



Acts Chapter 27

Theme: . . . it and the Birth of the Church

Personal Reflection

Complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now.

Further Study

Complete on your own or with your small group.

Read Acts 27 Click on any Bible verse in the study to read it or use your own Bible.

Song for the week: How Great is Our God - Chris Tomlin

Song links: https://youtu.be/KBD18rsVJHk?si=uxiPs3-1g_-WN6fK

Personal Reflection

Paul was taken to Italy but his friends did not leave him alone. Luke writes that he and Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica joined him in the journey with other prisoners headed to Rome.

We can and should pray for our family, friends and church when they face hardships, but we should also not leave them alone. What tangible ways do you have of showing up?

Aristarchus was first mentioned as being present with Paul during the riots in Ephesus. He and Gaius were grabbed by the mob and rushed into the theater. He and Secundus were the official delegates from the Thessalonian church who went with Paul to Jerusalem with the collection for the Jews. Paul called Aristarchus and Luke his fellow workers when he wrote to Philemon. Later while in prison in Rome Paul wrote to the church in Colossae and said that Aristarchus was a prisoner with him. *Optional, read Acts 19:29-37, Acts 20:1-6, Colossians 4:10, Philemon 1:22-24*

Luke and Aristarchus were faithful friends and served with Paul as he spread the gospel. Who in your life are your Luke and Aristarchus? How are you serving God and others together?

For the journey to Rome, Paul and other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius. The first leg of their journey was one day. At their stop, Julius showed kindness to Paul, allowing his friends to attend to his needs.

Luke detailed the sea voyage much like a travel log, one we can easily trace (see the map). The first leg of the trip from Caesarea to Sidon to Seleucia to Myra lasted about two weeks with the winds against them. In Myra Julius put the men on an Alexandrian ship carrying grain which was headed for Italy. As Luke continued the log, he wrote of the unexpected weather hardships and how Paul encouraged the people on board to make choices that would not kill them all.

The ship went next to Cnidus then around the island of Crete where it anchored in Fair Havens. The owner of the ship, the captain and Julius need to decide if they will stay there several months or seek a port that will better protect them.



“According to ancient sources, sea travel was particularly risky in the fall from September 14 to November 11 and considered extremely dangerous from November 11 to March 10. Visibility (mists and fogs) as well as the constant threat of severe winter-tossed storms rendered this period an inadvisable time to travel by sea ... Since Luke mentions the Fast (Day of Atonement) having already occurred, but not the Feast of Tabernacles, it is likely that they arrived in Fair Havens between October 10-15, AD 59. Thus, they were well into the time of year where sea voyages across the Mediterranean were quite dangerous. (*Bible Reference*).”

Paul was an experienced sea traveler; he had been shipwrecked three times. He warned those making the decision, “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.” Paul’s voice was alone in warning of impending hardship. The evidence supported his input yet Julius chose to listen instead to the others and set sail again to a better port to spend the winter. *Optional, read 2 Corinthians 11:25*

Their voyage from Crete to Phoenix was 50 miles and should have taken about a day. Instead, it ended up taking approximately two weeks as a violent storm blew the ship across the Mediterranean.

Later Paul said “men, you should have listened to me in the first place and not left Crete.” He reminded them of his warning and having predicted this very problem. They learned to listen to him and later their lives were spared because they listened.

Paul alone spoke up in warning. If you sense something is off or not going to go well, how do you know when to speak up, as Paul did, and when to stay silent and pray? When speaking up, how can you position your conversation with love not judgment?

Just as Paul had warned, the men encountered horrid weather and had to throw cargo overboard. After days of darkness without sun or stars, Luke said they lost hope.

Can you identify with their loss of hope? Is there anything in your life right now that feels hopeless?

Last week Shannon spoke about HOPE and where ours should be placed - in Jesus. All else will let us down.

Practically, this is hard! We struggle with health, finances, and relationships. How do you take those things which feel hopeless and place your hope in Jesus instead?

There is a mix - we must do what we need to or can do, but we must also trust God and have hope in Him, seeking wisdom and guidance from Him. How do you balance doing your part and trusting in God at the same time? What does that look like?

What in God's Word can you cling to instead of clinging to the thing that you are struggling with? What part of God's character ministers to you and brings you hope? (Provider, Healer, Shelter, Father, Savior...)

Jesus had visited Paul before to give him a message. This time God sent an angel. The message was that only the ship will be destroyed but God will save all those on board the ship and that Paul would yet face Caesar. Twice Paul told the men to take courage; that he had "faith in God that it will happen just as he told me."

Frank said a few weeks ago that sometimes Jesus saves us in dramatic ways and other times He quietly shows up, sits with us and says, "Take courage (*Acts 23:11*)" just as Jesus did with Paul. The Greek word also means to be bold, to endure, to make up the mind. On board the ship, Paul echoed God's message and said, "keep up your courage (*Acts 27:25*)."

What has God shown you or how has He shown up for you that you can now share with others to encourage them?

After two weeks, the sailors sensed they were near land. They measured the depth and dropped anchors. That night some of the sailors tried to escape, abandoning the passengers. The sailors were responsible for the ship and its passengers yet they made a plan for only themselves. Paul noticed and warned Julius and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." The soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboats which floated away.

Paul said he had "faith in God that it will happen just as He told me." But with only earthly hope, what might the sailors have been feeling or thinking?

Sometimes we do need to make a new plan. What would have been a better approach for the crew to make? We do not know if they tried, but who could they have talked to about their ideas?

There were 276 people on board the ship. No one had eaten in fourteen days. Paul encouraged them to eat and to build up their strength. He took the bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and passed it among the crew and passengers. Once everyone had eaten, they threw the remaining wheat overboard.

Read *Matthew 26:26-28*. What similarities do you notice?

How might Paul's actions have been an encouragement to Luke and the other followers of the Way?

Read *Exodus 16:4* and *Exodus 16:19-30*. What similarities do you notice?

For those on the ship who knew the Torah, what encouragement might they have received from throwing the wheat overboard?

The sailors found a beach and aimed for it but the ship hit a sandbar and broke apart. This time it was not the sailors thinking of only themselves but rather the soldiers. To ensure no one escaped, they planned to kill the prisoners.

Julius wanted to spare Paul's life. They had been sailing together for a long time. Paul had built his reputation with the centurion. "He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land" and everyone reached land safely. God's promise to Paul that nobody on the ship would be harmed in the shipwreck was fulfilled!

As Julius was a Roman army officer assigned to guard Paul, 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 and later spared his life. *Optional, read Acts 27:3, Acts 27:43*

If someone were to remain close to you at all times, what would they come to respect about you?

Putting it into practice:

Paul encouraged building up of strength, thanked God and kept only what they needed. Where do you need to have your strength built? What do you need to let go of? Thank God for what He is doing!

Further Study

"Luke's lively and suspenseful account of the journey is meant to demonstrate the reality of God's control over all circumstances (*Tough Questions*)." Where in your life do you see the reality of God's control over your circumstances?

God the Father was with Jesus in all His trials. The Holy Spirit was with Paul in His storm - God even sent him an angel to speak with him. The Holy Spirit is with us all the time, even in our storms He does not leave us. How do you experience His presence and guidance? How do you know it is from Him and not yourself?

One Hope is having its own storm. None of us will be lost from the family of God but we will be losing our "ship" (church). How can you weather this storm, leaning on God, trusting Him and supporting your church family?

Pray

As a small group pray for our pastors and our church as we weather our storm. Pray for our country as it moves through the election into accepting the outcome. Pray for each other and for your direction for a new church home.