in great personal danger. He afterwards attended Paul to Macedonia, and returned with him to Asia, Acts 20:4. Now, accompanying him to Rome, he was there a fellow prisoner with him, Colossians 4:10, and is mentioned in St. Paul's epistle to Philemon, Philemon 24, who was probably their common friend.—Dodd. Luke and Aristarchus were certainly not prisoners at this time, and seem to have gone with St. Paul merely as his companions, through affection to him, and love for the cause of Christianity. How Aristarchus became his fellow prisoner, as is stated Colossians 4:10, we cannot tell, but it could not have been at this time.

[**Adramyttium**] Several places are called by this name. This must have been a city in Mysia on the Aegean Sea. The ship was bound for home up the coast of Asia.

Barnes: A ship of Adramyttium. A maritime town of Mysia, in Asia Minor, opposite to the island of Lesbos. This was a ship which had been built there, or which sailed from that port, but which was then in the port of Caesarea. It is evident, from Acts 27:6, that this ship was not expected to sail to Italy, but that the centurion expected to find some other vessel into which he could put the prisoners to take them to Rome.

BBC: Shippers had low status but often made large profits. Ancient Mediterranean ships were quite small by modern standards; most of them weighed less than 250 tons, although Alexandrian grain ships (Acts 27:6) were much heavier (often estimated at eight hundred tons or more). Adramyttium was southeast of Troas. Imperial messengers normally traveled by land, unless a ship were convenient, as this one proved to be.

[**Aristarchus**] Acts 19:21; Acts 20:4. He and Luke accompanied Paul to Rome (Col. 4:10; Philemon 1:24).

⁹ <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/4427.htm>

Dake: [launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia] Paul's journey to Rome:

1. Caesarea, Samaria (Acts 27:1)
2. Sidon, Phoenicia (Acts 27:3)
3. Island of Cyprus (Acts 27:4)
4. Myra, Lycia, Asia Minor (Acts 27:5)
5. Salmone, Island of Crete (Acts 27:7)
6. Fair Havens, Lasea, Crete (Acts 27:8-44)
7. Melita (Malta), So. of Italy (Acts 28:1)
8. Syracuse, Sicily (Acts 28:12)
9. Rhegium, Italy (Acts 28:13)
10. Puteoli, Italy (Acts 28:13)
11. Appii Forum, Italy (Acts 28:15)
12. Rome, Italy (Acts 28:16-31)¹⁰

McGee: Again, it will be a help if you will follow this voyage on a map. You will notice that now they are going up the coast of Israel. In other words, they don't sail directly out to sea from the point of departure and then arrive at Rome. The ship hovers close to the coastline and goes up the coast of Israel.

Paul is not traveling alone. The physician Luke has been his companion for most of the last several years. The third member of Paul's entourage is Aristarchus, a Thessalonian convert who was a close friend to Paul.

“During the Apostle's subsequent long journey to Jerusalem, Aristarchus was to be found by his side ("Acts 20:4Acts 20:4). It is reasonable to suppose that this faithful friend remained in Palestine during Paul's two years' imprisonment there, for we find him again accompanying the Apostle when the latter shipped for Rome as a prisoner in charge of the centurion Julius ("Acts 27:2Acts 27:2)...He had been so long faithful to his friend the Apostle that it would rather appear as if he had thrown in his lot with him altogether and had no intention of forsaking him at all, and this view is strengthened by the fact that we find him sharing Paul's imprisonment throughout the two years during which the latter dwelt in his own hired house in Rome ("Col. 4:10Col. 4:10 and Philemon 24). So far as one can gather from the few instances in which his name is mentioned, he was always near the Apostle, ready to render him service and to work with and for him in the cause of the gospel from the time that he was converted in Thessalonica in A. D. 53 up to the close of Paul's first Roman imprisonment in A. D. 64. This friendship was therefore one of several years' standing, and must have been a source of considerable comfort and consolation to the aged Apostle in the trying circumstances of his later life, and during his weary and lengthy imprisonments both in Palestine and in Imperial Rome.” (St. Paul's Companions in Rome. by Col. R. M. Bryce-Thomas, *Improvement Era*, 1909, Vol. Xii. August, 1909. No. 10)¹¹

¹⁰ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

¹¹ <http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/NewTestament/ntindex.html>

Acts 27:3

And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

Even though Paul is a prisoner, Julius gives him the freedom in Sidon to visit the believers of the area. Julius trusts that Paul will not flee.

Clarke: Julius courteously entreated Paul—At the conclusion of the preceding chapter, it has been intimated that the kind treatment which Paul received, both from Julius and at Rome, was owing to the impression made on the minds of Agrippa and Festus, relative to his innocence. It appears that Julius permitted him to go ashore, and visit the Christians which were then at Sidon, without using any extraordinary precautions to prevent his escape. He was probably accompanied with the soldier to whose arm he was chained; and it is reasonable to conclude that this soldier would fare well on St. Paul's account.

We touched at Sidon. Matthew 11:21. It was north of Caesarea. Sidon had a double harbor and was about seventy miles north of Caesarea, where they had started.

Unto his friends. In Sidon. Paul had frequently travelled in that direction, in going to and returning from Jerusalem; and it is not improbable, therefore, that he had friends in all the principal cities.

Barnes: To refresh himself. To enjoy the benefit of their kind care, to make his present situation and his voyage as comfortable as possible. It is probable that they would furnish him with many supplies which were needful to make his long and perilous voyage comfortable.

LAN: Julius, a hardened Roman centurion, was assigned to guard Paul. Obviously he had to remain close to Paul at all times. Through this contact, Julius developed a respect for Paul. He gave Paul a certain amount of freedom (Acts 27:3) and later spared his life (Acts 27:43). How would your character look, up close and personal?

McGee: Sidon is a familiar place to us. Tyre and Sidon are up on the coast in Phoenicia in what is now the country of Lebanon.

Notice the liberty that is granted to the apostle Paul. I am of the opinion that here is a Roman official whom Paul reached with the gospel. His treatment of Paul is gracious. Even the great apostle Paul needed the fellowship and refreshment of Christian brethren. None of us are immune to that. We need the understanding and encouragement of one another.

The Roman centurion in charge of Paul allowed him to refresh himself and later kept his soldiers from killing him (v. 23-24). What can we learn from the way Julius treated Paul? This Roman had no interest in the Jewish religions; he did not believe that Paul was a messenger of God (see v. 11). Yet he treated him with courtesy as a matter of common

decency. May we treat everyone, even our own enemies, with the same measure of courtesy.

Sterling W. Sill

“M. A. Kelty said, ‘Small kindnesses, small courtesies, small considerations, habitually practiced in our social intercourse, give a greater charm to the character than the display of great talents or great accomplishments.’ Goethe declared, ‘There is no outward sign of true courtesy that does not rest on a deep moral foundation.’ And Emerson said, ‘We should be as courteous to a man as we are to a picture, which we are willing to give the advantage of the best possible light.’

“...One of the wisest decisions we can make is to always be courteous, kind, and gracious. A courteous person does not violate the rules of accepted conduct. A courteous person is not immodest or offensive. He is always thoughtful of God, of his country, of his family, of his friends, and even of his enemies.

“May we always be courteous in our speech, in our activities, in our appearance. Then, when we go to stand before God, it is likely that one of the qualities that will shine brighter in our lives than almost any other is that great gem of courtesy.” (*The Wealth of Wisdom*, 83-85)¹²

Acts 27:4

And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

The Jewish belief is that you couldn't really navigate those waters after the Feast of Tabernacles, they are running out of time, and running into storm season.

