

## The Acts of the Apostles

Sermon Number: 33

Acts 27 – 28

August 5, 2012

### Paul Goes to Rome

This sermon will conclude the series on the Book of Acts.

In the last study Paul was on trial for his life, the Jews having accused him of preaching contrary to Moses and for violating the temple by bringing a gentile into the courts. None of the charges were true and the governor would have released Paul but for the fact that as a free-born Roman citizen he exercised his right to appeal directly to the Caesar.

#### Acts 25:10-12

<sup>10</sup> But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourselves know very well. <sup>11</sup> If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar." <sup>12</sup> Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go."

In this study we will go to sea with Paul and follow him to Rome.

Luke's account of Paul's voyage is one of the most exciting writing that you will find anywhere. The providence of God is evident in that God has given Paul the assurance that he will go to Rome. After Paul had been arrested and was being held in the barracks of the soldiers the Lord Jesus appeared to him.

#### Acts 23:11

The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome."

The certainty of an event does not relieve the anxiety and pain involved in its conclusion. The classic example in Scripture is the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was foreordained that the Christ must suffer and die for the sins of His people; but Jesus, as a true Man, actually had to live His life as providence unfolded.

## **1. Anchors Aweigh!**

### **a. All Aboard!**

**Acts 27:1-2**

And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. <sup>2</sup> And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.

Once Festus and Agrippa had agreed on the wording of the official documents to be sent with Paul to Rome...

Acts 25:26-27

<sup>26</sup> But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. <sup>27</sup> For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him."

...he and other prisoners being held at Caesarea were given in charge to a centurion named Julius. Julius was part of an honored Imperial Regiment.

Most of the voyage takes place on Egyptian grain ships. Julius was responsible for the oversight and transport of grain. As it turned out Julius had a contingent of Roman soldiers so Festus placed the prisoners, including Paul, in his charge.

Since Paul was a Roman citizen he was accorded much respect not at all common for prisoners. The "we" indicates that Luke and Aristarchus were signed on as Paul's "slaves." As a citizen of Rome Paul would be allowed to bring along slaves to minister to his needs.

### **b. Contrary Winds**

**Acts 27:3-8**

The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for. <sup>4</sup> And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. <sup>5</sup> And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. <sup>6</sup> There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. <sup>7</sup> We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. <sup>8</sup> Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

The kindness of Julius toward Paul is remarkable. Luke calls him "kindly Julius."

When the ship put out to sea it was late in the summer and the winds were blowing strongly from west to northwest. This made travel toward the north and west on the open sea very difficult. That is why the captain of the ship kept close to the coasts of Syria and Asia. The ship could take advantage of a prevailing westerly current that runs along the south coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia. It was slow going. When the westerly wind made progress impossible, they would anchor the ship in the shelter of the coast. Finally, the ship arrived at Myra, a chief port of the imperial grain service.

There the centurion found an Alexandrian grain ship that was headed for Rome. Egypt was called the “granary of Rome.” This would be a huge ship that carried thousands of tons of grain. Typically, it would be about 140 feet long; 36 feet wide; and would draft 33 feet. The shape would be rounded bow and stern. There is no rudder for steering; two large paddles were used in the stern to steer the ship. There would be a single large square sail made of linen or of animal skins on a single mast. These ships were not designed to sail {tack} against the wind. But that is what was necessary as they set out in late summer or early fall.

Off the island of Cnidus the contrary wind forced them to give up on the direct course between Achaia and the island of Crete. They sailed south to the leeward side of Crete and worked along the south coast of the island. With much difficulty they reached a port called Fair Havens. There another crucial decision was made.

### **c. Phoenix or Bust**

### **Acts 27:9-12**

<sup>9</sup> Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, <sup>10</sup> saying, “Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.” <sup>11</sup> But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. <sup>12</sup> And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

The experienced seamen knew that sailing was doubtful after summer. By winter, it was out of the question. They had no instruments, like a sextant or a compass, to guide them; but depended on the stars and the sun. Weeks of cloudy winter weather meant the stars and the sun were hidden and staying on course was impossible. After November {Fast}, all navigation on the open sea stopped until February. Luke says it was “after the Fast.”

In 59 A.D. it would be after October 5<sup>th</sup>.

Paul was an experienced sea traveler who had been through three shipwrecks.

Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 2 Cor 11:25

Paul urged the officers to winter at Fair Havens. In many cases the captain of the ship was also its owner. The owner had a contract to deliver grain to Rome. The final authority would be the Roman officer. Paul had no official authority. The “experts” decided to sail for Phoenix, a larger and safer port town, in which to spend the winter.

## 2. Euroquilo

## Acts 27:13-20

<sup>13</sup> Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. <sup>14</sup> But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. <sup>15</sup> And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. <sup>16</sup> Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. <sup>17</sup> After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along. <sup>18</sup> Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. <sup>19</sup> And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. <sup>20</sup> When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

As a gentle wind began to blow from the south, they weighed anchor and hugged the shore of Crete and headed for Phoenix. They had not gone far when a violent storm called the “northeaster” swept down on them. The word is “Euroquilo” which is of hurricane force. The word is Greek for *Euros* {east wind} and Latin for *Aquilo* {north wind} and signifies the twisting motion of the sea and clouds.

