

## Part 60 Shipwrecked

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, Dec. 07, 2016

### † Acts 27:1-44

Two weeks ago we covered all of Chapter 26 which detailed Paul standing before King Agrippa. Paul explained who he was, where he came from, and what had happened to him on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians, he met the Lord Jesus Christ and was gloriously saved. The Bible tells us that Agrippa responded to Paul by saying, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” We also saw that once again, for the 4<sup>th</sup> time, Paul is declared to be innocent. However, because Paul has appealed unto Caesar he must go stand trial in Rome. And that is where we pick up from tonight in Chapter 27 with Paul setting sail towards Rome.

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. 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.

Paul boards a ship bound for Italy, which was the capital of Rome. There are also other prisoners along with Paul. They are placed under the care of a Roman Centurion named Julius. It says that he was of Augustus' band. That isn't a rock and roll band, it is a band of 400 to 600 Roman soldiers that served under Augustus, which is a title of the Roman Emperor, Nero.

Notice Luke, the human penman of the Book of Acts is writing in first person. He is also going along with Paul on his journey to Rome. Luke hasn't been with Paul during his imprisonment, the last time he was writing in first person was back in Acts 21:18 just before Paul was arrested. But now he is with Paul on his trip to Rome on the prison ship. Not only was Luke along with Paul but so was Aristarchus. He also was a friend of Paul's and not a prisoner. It is very unusual that a prisoner would be allowed to have friends ride along with them on a Roman prison route. I think John MacArthur has a good explanation for why this was allowed in Paul's case:

“The interesting thing about this is that it was just unheard of for a prisoner to be allowed to have companions on a prison route to be tried at Rome. It was just unheard of. And historians tell us there could have only been two possible ways in which these two could have been included: one, they would have had to take the position of slaves of Paul. They would have had to become slaves and Paul would have had to have taken them along as his slaves or Festus knowing the innocence of Paul and wanting to secure his good reputation with Rome, gave Paul the opportunity of this courteous gesture just in order to show good faith with Paul so that he would be well reported of when Paul arrived in Rome. Either one of those two reasons. But for whatever reason of the two Luke and Aristarchus accompany Paul.”<sup>i</sup>

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.

Sidon was only about 70 miles from Caesarea so they made it there within a day's journey. This Roman Centurion, Julius, is obviously a good man. He treats Paul with great respect and allows him to visit with friends that he has there in Sidon. That word “refresh” means to “receive attention.” It is generally used in the case of someone receiving medical care. Paul very well could have been suffering from sickness such as he often was on his missionary journeys and perhaps he needed some medical care. It could also mean that he was just getting himself cleaned up and rejuvenated. You know how it is when you've been traveling and need to get yourself rejuvenated.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. 6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

The weather was not cooperating with their trip to Italy. Instead of going out into open waters and sailing they have to stay near land. That is why it says that they sailed “under Cyprus.” That just means that they held close to the land.

They stop in Myra and changed ships. Obviously the ship they were in was not worthy enough to travel in these extreme conditions. They find another ship that is also headed toward Italy and it is a ship that is hauling wheat. We see that down in verse 38 where they had to throw the wheat off of the ship to keep from sinking. This ship is a larger vessel and would hold up to rough travels much better.

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

They are under some rough sailing and heavy winds which are not allowing them to get very far or go where they want to go, so they have to stop off at this place called “the fair havens,” which is close to the city of Lasea.

I remember one time me and my dad were out on Douglas Lake right below the town of Dandridge. We were in his small fishing boat and out of nowhere a storm popped up. The sky got almost as black as night the winds began blowing so hard that the waves on the lake were coming over our boat. Dad cranked up the motor on that little boat and we started toward the banks of Dandridge. I didn't think we would ever make it there. It seemed like we would go a foot forward and then get pushed back 3 foot more. By the time we reached the banks our boat was filled with water and lightning was striking all around us. We tied that boat off on a big rock and climbed up the bank and walked into the town of Dandridge into one of the little stores there. After about 30 minutes that storm blew out as fast as it blew in. We sure were thankful for that little town to take refuge in though, I guess you could call it our “Fair Haven.”

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

It is hard to say how many days so far that they have been sailing and trying to make headway but because of the storms they aren't getting very far. It says “the fast was now already past.” The fast Paul is referring to is most likely the fast that the Jews performed on the Great Day of Atonement. This was usually at the end of September or early October. After the beginning of October it was typically too dangerous to try and cross the Mediterranean Sea due to the harsh weather during those months. They obviously thought that they would have made it to Italy by now but because of their delays it is going to push them into the dangerous season for traveling.

Paul steps forward and makes a proclamation; “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.” He may not be a sailor or a ship's captain but he has certainly traveled enough to know the dangers of continuing this trip. He tells them that he believes if they continue they will suffer much hurt and damage to the ship and risk their own lives.

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

Well, the Roman centurion isn't going to take advice from a preacher. He believes the master and owner of the ship has more knowledge of sailing in rough weather than Paul does and that man obviously believes they can continue further so that is what they plan to do.

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete. 14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

At first it appears that they made a wise decision because the winds died down and it looked like smooth sailing. Oh, but how wrong they were... The next thing they know one of the strongest winds they had experienced yet popped up. It was called a "Euroclydon." This storm is what we know as a Nor'easter storm. We do not have to deal with these here in Tennessee but the states in the upper north east of the United States have to deal with them quite often. What causes them is when the warm waters from the south warm air from the east coast rises over the Atlantic and clashes with the arctic cold air from the north. When this happens it creates a cyclone effect and pushes wind, rain, and snow inland causing all kinds of problems. The winds are generally around 60-70 mph. You can only imagine what that would do to a ship sailing in such a storm. I bet they wished they had listened to the preacher now!