“Under Cyprus” actually means that they came all the way down south of Cyprus, which indicates they were encountering some north winds.

Barnes: We sailed under Cyprus. For an account of Cyprus, Acts 4:36. By sailing "under Cyprus" is meant that they sailed along its coasts; they kept near to it; they thus endeavoured to break off the violent winds. Instead of steering a direct course in the open sea, which would have exposed them to violent opposing winds, they kept near this large island, so that it was between them and the westerly winds. The force of the wind was thus broken, and the voyage rendered less difficult and dangerous. They went between Cyprus and Asia Minor, leaving Cyprus to the left. Had it not been for the strong western winds they would have left it on the right.

The winds were contrary. Were from the west, or south-west, which thus prevented their pursuing a direct course.

¹² <http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/NewTestament/ntindex.html>

BBC: The ship is opposed by the usual summer winds from the west or northwest. Thus, remaining close to the Syrian coast east of Cyprus, and northward to the south of Asia Minor, their voyage is much slower than the reverse voyage across open sea (Acts 21:1-3), although aided by land breezes.

Acts 27:5

And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

Clarke: Myra, a city of Lycia—The name of this city is written variously in the MSS., Myra, Murrha, Smyra, and Smyrna. Grotius conjectures that all these names are corrupted, and that it should be written Limyra, which is the name both of a river and city in Lycia. It is certain that, in common conversation, the first syllable, *li*, might be readily dropped, and then Myra, the word in the text, would remain. Strabo mentions both Myra and Limyra, lib. xiv. p. 666. The former, he says, is twenty stadia from the sea, upon a high hill: the latter, he says, is the name of a river; and twenty stadia up this river is the town Limyra itself. These places were not far distant, and one of them is certainly meant.

BBC: Myra was two miles from its harbor. The soldiers and their prisoners might have gone on by land (Acts 27:2), but the centurion is able to find another ship (Acts 27:6).

Acts 27:6

And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

A larger vessel, typically carrying grain from Egypt to Italy.

Clarke: A ship of Alexandria—It appears, from Acts 27:38, that this ship was laden with wheat, which she was carrying from Alexandria to Rome. We know that the Romans imported much corn from Egypt, together with different articles of Persian and Indian merchandise.

When you check the map, you will see that Myra is sort of a jumping-off place. This was the place at which they changed ships. The centurion found a ship of Alexandria, which means it had come up from northern Africa and was sailing to Italy.

Barnes: A ship of Alexandria. A ship belonging to Alexandria. Alexandria was in Egypt, and was founded by Alexander the Great. It appears, from Acts 27:38, that the ship was laden with wheat. It is well known that great quantities of wheat were imported from Egypt to Rome; and it appears that this was one of the large ships which were employed for that purpose. Why the ship was on the coast of Asia Minor, is not known. But it is probable that it had been driven out of its way by adverse winds or tempests.

BBC: Rome's grain fleet dominated Mediterranean trade; ships from Alexandria, Egypt, would travel northward and then westward to bear their cargoes to Rome. This journey took from as little as fifty days to over two months, although the reverse voyage from Rome to Alexandria could take as little as nine to twelve days. The Egyptian grain ships were about 180 feet long, 45 feet wide and (at their deepest) over 40 feet deep; the fleet may have transported some 150,000 tons of Egyptian grain to Italy each year. This was the largest mercantile fleet known to Europe before the 1700s. The Alexandrian fleet was the quickest means of transportation from Syria to Rome.

ESV: 5–6 Cilicia, Pamphylia, and Lycia were districts along the southern coast of what today is Turkey. **Myra** was directly north of **Alexandria** and would have been a good stopping place for a ship that was sailing for Italy, probably carrying Egyptian grain.

Acts 27:7

And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;

Sailed slowly many days—Partly because the wind was contrary, and partly because the vessel was heavy laden.

Clarke: Over against Cnidus—This was a city or promontory of Asia, opposite to Crete, at one corner of the peninsula of Caria. Some think that this was an island between Crete and a promontory of the same name.

Over against Salmone—We have already seen that the island formerly called Crete is now called Candia; and Salmone or Sammon, or Samonium, now called Cape Salamon, or Salamina, was a promontory on the eastern coast of that island.

BBC: Ships that sailed over against Cnidus were keeping north of Rhodes. Crete was the largest island of the Aegean Sea. It had few harbors in the north, and a north wind from the Aegean there could wreck a ship against the coast. A wind that would drive their ship toward Salmone (on the eastern end of Crete) would be a northwesterly wind, normal for late summer. But the south coast of Crete had more harbors, and the south winds there were more gentle.

Acts 27:8

And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

Barnes: And, hardly passing it. Scarcely being able to pass by it without being wrecked. Being almost driven on it. They passed round the east end of the island, because they had been unable to sail directly forward between the island and the main land.

Clarke: The Fair Havens—This port still remains, and is known by the same name; it was situated towards the northern extremity of the island.

Barnes: The fair havens. This was on the south-eastern part of the island of Crete. It was probably not so much a harbour as an open kind of *road*, which afforded good anchorage for a time. It is called by Stephen, the geographer, "the fair shore."

Clarke: Was the city of Lasea—There is no city of this name now remaining: the Codex Alexandrinus reads Αλασσα, Alassa; probably Lysia, near the port of Gortyna, to the eastward.

They were headed for the island of Crete. Apparently they were still having difficulty sailing. Contrary winds were the great difficulty for sailing vessels of that day. They passed on the south side of the island and came to Lasea, which is on the south shore of Crete.¹³

Acts 27:9

Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished *them*,

“The fast was now already past” - Yom Kippur had apparently gone by.

[the fast was now already past] The 10th day of the 7th month, the day of atonement, about Oct. 1. This time of the year the Mediterranean was very tempestuous. Among ancient Jews, to sail after this feast was proverbially dangerous.

Clarke: Sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past—It is generally allowed that the fast mentioned here was that of the great day of atonement which was always celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh month, which would answer to the latter end of our September; see Leviticus 16:29; 23:27, etc. As this was about the time of the autumnal equinox, when the Mediterranean Sea was sufficiently tempestuous, we may suppose this feast alone to be intended. To sail after this feast was proverbially dangerous among the ancient Jews. See proofs in Schoettgen.

Barnes: When much time was spent. In sailing along the coast of Asia; in contending with the contrary winds. It is evident that, when they started, they had hoped to reach Italy before the dangerous time of navigating the Mediterranean should arrive. But they had been detained and embarrassed contrary to their expectation, so that they were now sailing in the most dangerous and tempestuous time of the year.

Barnes: Because the fast was now already past. By "the fast," here is evidently intended the fast which occurred among the Jews on the great day of atonement. That was

¹³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:631). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

the tenth of the month *Tisri*, which answers to a part of September and part of October. It was therefore the time of the autumnal equinox, and when the navigation of the Mediterranean was esteemed to be particularly dangerous, from the storms which usually occurred about that time. The ancients regarded this as a dangerous time to navigate the Mediterranean. See the proofs in Kuinel on this place.

BBC: The “fast” here refers to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which occurs in September or October. Sea travel became more dangerous as winter approached (2 Tim. 4:21; Titus 3:12). Shipping was completely closed down from around November 10 to as late as March 10, but September 15–November 10 and March 11–May 26 were risky periods as well.