To reach Phoenix the ship would have sail north into the gale, a thing that this ship could not do. All she could do was to run with the wind and try not to run aground. The slight relief from the wind allowed the sailors to do some things that would help their situation. They hauled the “ship's boat” {dinghy or lifeboat} which was towed behind the ship, up on the deck with great difficulty. They wrapped the boat with cables to try to keep it from being torn apart. They dropped the sea anchor in an effort to slow them down as it dragged behind the ship.

The next day they jettisoned the ship's cargo. The day after that they threw the ship's tackle {mast and sail} overboard. These were desperate measures because the ship was sinking.

### **3. “Captain Paul”**

**Acts 27:21-26**

The men are certain they are doomed. They had had no time to prepare food and eat for several days. Paul makes an incredible announcement!

<sup>21</sup> Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. <sup>22</sup> Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. <sup>23</sup> For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, <sup>24</sup> and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' <sup>25</sup> So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. <sup>26</sup> But we must run aground on some island."

### **4. Shipwrecked!**

#### **a. The Sound of Land**

**Acts 27:27-32**

<sup>27</sup> When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. <sup>28</sup> So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. <sup>29</sup> And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. <sup>30</sup> And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, <sup>31</sup> Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." <sup>32</sup> Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.

The ship had been driven by the violent storm for nearly two weeks. They had arrived at what is now called the Adriatic Sea. About midnight the sailors sensed that land was near. They could hear the waves breaking on the shore. They checked the depth often and discovered that they were approaching an unknown shore. They put out four anchors to keep from crashing on the rocks in the dark.

The sailors pretended to deploy more anchors but instead lowered the ship's lifeboat into the sea. They intended to escape from the ship and leave the soldiers and passengers behind. Paul realized this and warned the centurion that the safety of all of them depended on the sailors staying with the ship. The soldiers cut the ropes and let the lifeboat fall away.

**b. You have to eat!**

**Acts 27:33-38**

<sup>33</sup> As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. <sup>34</sup> Therefore I urge you to take some food. It will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." <sup>35</sup> And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. <sup>36</sup> Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. <sup>37</sup> (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) <sup>38</sup> And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

No one had eaten for two weeks. All the strength that could be mustered would be needed, so Paul urged everyone to eat. Paul took bread and prayed. A wave of reassurance swept through the 276 souls as they ate together. Then they threw the rest of the cargo overboard to lighten the ship so it would be able to get as close as possible to shore when it ran aground.

**c. Breaking Up**

**Acts 27:39-44**

<sup>39</sup> Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. <sup>40</sup> So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. <sup>41</sup> But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. <sup>42</sup> The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. <sup>43</sup> But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, <sup>44</sup> and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

At daybreak they made out a sandy beach where they could land. The aft anchors were cut loose and a small sail was hoisted to gain speed. The bow stuck fast and the stern was torn to pieces.

The soldiers were ready to kill the prisoners to keep them from escaping. If the prisoners escaped the soldiers would be severely punished if not executed.

Again Paul's presence saved the lives of them all. They all reached land alive.

## 5. Welcome to Malta

## Acts 28:1-10

After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. <sup>2</sup> The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. <sup>3</sup> When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. <sup>4</sup> When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." <sup>5</sup> He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. <sup>6</sup> They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

<sup>7</sup> Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. <sup>8</sup> It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. <sup>9</sup> And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. <sup>10</sup> They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.

Malta is a small island about 50 miles south of Sicily. Some translations have "Barbarians" which usually means uncivilized, but here it simply means non-Greek speaking people.

Paul was helping gather firewood and was bitten by a viper. First the natives concluded that Paul must be a murderer who, having escaped death at sea was about to receive justice anyway. Then when Paul did not die from the snakebite, they decided that he must be a god.

## 6. To Preach at Rome

### a. Rome at Last!

**Acts 28:11-15**

<sup>11</sup> After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead. <sup>12</sup> Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. <sup>13</sup> And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. <sup>14</sup> There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome. <sup>15</sup> And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.

After the winter in Malta, in February, they caught another Alexandrian grain ship, which carried them to Italy.

Paul was met at the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns. The Christians at Rome had been advised that he was coming.

### b. Unchained Witness

**Acts 28:16-31**

<sup>16</sup> And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier that guarded him.

<sup>17</sup> After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. <sup>18</sup> When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. <sup>19</sup> But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. <sup>20</sup> For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain." <sup>21</sup> And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. <sup>22</sup> But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

<sup>23</sup> When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. <sup>24</sup> And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. <sup>25</sup> And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:



<sup>26</sup> "Go to this people, and say,  
You will indeed hear but never understand,  
and you will indeed see but never perceive.

<sup>27</sup> For this people's heart has grown dull,  
and with their ears they can barely hear,  
and their eyes they have closed;  
lest they should see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears  
and understand with their heart  
and turn, and I would heal them.'

<sup>28</sup> Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the  
Gentiles; they will listen."

<sup>30</sup> He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who  
came to him, <sup>31</sup> proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus  
Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

While awaiting trial in Rome, Paul was allowed to rent his own house. He was  
kept under house arrest, chained to a Roman soldier 24 hours a day.

Paul preached to the Jews. Some believed. Others refused and left after Paul  
quoted a passage from Isaiah. For two years Paul waited for his trial. He preached  
to everyone while chained to a guard.

Paul was physically chained, but the Gospel and his preaching of it were  
unchained!