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

The storm is so bad that they cannot control it. They just turn loose of the helm and let the storm take them wherever it wanted to.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: 17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

They began to be blown toward an island and they were afraid they would lose the boat which is tied to the side of the ship. So they had to lift the boat up the side of the ship to keep it from being lost. You really do not want to lose your life boat. That is essentially what that boat is. It allowed you to go from the big ship to the shore and if the ship was going down you relied on the small boat to escape.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; 19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

They are really getting desperate now. They are doing everything they can to lighten the ship's load to keep it from sinking. It is taking on a lot of water from this storm, the lighter they can get it the better. It says they **cast out the tackling of the ship**. This would have included; sails, anchors, cables, ropes, masts, anything not completely necessary to keep the ship from sinking.

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. -- By this point it is obvious that they are not going to save the ship. They have done all they can do.

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.

The phrase "after long abstinence," means that they had been without any food for a long time. You can only imagine how hard it would have been to try and eat or prepare food on a ship while a storm of this magnitude was hitting it. They may have went days without eating.

Paul is going to speak up. He gives them a slight rebuke for not listening to him in the first place. And, he is right. If they had took his advice they wouldn't be in the predicament that they were now in. But Paul isn't just trying to prove that he was right, he is trying to get their undivided attention so they will listen to him for what he has to say next.

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. 23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, 24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. 25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. 26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

So he gives them good news and bad news. The good news is that no one is going to die because of this storm, they are all going to survive. The bad news is they are going to lose the ship so they will need to prepare for that.

He also tells them that he knows all of this because an angel of God told him all of this. This is further good news. Everyone has witnessed how Paul's God has protected him through everything he has been through. Also, the Romans relied upon gods for everything in their life. Albeit not Paul's God but Paul's God is obviously better than their Roman gods. I mean, where is Neptune at. He is the Roman god of the sea, the equivalent of the Greek god Poseidon. Or what about Enemio, the god of wind and winter? Or Jupiter, the god of the sky. It's obvious the Roman gods are no good. So Paul's God sounds pretty good to me!

One thing that Paul mentions is that they will end up on a certain island. In other words they are going to be shipwrecked on an island. Let's hope it isn't Gilligan's Island because those guys couldn't ever get off that island!

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; 28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. 29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

They had been fighting this storm on the sea for 14 nights. Finally they come within distance of land. It says they "sounded." What that means is they let down a line with a weight on it to measure the depth of where they were at. They would do this as they would get closer to land to make sure they didn't get the ship stuck. A fathom is a distance of 6-feet. So this first check they were 120-feet from touching the bottom. The next check was 90-feet, which was about as close as they wanted to get in fear of bottoming out the ship. Luckily they hadn't thrown everything overboard when they threw the tackle and they had some anchors left. They threw the anchors over at this point to anchor down and wait until daylight to check where they were at.

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,

Now we get to an interesting part. It seems that the sailors on the ship were all in a panic. They knew that if the ship ran ashore or into the rocks around the edge of the island that it would break up and they would most likely be trapped and drown. So they make up a story that they are going to throw out anchors but what they really were doing was lowering that small boat that was attached to the ship so they could abandon ship and make a run for the land leaving everyone else stranded.

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

Paul caught on to their trick and quickly informed the Roman Centurion and the soldiers that the sailors would have to remain in the ship if they expected everyone to survive what was about to happen. Remember, Paul has already told them that the angel of the Lord said they would lose the ship.

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

Well, well, well... seems they want to listen to the preachers advice now! They have learned a very valuable lesson on this trip and that is to pay attention to the man getting his orders from the Lord God. So, they cut the ropes from the boat that was attached to the ship and let it fall off. This way there would be no other attempts at anyone trying to sneak off in it.

But there is a down side to them cutting the boat loose... now no one is able to use it to get safely to shore, which means they are going to have to swim to the shore now. That is where I would be in trouble because I can't swim a lick. If I don't have a life jacket I just sink like a rock when I get in the water.

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. 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.

Isn't it amazing how Paul has stepped up to be the leader on this ship? He obviously has more wits about him than the ship's captain or even the Roman centurion. So Paul becomes the natural leader of everyone. He realizes that they need to eat. It has been 14 days since they had stopped fighting this storm and sat down to try and get something in their stomachs. Paul also assures them that they will survive, "there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you." Those must have been comforting words to hear.

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. 36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. 37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

It is amazing how God has protected all of these men, 276 men on this ship in a 2-week hurricane and all of them have survived so far.

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

I guess they figured there was no use keeping all of the heavy wheat on the ship so they threw it overboard to lighten the load.

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

It finally becomes daytime and they can see the land. They spot an area where it looks like good access to the island and they point the ship into that direction.

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.

We see that God's prophesy comes to pass, they are going to lose the ship. The ship runs aground and the violence of the waves beat the back of the ship so hard that the ship starts coming apart.

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

I don't know how many prisoners were on the ship out of these 276 men but the soldiers are all concerned that they would jump overboard and swim away and escape. The Romans did not want to lose any prisoners. It could mean their own death if they did. So they plan on just killing all of the prisoners, including Paul.

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: 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.

The Roman Centurion does not want to see Paul killed so to protect him he advises the soldiers to jump overboard first, get to the shore and wait for the prisoners to swim to land. And that is exactly what they did and just like God said, everyone survived.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible

<sup>i</sup> John MacArthur, Paul's Journey to Rome Part 1