LAN: The “Fast” was the Day of Atonement. Ships in ancient times had no compasses and navigated by the stars. Overcast weather made sailing almost impossible and very dangerous. Sailing was doubtful in September and impossible by November. This event occurred in October (A.D. 59).

JNTC: It was already past *Yom-Kippur*, literally, “past the Fast.” It is as a matter of course that Luke writes of the Jewish holiday *Yom-Kippur* (the Day of Atonement). This is evidence that Sha’ul continued observing Jewish practices, keeping the Law until the end of his life (see 13:9, 21:21, 22:3). It also lends strength to the contention that Luke himself was Jewish or a proselyte to Judaism; he would otherwise be unlikely to measure time for his Gentile reader (1:1–4) by the Jewish calendar.

Shipping became increasingly risky after mid-September and was rarely engaged in after mid-October because of the likelihood of storms. *Yom-Kippur* can occur between September 14 and October 14.

For a Jewish believer *Yom-Kippur* has a different significance than for the unbeliever. A Messianic Jew knows that Yeshua the Messiah, by his death on behalf of all sinners (Yn 3:16; Ro 3:21–26, 5:8), has become the final *kapparah* (“atonement,” literally “covering”; the word is a cognate of “*kippur*”). For this reason no further sacrifices for sin are necessary; this is the subject of Messianic Jews 7–10&NN.¹⁴

Acts 27:10

And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

Paul is prophesying.

[I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives] The 16th New Testament prophecy in Acts (Acts 27:10, fulfilled). The next is in Acts 27:22.

¹⁴Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 27:9). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Clarke: I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt, etc.—Paul might either have had this intimation from the Spirit of God, or from his own knowledge of the state of this sea after the autumnal equinox, and therefore gave them this prudent warning.

Barnes: I perceive. It is not certain that Paul understood this by direct inspiration. He might have perceived it from his own knowledge of the danger of navigation at the autumnal equinox, and from what he saw of the ship as unfitted to a dangerous navigation. But there is nothing that should prevent our believing also that he was guided to this conclusion by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Comp. Acts 27:23,24.

Barnes: The lading. The freight of the ship. It was laden with wheat, Acts 27:38. Paul evidently, by this, intended to suggest the propriety of remaining where they were, until the time of dangerous navigation was past.

BBC: Pagans undertaking sea voyages always sacrificed to the gods and sought their protection. Bad omens, astrological interpretations or dreams sometimes prevented a ship from sailing if they were taken seriously. Before going to war Romans would check the entrails of animals, the flight of birds and other forms of divination; religious advice was always important to those contemplating a potentially risky venture. Paul would sound to them like the kind of seer who could predict the future without divination. Unlike Greeks, Romans respected divination more than this kind of prophecy.

It is possible that Sha’ul was prophesying, in the sense of giving forth a word of God. Or he may simply have been offering his opinion as an experienced sea-goer who had seen disasters before—he had been shipwrecked three times and been adrift overnight on wreckage (2C 11:25). But his advice went unheeded.¹⁵

McGee: One can certainly understand the centurion. After all, you would expect the captain of the ship to know more about sailing than Paul.

We see Paul under a real testing here. He certainly stands out. He makes a suggestion which, they will find later, should have been followed. The spiritual superiority of Paul is evident at this point. There is no confusion in the life of Paul, no uncertainty, no frustration. He is what would be called a poised personality. Paul knew the way he was going. “This one thing I do” was his declaration when he got to Rome. We can observe these qualities in his behavior, throughout the voyage. Paul lived his life as a man in touch with God.

¹⁵Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 27:10). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Acts 27:11

Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

[centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship] He was in authority, being in imperial service, so they sailed on. They sought to get to Phenice at the western end of the island and there spend the winter.

Clarke: The centurion believed the master, the pilot; and owner of the ship, the captain and proprietor. This latter had the command of the ship and the crew; the pilot had the guidance of the vessel along those dangerous coasts, under the direction of the captain; and the centurion had the power to cause them to proceed on their voyage, or to go into port, as he pleased; as he had other state prisoners on board; and probably the ship itself was freighted for government. Paul told them, if they proceeded, they would be in danger of shipwreck; the pilot and captain said there was no danger; and the centurion, believing them, commanded the vessel to proceed on her voyage. It is likely that they were now in the port called the Fair Havens.

Barnes: The master. The captain, or the pilot. The person who is here meant was the helmsman, who occupied, in ancient ships, a conspicuous place on the stern, and steered the ship, and gave directions to the crew.

Barnes: The owner of the ship. Probably a different person from "the master." He had the general command of the ship as his own property, but had employed "the master," or the pilot, to direct and manage it. His counsel, in regard to the propriety of continuing the voyage, would be likely to be followed.

BBC: Being a practical Roman, the centurion respects the nautical knowledge of the captain more than a Jewish prisoner's religious insights. Yet such a decision was often made more on economic than nautical grounds. Grain ships sometimes traveled together; this one is making the voyage alone and is probably one of the latest vessels of the shipping season. But the captain at best hopes to make it to a better harbor before the seas close down for the winter; he cannot hope to reach Italy this late in the year (Acts 27:9). The captain is probably also the ship owner here, but because his vessel is part of the imperial grain fleet, the centurion functions as a Roman official with greater authority than the ship owner, just as he would on land in Egypt.

Paul, an apostle and a prophet, gives prophetic warning to his captors. But the centurion and owner were in a hurry to get somewhere! Aren't we all? As we read of the tempest and their tribulations, as we think of the prayers and fasting of Paul and his entourage, as we review the loss of property and danger to life, we are reminded that all of it could have been avoided by simply heeding the counsel of Paul. He later reminds them, 'Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss' (v. 21). But, as is often the case, they had only one opportunity to do the right thing. To change their mind once at sea was too late!

Acts 27:12

And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.

This small town probably could not support 276 people for winter.

[**south west and north west**] Phenice was located in a harbor that had two openings divided by a little island. One opening was in the direction in which the southwest wind blows toward the northeast; the other opening was in the direction in which the northwest wind blows toward the southeast. Recent researches prove that this is the exact description of the haven of Phenice, Crete.

Clarke: Might attain to Phoenice—It appears that the Fair Havens were at the eastern end of the island, and they wished to reach Phoenice, which lay farther towards the west.

Barnes: To Phenice. This was a port or harbour on the south side of Crete, and west of the fair havens. It was a more convenient harbour, and regarded as more safe. It appears, therefore, that the majority of persons on board concurred with Paul in the belief that it was not advisable to attempt the navigation of the sea, until the dangers of the winter had passed by.

BBC: Phoenix was probably a common winter harbor; its site is either in southwestern Crete or, more likely, on the north of Crete.

LAN: Although this was not the best time to sail, the pilot and the owner of the ship didn't want to spend the winter in Lasea, and so the pilot took a chance. At first the winds and weather were favorable, but then the deadly storm arose.

Acts 27:13

And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.

“South wind” is a favorable wind, contrary to the normal winds there. A south wind is what they need and should have brought them to their destination within hours. But the south wind often changes suddenly to a dangerous northerly wind in this region; the conflicting air currents increase the danger.

[**when the south wind blew softly**] When they saw the wind blow softly they all supposed that they would make it to Phenice, but Paul's prophecy of Acts 27:10 had to be fulfilled.

Clarke: When the south wind blew softly—Though this wind was not very favorable, yet, because it blew softly, they supposed they might be able to make their passage.

They sailed close by Crete—Kept as near the coast as they could.

Acts 27:14

But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

[**tempestuous**] Greek: *tuphonikos* (GSN-5189), typhonic. Only here.

[**Euroclydon**] This is an ancient term for an eastern storm, a typhoon whirlwind or hurricane blowing in all directions. The name of the wind!

JNTC: A full gale, Greek *anemos tuphonikos* (the first means “wind”; the latter gives us the English word “typhoon”). They tried to hug the south coast of Crete; but the **northeast** wind, blowing from shore, drove them out to sea, where the larger waves were more difficult to deal with.¹⁶

This is a difficult verse to translate and interpret. Some translations use the word “northeaster” or its equivalent for this wind. The Vulgate has *Euraquilo* (Lat.), regarded as being the northeast wind. The name in the Greek is *eurakulon* and appears to give simply the direction of the wind. Luke’s words (*anemos tuphonikos*, Gk.) describing the wind can be translated “arose,” and are from the root word meaning “to throw.” Some have concluded, possibly erroneously, that *tuphognikos* is the base of the modern English “typhoon,” a “violent, turbulent whirlwind,” or a “squall.” The English word may have been borrowed, as others maintain, from elsewhere, possibly from the Chinese word *tai-fung*, referring to the heavenly squalls or tropical cyclones originating in the Philippines and China Sea. In this passage, the wind was clearly “tempestuous.” It descended violently upon the helpless crew and small group of passengers en route to Rome. Little did they realize that this wind was part of the divine purpose to fulfill Jesus’ words to Paul that he should testify of Him as Lord before Caesar.¹⁷

ESV: The **wind** is described as **tempestuous** (Gk. *typhōnikos*), and the storm is called in Greek the *eurakylōn* (Gk., based on *euros*, “east wind,” and *akylō*, “north wind”—hence, **northeaster**). Such northeasters are extremely dangerous in this region, appearing suddenly with violent, whirling winds caused by a meeting of opposite air currents.

Acts 27:15

And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.

[**ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind**] The ship was caught in the hurricane and driven where the wind would take it.

¹⁶Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 27:14). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

¹⁷ Believer’s Study Bible

Clarke: And when the ship was caught The ship was violently hurried away before this strong levanter; so that it was impossible for her, to face the wind, to turn her prow to it, so as to shake it out, as I have heard sailors say, and have seen them successfully perform in violent tempests and squalls.

We let her drive—We were obliged to let her go right before this tempestuous wind, whithersoever it might drive her.

BBC: With a favorable wind in their mainsail, these ships could cover about fifty nautical miles in daylight, or ninety miles in twenty-four hours; but they had little resistance to a powerful wind going in a direction they wished to avoid.

Fearing that fierce winds would overturn the ship, the crew takes down the sails, allowing the ship to be driven before the tempest. Later (v. 17), they would raise the sails attempting to avoid getting stuck in shallow water by the island of Clauda. “Historians of Rome have long noted that Luke’s description of this exciting journey is one of the most important primary sources available on ancient seamanship. Students of Paul’s life cannot help but be impressed with his spiritual leadership and unfailing trust in the Lord under the most trying circumstances.” (C. Wilfred Griggs, “Paul: The Long Road from Damascus,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 57)

Acts 27:16

And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

[**Clauda**] An island on the southwest coast of Crete, now called Gaza; almost due south of Phenice.

BBC: The only place to anchor at Cauda is also exposed to the east-northeast wind and thus could not help them. The “boat” or “lifeboat” (NIV) was used for landings, to maneuver the ship for tacking and so forth. Sometimes these boats were kept on deck; at other times, as here, they were towed behind. Here, filled with water or in danger of breaking loose from the ship, it has to be brought on deck to be rescued.

[**boat**] Greek: *skaphe* (GSN-4627), skiff. The lifeboat. Only here; Acts 27:30,32. The ancient skiff was not taken on board, but was usually allowed to follow in the wake. In this instance, by reason of the storm, it was thought advisable to take it on board, but the task was difficult.

Clarke: A certain island—called Clauda—Called also Gaudos; situated at the southwestern extremity of the island of Crete, and now called Gozo, according to Dr. Shaw.

Clarke: Much work to come by the boat—It was likely to have been washed overboard; or, if the boat was in tow, at the stern of the vessel, which is probable, they found it very difficult to save it from being staved, or broken to pieces.

Barnes: To come by the boat. This does not mean that they attempted here to land in the boat, but they had much difficulty in saving the small boat attached to the ship, from being staved to pieces. Whether it was carried in the ship or towed at the stern, does not appear; but it is evident that it was in danger of being broken to pieces, or lost, and that they had much difficulty in securing it. The importance of securing the small boat is known by all seamen.

Acts 27:17

Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, struck sail, and so were driven.

[helps] Every ship carried large cables, which were used in case of necessity for passing around the hull, thus undergirding it, and saving it from strain which resulted from the working of the mast in a storm.

Clarke: Undergirding the ship—This method has been used even in modern times. It is called frapping the ship. A stout cable is slipped under the vessel at the prow, which they can conduct to any part of the ship's keel; and then fasten the two ends on the deck, to keep the planks from starting: as many rounds as they please may be thus taken about the vessel. An instance of this kind is mentioned in Lord Anson's Voyage round the World. Speaking of a Spanish man-of-war in a storm: "They were obliged to throw overboard all their upper-deck guns, and take six turns of the cable round the ship, to prevent her opening." P. 24, 4to. edit. The same was done by a British line-of-battle ship in 1763, on her passage from India to the Cape of Good Hope.

[quicksands] Greek: *Surtis* (GSN-4950). Only here. There are two gulfs on the north shore of Africa, full of shoals and sandbanks, called Syrtis Major and Syrtis Minor. They were afraid of being driven on these sands. Quicksands are a form of sand bar.

[strake sail] They lowered the gear and took down the beam to which the sail was attached.

Clarke: Strake sail What this means is difficult to say. As to striking or slackening sail, that is entirely out of the question, in such circumstances as they were; when it is evident they could carry no sail at all, and must have gone under bare poles. Some think that lowering the yards, and taking down the top-mast, is what is intended; but in such a perilous situation this would have been of little service. Others think, letting go their main or sheet anchor, is what is meant; but this seems without foundation, as it would have been foolishness in the extreme to have hoped to ride out the storm in such a sea. Passing by a variety of meanings, I suppose cutting away, or by some means letting down the

mast, is the action intended to be expressed here; and this would be the most likely means of saving the vessel from foundering.

Acts 27:18

And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next *day* they lightened the ship;

[lightened the ship] Evidently threw out some cargo.

Jettisoning the bulk of the cargo is the natural step at this point; in crises like this one no distinction is made between valuable and cheap cargo (Jonah 1:5; also Josephus, Achilles Tatius).

Acts 27:19

And the third *day* we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

[our own hands] All prisoners and others on board were pressed into service, including Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus.

[the tackling of the ship] The yard, sail, and all the ship's furnishings, baggage, and other things.

BBC: It would take most of the manpower on deck to lower the yard (“tackle”—NIV)—a spar that could be nearly the ship’s own length—down to the deck. One would secure it if possible, but in the severity of this storm, they cannot afford the encumbrance created by retaining it.

Acts 27:20

And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

Remember that they did not have compasses. They used the sun and the stars for guidance, and when they were blocked, they had no way to know where they were.

Clarke: Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared—And consequently they could make no observation; and, having no magnetical needle, could not tell in what direction they were going.

[tempest] Greek: *chemimon* (GSN-5494), translated winter (Matthew 24:20; Mark 13:18; John 10:22; 2 Tim. 4:21) and foul weather (Matthew 16:3).

BBC: Pagans felt that those who died at sea never entered the realm of the dead; instead their souls wandered aimlessly forever above the waters in which they perished.

McGee: Dr. Luke says that “no small tempest” lay on them. We have already seen how Dr. Luke likes to use the diminutive like this. He means that it was really a terrible storm. In fact, they did not think they would escape from it alive. It was in the storm that the voice of the Lord was heard through the lips of Paul.

After fourteen days of wave and wind, the folk on the ship felt that they would not come through alive. They felt like this was it. However, the Lord had appeared to Paul and assured him that he was going to see Rome. With this assurance Paul was able to stand out above the others.

Acts 27:21

But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

[**abstinence**] After a long fast (Acts 27:33,38).

[**ye should have hearkened unto me**] Paul reminded all of his prophecy of Acts 27:10, being quick to cheer them with another prophecy. An angel had stood by Paul that night to give him word for the distressed men on the ship (Acts 27:23).

BBC: Ancient people evaluated the sincerity of philosophers (e.g., Aristippus) according to how calm they stayed under pressure. A true philosopher consistent with his teachings would remain calm in a dangerous storm at sea (so Pyrrho the Skeptic), whereas as a false prophet like Peregrinus would not. The others’ lack of eating may be due to seasickness.

LAN: Why would Paul talk to the crew this way? Paul was not taunting them with an “I told you so,” but was reminding them that, with God’s guidance, he had predicted this very problem (Acts 27:10). In the future, they listened to him (Acts 27:30-32) and their lives were spared because of it.

Acts 27:22

And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man’s* life among you, but of the ship.

[**And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship**] The 17th New Testament prophecy in Acts (Acts 27:22-26, fulfilled). The next is in Acts 27:31.

Clarke: **There shall be no loss of—life—**This must be joyous news to those from whom all hope that they should be saved was taken away: Acts 27:20.

JNTC: You should have listened to me. We cannot know whether Sha’ul was indulging himself in a well-earned but all-too-human “I told you so,” or reminding his hearers of their mistake so that they would be more willing now to hear his message of hope.

Harold B. Lee

“Now for a moment let us become fellow-travelers with Paul the Apostle, a man on a voyage across the Mediterranean to Rome, where he was in the custody of Roman officers because of his ‘offense’ to the guilty sinners of his day in preaching the truths of the Gospel...As we voyage together toward Rome a furious storm breaks and after five days most all on board have despaired of living out the storm. Not so with this young man whose faith had brought him the peace of heavenly vision. He stood before his cowering mates and said: ‘And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul . . . Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.’ (“Acts 27:22”Acts 27:23”Acts 27:24”Acts 27:25Acts 27:22-25.)¹⁸

Neal A. Maxwell

“This lesson about justifiable cheerfulness even amid perilous passages apparently had been driven home to Paul, for during his voyage to Rome, he assured his fearful shipmates that not one of them would lose their lives, though their ship would be lost. Therefore, He encouraged them to ‘be of good cheer’ in the midst of their anxieties, and his prophecy was fulfilled.

“It remains for us, therefore, to be of good cheer even when...current circumstances seem hopeless.” (*Even As I Am*, 101.)¹⁹

Acts 27:23

For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

Clarke: The—God, whose I am, and whom I serve—This Divine communication was intended to give credit to the apostle and to his doctrine; and, in such perilous circumstances, to speak so confidently, when every appearance was against him, argued the fullest persuasion of the truth of what he spoke; and the fulfillment, so exactly coinciding with the prediction, must have shown these heathens that the God whom Paul served must be widely different from theirs.

JNTC: Even in a storm at sea, as cargo is being thrown overboard, Sha’ul loses no occasion to communicate the Gospel, or at least to arouse the curiosity of his shipmates. Verse 26 is predictive prophecy, fulfilled at v. 41. ²⁰

¹⁸ <http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/NewTestament/ntindex.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/NewTestament/ntindex.html>

²⁰ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Ac 27:23). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Acts 27:24

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

Clarke: God hath given thee all them that sail with thee—Two hundred and seventy-six souls saved for the sake of one man! This was a strong proof of God’s approbation of Paul; and must at least have shown to Julius the centurion that his prisoner was an injured and innocent man.

Barnes: God hath given thee all, That is, they shall all be preserved with thee. None of their lives shall be lost. It does not mean that they should be converted; but that their lives should be preserved. It is implied here that it was for the sake of Paul, or that the leading purpose of the Divine interposition to rescue them from danger was to save his life. The wicked often derive important benefits from being connected with Christians; and God often confers important favours on *them* in his general purposes to benefit his own people. The lives of impenitent men are often spared because God interposes to save his own people.

saying, Fear not, Paul: thou must be brought before Caesar and, lo, God hath given thee all ... that sail with thee—While the crew were toiling at the pumps, Paul was wrestling in prayer, not for himself only and the cause in which he was going a prisoner to Rome, but with true magnanimity of soul for all his shipmates; and God heard him, “giving him” (remarkable expression!) all that sailed with him. “When the cheerless day came he gathered the sailors (and passengers) around him on the deck of the laboring vessel, and raising his voice above the storm” [HOWSON], reported the divine communication he had received; adding with a noble simplicity, “*for I believe God* that it shall be even as it was told me,” and encouraging all on board to “be of good cheer” in the same confidence. What a contrast to this is the speech of Caesar in similar circumstances to his pilot, bidding him keep up his spirit because he carried Caesar and Caesar’s fortune! [PLUTARCH]. The Roman general knew no better name for the Divine Providence, by which he had been so often preserved, than *Caesar’s fortune* [HUMPHRY]. From the explicit particulars—that the ship would be lost, but not one that sailed in it, and that they “must be cast on a certain island”—one would conclude a visional representation of a total wreck, a mass of human beings struggling with the angry elements, and one and all of those whose figures and countenances had daily met his eye on deck, standing on some unknown island shore. From what follows, it would seem that Paul from this time was regarded with a deference akin to awe.²¹

²¹Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Ac 27:24). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Acts 27:25

Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

BBC: It was not unusual for ancient writers in the middle of a story to report earlier events they had not yet mentioned.

A story is told that even some unreligious men began to supplicate the gods during a raging storm; the philosopher Bias, aboard the same ship, urged them to be quiet, lest the gods recognize they were aboard and sink the ship! Like Jonah's behavior in the Old Testament (Jonah 1:6-16), this attitude contrasts sharply with Paul's concern for all aboard. (A few other people, like Caesar, were said to have claimed that a ship could not sink with them on it, but Paul's claim is because of God's mission and message, not because he is personally indispensable.) Various deities claimed the role of protector at sea, like Isis or the Dioscuri (Acts 28:11); but God is the true protector.

I believe God that it will be just as it was told me is the essence of what it means to put our faith in God and His Word. Paul's unshakable confidence in God made him a leader among these people, even though he was a prisoner of Rome.

- Take note of what Paul said: **"I believe God."** He didn't say, "I believe *in* God." Every demon in hell agrees with the existence of God. Paul declared his total confidence in God's promise.
- Paul believed God when there was nothing else to believe. He couldn't believe the sailors, the ship, the sails, the wind, the centurion, human ingenuity or anything else - only God and God alone. This was not a fair-weather faith; he believed God in the midst of the storm, when circumstances were at their worst. Paul would say along with Job: *Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him* (Job 13:15). His terrible situation was real, but God was more real to Paul than the dreadful circumstances.
- Paul was not *ashamed* to say that he believed God. "I would to God that all Christians were prepared to throw down the gauntlet and to come out straight; for if God be not true let us not pretend to trust him, and if the gospel be a lie let us be honest enough to confess it." (Spurgeon)²²

Acts 27:26

Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

Clarke: We must be cast upon a certain island—The angel which gave him this information did not tell him the name of the island. It turned out to be Melita, on which, by the violence of the storm, they were wrecked some days after.

BBC: Running aground was not normally good news; Paul's advance notice of that crisis would make faith easier when the time came.

²² <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/4427.htm>

Spurgeon: 21-26 For the sake of one good man all on board the vessel were preserved. May the Lord give to us, also, all who are with us. Paul was accompanied by Luke and other believers, there were also with him the courteous centurion, several prisoners, a crew of rough sailors, and a band of fierce soldiers, and God gave him all that sailed with him. We pray that all our family, our fellow church members, our servants, our neighbors, our work people, and even our enemies, may be saved. Are not our hearts large enough to pray for all? May the Lord give us faith to intercede for them, and what a joy it will be if all shall come safely through the tempests of this life to the shores of heaven! Grant it, O Lord! Amen and amen.

Acts 27:27

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

[were driven up and down] Greek: *diaphero* (GSN-1308), to carry hither and thither. This took place in the Adriatic Sea.

Clarke: Deemed that they drew near to some country—They judged so, either by the smell of land, which those used to the sea can perceive at a considerable distance, or by the agitation of the sea, rippling of the tide, flight of sea-birds, etc.

Acts 27:28

And sounded, and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms.

Soundings were made by throwing a weighted, marked line into the water. When the lead hit the bottom, sailors could tell the depth of the water from the marks on the rope.

[twenty fathoms] About 40 yards deep.

[fifteen fathoms] About 30 yards deep.

Barnes: In Adria. In the Adriatic Sea. This sea is properly situated between Italy and Dalmatia, now called the Adriatic Gulf. But, among the ancients, the name was given not only to that gulf, but to the whole sea lying between Greece, Italy, and Africa, including the Sicilian and Ionian Sea. It is evident, from the narrative, that they were not in the Adriatic Gulf, but somewhere in the vicinity of Malta.

Acts 27:29

Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

[four anchors out of the stern] Ancient vessels did not have heavy anchors as today but carried more of them.

Clarke: Cast four anchors out of the stern—By this time the storm must have been considerably abated; though the agitation of the sea could not have subsided much. The anchors were cast out of the stern to prevent the vessel from drifting ashore, as they found that, the farther they stood in, the shallower the water grew; therefore they dropped the anchor astern, as even one ship's length might be of much

Acts 27:30

And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

[colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship] The shipmen were about to flee from the ship under the pretense of casting out anchors, but Paul, who was watching for the safety of all, saw it and told the centurion that unless these stayed in the ship they could not be saved.

Clarke: The shipmen—The sailors—let down the boat. Having lowered the boat from the deck into the sea, they pretended that it was necessary to carry some anchors ahead, to keep her from being carried in a dangerous direction by the tide, but with the real design to make for shore, and so leave the prisoners and the passengers to their fate. This was timely noticed by the pious and prudent apostle; who, while simply depending on the promise of God, was watching for the safety and comfort of all.

Barnes: Under colour. Under pretence. They pretended that it was necessary to get into the boat, and carry the anchors ahead of the ship so as to make it secure, but with a real intention to make for the shore.

Barnes: Out of the foreship. From the prow, so as to make the fore part of the ship secure. The reason why they did this was, probably, that they expected the ship would go to pieces; and as all on board could not be saved in one small boat, they resolved to escaped to a place of safety as soon as possible.

BBC: Other cases are known of crew members' trying to escape a doomed ship in a small boat; these boats were not meant as lifeboats and fitted only a handful of people.

ESV: the sailors were seeking to escape. They knew they were nearing land, so they decided to take the ship's only small boat and get themselves safely to shore. But such a selfish action would have left no one on the ship with the skill to handle it, leading to

much loss of life. So Paul warned the centurion of the sailors' plan, and he stopped them (vv. 31–32). Paul's action shows the compatibility of divine sovereignty (see vv. 22–24) with human responsibility. God will fulfill his promises, but that doesn't negate the importance of human actions as the means God uses to carry out his promises (cf. note on 18:9–11).

Russell M. Nelson

“The Lord can readily discern between those with superficial signs of activity and those who are deeply rooted in His Church...Loyalty to the Lord carries an obligation of loyalty to those called by the Lord to lead His Church. He has empowered that men be ordained to speak in His holy name. As they guide His unsinkable boat safely toward the shore of salvation, we would do well to stay on board with them. ‘No waters can swallow the ship where lies / The Master of ocean and earth and skies.’ (Hymn 105)

“Nevertheless, some individuals want to jump ‘out of the boat’ before reaching land. And others, sadly, are persuaded out by companions who insist that they know more about life's perilous journey than do prophets of the Lord. Problems often arise that are not of your own making. Some of you may innocently find yourselves abandoned by one you trusted. But you will never be forsaken by your Redeemer, who said, ‘I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say.’ (DC 82:10)” (*Perfection Pending, and Other Favorite Discourses*, 130 - 131.)²³

Acts 27:31

Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

[**Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved**] The 18th New Testament prophecy in Acts (Acts 27:31, fulfilled). The next is in Acts 27:34.

Clarke: Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved—God, who has promised to save your lives, promises this on the condition that ye make use of every means he has put in your power to help yourselves. While, therefore, ye are using these means, expect the co-operation of God. If these sailors, who only understand how to work the ship, leave it, ye cannot escape. Therefore prevent their present design.

BBC: By this point, Paul (whose advice was originally disregarded, perhaps as the impractical concerns of an eccentric Jewish teacher) is now in virtual command of the ship, because he has the centurion's ear.

JNTC: Unless these men remain on board the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved. But hadn't God already promised that not one life would be lost (vv. 22, 24)? Think of it this way: the prophecy includes God's foresight concerning decisions which are nevertheless made by free will. If the sailors had left the boat, would the centurion's and his soldiers' lives have been saved? This is a hypothetical question which need not be

²³ <http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/NewTestament/ntindex.html>

answered, since that is not what happened, and we have no framework for dealing with such questions. Once again we are reminded of Rabbi Akiva's summary of the paradox, "All is known, yet free will is given" (Avot 3:15).

Moreover, in the Holy Scriptures, even what appears to be an absolute prediction ("X will happen") may be implicitly conditional ("If you disobey God, X will happen"). Jonah's apparently unconditioned prediction of Nineveh's destruction (Jonah 3:4) is a good example—the prophet was wrong (and angry about it) because the people of Nineveh repented (which, rather than the city's ruin, is what God actually wanted).

Why did the sailors have to stay on board? It was a practical matter: had they left, there would not have been enough skilled personnel left to operate the ship in the storm.

McGee: The crew was trying to abandon the ship, you see. They acted as if they were dropping anchor, but actually they were going overboard. They were leaving a sinking ship as the rats leave it. They were doing something which they should never have done.

Paul tells the centurion that the only assurance of safety is for all to remain with the ship. Paul has put his trust in God. What a wonderful thing it is to trust the Word of God. The angel of God had told Paul that he and the men would be saved. But they couldn't be saved their way. They must be saved God's way. God's way was for them to stay with the ship. It was a question of believing that God would save them or not believing and taking matters into their own hands. Paul had told them that he believed God. And he tells them that if they want to be saved, all will need to stay on board the ship.

Acts 27:32

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

[**Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off**] The soldiers had respect for Paul by now so obeyed his prophecy and cut the ropes and let the skiff go.

Clarke: **The soldiers cut off the ropes**—These were probably the only persons who dared to have opposed the will of the sailors: this very circumstance is an additional proof of the accuracy of St. Luke.

Paul has given the information to the centurion. The centurion is beginning to listen to Paul now. He gives the command and the soldiers cut the ropes to the life boats. Now everyone must stay on board.

Acts 27:33

And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

[**This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting**] Fourteen days they had fasted, so he now advised them to break the fast (see Psalm 69:10).

[nothing] Seven things that are not fasts (Dake) :

1. Abstaining from meats except fish
2. Drinking only orange juice, or other juices for a period
3. Abstaining from some foods while eating others
4. Abstaining from certain pleasures but allowing others
5. Abstaining from smoking, chewing tobacco, drinking liquor, or some other bad or pleasurable habit and eating food
6. Abstaining from all pleasure or entertainment and eating lightly
7. Forcing one's self from all normal family and social life

While the day was coining on—It was then apparently about day-break.

Clarke: This day is the fourteenth day that ye have—continued fasting—Ye have not had one regular meal for these fourteen days past. Indeed we may take it for granted that, during the whole of the storm, very little was eaten by any man: for what appetite could men have for food, who every moment had death before their eyes?

The next time your mind turns to murmuring about fasting for a day, remember the faith of these passengers: fourteen days without food, suffering sea-sickness, torrential rains, on a ship which was about to sink, without hope of survival, and with nothing to do but wait and eat. Yet they spent their time in fasting and prayer, instead. Their trial seems worse than skipping a couple of meals once a month, doesn't it?²⁴

Acts 27:34

Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

[for your health] No fasting should go beyond the point of impairing health. One can fast up to 40 days before starvation begins if he is a healthy person, but with people who are not healthy, fasting must be done with care and under proper supervision (see Psalm 69:10).

A hair fall from the head—A proverbial expression for, ye shall neither lose your lives nor suffer any hurt in your bodies, if ye follow my advice.

Cf. 1 Sam. 14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11; 1 Kings 1:52; Matt. 10:30; Luke 12:7; 21:18.

“Not a hair of one's head” was a proverbial expression in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 14:45; 2 Samuel 14:11; 1 Kings 1:52); but it would make sense even to hearers who were not familiar with it.

²⁴ <http://www.gospeldoctrine.com/NewTestament/ntindex.html>

[health] Greek: *soteria* (GSN-4991). Translated "health" only here, but "salvation" 40 times.

Sixteen Things People Can Be Saved From (Dake):

1. Sins (Matthew 1:21; Luke 7:50)
2. Drowning (Matthew 8:25; Matthew 14:30)
3. Losing life (Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24)
4. Losing soul (Matthew 18:11; James 1:21)
5. Being a sinner (1 Tim. 1:15)
6. Physical death (Hebrews 5:7; 1 Tim. 2:15)
7. Sickness (James 5:15; Matthew 9:22)
8. Blindness (Mark 10:52; Luke 18:42)
9. Leprosy (Luke 17:19)
10. Lameness (Acts 3:2; Acts 4:9; Acts 14:9)
11. Demon possession (Luke 8:36)
12. Eternal death (James 5:19-20)
13. An evil conscience (1 Peter 3:21)
14. Eternal fire (Jude 1:23)
15. Wrath (Romans 5:9-10)
16. Slavery (Jude 1:5)

[for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you] The 19th New Testament prophecy in Acts (Acts 27:34, fulfilled). The next is in Acts 28:28. A figurative statement expressing no loss of life, or physical harm.

McGee: You know very well, fourteen days of fasting would weaken even the hardiest men. Now Paul urges them all to eat. Apparently they had all fasted. The pagans had fasted because they were scared to death. Paul and the Christians may have fasted because they were doing it unto the Lord. Now they are near land and they all need their strength to make it to shore. So Paul uses sanctified sanity in the Lord's service. He uses good sense.

In Christian work we need just good, common, sanctified sense more than in any other area of life. How foolish people can be and at the same time excuse it by saying they are simply trusting the Lord. My friend, the Lord expects us to use some common sense.

Acts 27:35

And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

Clarke: Gave thanks to God—Who had provided the food, and preserved their lives and health to partake of it. Some think that he celebrated the holy eucharist here: but this is by no means likely: he would not celebrate such a mystery among ungodly sailors and soldiers, Jews and heathens; nor was there any necessity for such a measure.

Barnes: And gave thanks, This was the usual custom among the Hebrews. Matthew 14:19. Paul was among those who were not Christians. But he was not ashamed of the proper acknowledgment of God, and was not afraid to avow his dependence on him, and to express his gratitude for his mercy.

JNTC: Said the *B.rakkah* which Jews normally make over bread, “*Barukh Attah, Adonai Eloheynu, Melekh-ha·olam, haMotzi lechem min ha·aretz*” (“Praised be you, Adonai our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth”). See Mt 14:19N.

Acts 27:36

Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat.

[good cheer] Greek: *euthumos* (GSN-2115), good cheer. Only here and Acts 24:10, where it is translated "more cheerfully."

Acts 27:37

And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

[two hundred threescore and sixteen souls] There were 276 individuals. Here "souls" refers to persons and not to the spiritual part of man called "the soul" (Hebrews 4:12; 1 Thes. 5:23; Mark 8:36).

Acts 27:38

And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

They ate what they could and threw the rest overboard to lighten the ship.

[wheat] It was a grain cargo ship from Egypt, the grainery of the world (Acts 27:6).

They lightened the ship—They hoped that, by casting out the lading, the ship would draw less water; in consequence of which, they could get nearer the shore.

Barnes: They lightened the ship. By casting the wheat into the sea. As they had no hope of saving the cargo, and had no further use for it, they hoped that by throwing the wheat overboard, the ship would draw less water, and that thus they would be able to come nearer to the shore.

BBC: They need to lighten the ship further (Acts 27:18), in order to run aground as close to land as possible. They had so far retained some of the cargo as ballast (heavy material kept in the hold of a ship to steady it). An Alexandrian ship's cargo would be wheat.

Acts 27:39

And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

[**creek**] Greek: *kolpos* (GSN-2859), bosom. Here; Luke 6:38; Luke 16:22,23; John 1:18; John 13:23.

They knew not the land—And therefore knew neither the nature of the coast, nor where the proper port lay.

Clarke: A—creek with a shore—Sinum, a bay, with a shore; a neck of land perhaps on either side, running out into the sea, and this little bay or gulf between them; though some think it was a tongue of land, running out into the sea, having the sea on both sides, at the point of which these two seas met, Acts 27:41. There is such a place as this in the island of Malta, where, tradition says, Paul was shipwrecked; and which is called la Cale de St. Paul. See Calmet.

Acts 27:40

And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

[**rudder**] Greek: *pedalion* (GSN-4079), only here; James 3:4. A rudder was a board to guide the course of the vessel. Ancient ships had two or more rudders at the side. The bands were some kind of fastenings, by which the rudders were hoisted out of the water when the storms got too bad to use them and something to let them down into water again when needed. The bands being loosened, the rudders fell down into the water to help steer the ship into the creek if possible.

[**mainsail**] Perhaps the jib, or triangular sail which was suspended from the foremast to the bowsprit. In this chapter there are about 50 nautical terms that are not found anywhere else in the New Testament

Clarke: Taken up the anchors—Weighed all the anchors that they had cast out of the stern. Some think the meaning of the word is, they slipped their cables; and so left the anchors in the sea.

Clarke: Loosed the rudder bands—Or, the bands of the rudders; for large vessels in ancient times had two or more rudders, one at the side, and another at the stern, and sometimes one at the prow. The bands, ζευκτηριας, were some kind of fastenings, by which the rudders were hoisted some way out of the water; for, as they could be of no use in the storm, and, should there come fair weather, the vessel could not do without them,

this was a prudent way of securing them from being broken to pieces by the agitation of the waves. These bands being loosed, the rudders would fall down into their proper places, and serve to steer the vessel into the creek which they now had in view.

Clarke: Hoisted up the mainsail—Ἀρτεμωνα is not the mainsail, (which would have been quite improper on such an occasion), but the jib, or triangular sail which is suspended from the foremast to the bowsprit; with this they might hope both to steer and carry in the ship.

Acts 27:41

And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

[two seas met] A peninsula washed on both sides by the sea. It also could signify reefs of rock partly above and below the water.

Where two seas meet—The tide running down from each side of the tongue of land, mentioned Acts 27:39, and meeting at the point.

Ran the ship aground—In striving to cross at this point of land, they had not taken a sufficiency of sea-room, and therefore ran aground.

Clark: The forepart stuck fast—Got into the sands; and perhaps the shore here was very bold or steep, so that the stem of the vessel might be immersed in the quicksands, which would soon close round it, while the stern, violently agitated with the surge, would soon be broken to pieces. It is extremely difficult to find the true meaning of several of the nautical terms used in this chapter. I have given that which appeared to me to be the most likely; but cannot absolutely say that I have everywhere hit the true meaning.

JNTC: This verse says, literally, “And coming upon a place between two seas they drove the vessel; and while the prow, having run aground, remained immovable, the stern was broken by the force.” The sense is not exactly clear from the text. I have surfed for over thirty years; and this gives me some knowledge of how the sea works, which, I hope, helps solve the mystery. When a swell reaches an island, its waves split to pass it, and they may meet head-on at the far end of the island. At this place, the sand carried along by the currents from both directions is deposited as a sandbar or sand spit, on which the waves break from two nearly opposite directions, sometimes even running straight into each other. Such a spot makes for lively surfing but is very treacherous for ships and boats. My translation reflects this understanding, based on my experience surfing the islands off the coast of Southern California.

Acts 27:42

And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

[lest any of them should swim out, and escape] The lives of the soldiers were at stake if their prisoners escaped.

Clarke: The soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners—What blood-thirsty, cowardly villains must these have been! Though, through the providence of God, those poor men had escaped a watery grave, and had borne all the anxiety and distresses of this disastrous voyage, as well as the others, now that there is a likelihood of all getting safe to land that could swim, lest these should swim to shore, and so escape, those men, whose trade was in human blood, desired to have them massacred! We have not many traits in the histories of the most barbarous nations that can be a proper counterpart to this quintessence of humano-diabolic cruelty.

LAN: 42-43 The soldiers would pay with their own lives if any of their prisoners escaped. Their instinctive reaction was to kill the prisoners so they wouldn't get away. Julius, the centurion, was impressed with Paul and wanted to save his life. Julius was the highest ranking official and therefore he could make this decision. This act preserved Paul for his later ministry in Rome and fulfilled Paul's prediction that all the people on the ship would be saved (Acts 27:22).

Acts 27:43

But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land:

Roman soldiers could swim, it was part of their training, but the prisoners were on their own.

Why did the shipwreck occur? Was Paul in God's will? or was it Satanic opposition... God's strengthening is made perfect in man's weakness.

We find from 2 Cor 11:25 that Paul was in THREE shipwrecks!

[willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land] The centurion saw that Paul was an innocent and very godly man so wished to save him. He had all the prisoners loosed so they could swim to the shore if possible.

Clarke: Willing to save Paul, etc.—Had one fallen, for the reasons those cruel and dastardly soldiers gave, so must all the rest. The centurion saw that Paul was not only an innocent, but an extraordinary and divine man; and therefore, for his sake, he prevented the massacre; and, unloosing every man's bonds, he commanded those that could to swim

ashore and escape. It is likely that all the soldiers escaped in this way, for it was one part of the Roman military discipline to teach the soldiers to swim.

Acts 27:44

And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

[**And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land**] This fulfilled Paul's prophecies of all being kept alive (Acts 27:22,31).

Barnes: They escaped all safe to land. According to the promise which was made to Paul, Acts 27:22. This was done by the special Providence of God. It was a remarkable instance of Divine interposition to save so many through so long-continued dangers; and it shows that God can defend in any perils, and can accomplish all his purposes. On the ocean or the land, we are safe in his keeping; and he can devise ways that shall fulfil all his purposes, and that can protect his people from danger.

Clarke: And the rest—That could not swim: some on boards, planks, spars, etc., got safe to land; manifestly by an especial providence of God; for how otherwise could the sick, the aged, the terrified, besides women and children, (of which, we may naturally suppose, there were some), though on planks, get safe to shore?—where still the waves were violent, Acts 27:41, and they without either skill or power to steer their unsafe flotillas to the land? It was (in this case, most evidently) God who brought them to the haven were they would be.

1. PAUL had appealed to Caesar; and he must go to Rome to have his cause heard. God admitted of this appeal, and told his servant that he should testify of him at Rome; and yet every thing seemed to conspire together to prevent this appeal, and the testimony which the apostle was to bear to the truth of the Christian religion. The Jews laid wait for his life; and when he had escaped out of their hands, and from their territories, then the winds and the sea seemed to combine to effect his destruction. And God suffered all this malice of men, and war of elements, to fight against his servant, and yet overruled and counterworked the whole, so as to promote his own glory, and bring honor to his apostle. Had it not been for this malice of the Jews, Festus, Felix, Agrippa, Berenice, and many Roman nobles and officers, had probably never heard the Gospel of Christ. And, had it not been for Paul's tempestuous voyage, the 276 souls that sailed with him could not have had such displays of the power and wisdom of the Christians' God as must have struck them with reverence, and probably was the cause of the conversion of many. Had the voyage been smooth and prosperous, there would have been no occasion for such striking interferences of God; and, had it not been for the shipwreck, probably the inhabitants of Malta would not so soon have heard of the Christian religion. God serves his will by every occurrence, and presses every thing into the service of his own cause. This is a remark which we have often occasion to make, and which is ever in place. We may leave the government of the world, and the government of

the Church, most confidently to God; hitherto he has done all things well; and his wisdom, power, goodness, and truth, are still the same.

2. In considering the dangers of a sea voyage, we may well say, with pious Quesnel, To what perils do persons expose themselves, either to raise a fortune, or to gain a livelihood! How few are there who would expose themselves to the same for the sake of God! They commit themselves to the mercy of the waves; they trust their lives to a plank and to a pilot; and yet it is often with great difficulty that they can trust themselves to the providence of God, whose knowledge, power, and goodness, are infinite; and the visible effects of which they have so many times experienced.
3. What assurance soever we may have of the will of God, yet we must not forget human means. The life of all the persons in this ship was given to St. Paul; yet he does not, on that account, expect a visible miracle, but depends upon the blessing which God will give to the care and endeavors of men.
4. God fulfils his promises, and conceals his almighty power, under such means and endeavors as seem altogether human and natural. Had the crew of this vessel neglected any means in their own power, their death would have been the consequence of their inaction and infidelity.

