

# ACTS

## Chapter 27

### *Paul Sails for Rome*

**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. 2 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. 3 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. 4 And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. 5 And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. 7 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. 8 Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea. 9 Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast<sup>[a]</sup> was already over, Paul advised them, 10 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.” 11 But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. 12 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.**

**27:1** *we should sail.* † The “we” narrative begins again (the last such reference appeared in 21:18). Probably Luke has spent the two years of Paul’s Caesarean imprisonment nearby, probably gathering material for his two-volume document (cf. Lk 1:3), and now he joins those ready to sail. (CSB)

Luke is now with Paul; this begins the third “we” section. (TLSB)

*centurion... named Julius.* Otherwise unknown. Perhaps he was given the specific duties of an imperial courier, which included delivering prisoners for trial. (CSB)

The military division is known to have been stationed in Syria at this time, but the origin and significance of the term “Augustan” is not clear. (TLSB0)

*Augustan Cohort.* The Roman legions were designated by number, and each of the regiments also had designations. The identification “Augustan,” or “Imperial” (belonging to the empire), was common. (CSB)

**27:2** *Adramyttium.* A harbor on the west coast of the province of Asia, southeast of Troas, east of Assos. (CSB)

*ports along the coast.* At one of these stops, Julius would plan to transfer to a ship going to Rome. (CSB)

*Aristarchus*. See 19:29; 20:4; see also Phm. 24 and Col 4:10, indicating he was in Rome with Paul later. (CSB)

Accompanied Paul when he brought the offering for the poor in Jerusalem (cf 20:4; see note, 24:17). He also was with Paul while Paul was imprisoned in Rome (Col 4:10; Phm 24). (TLSB)

Like Luke, had accompanied Paul to Jerusalem with the relief offering (20:4). He was one of the men who, with Gaius, were rushed into the theater of Ephesus by a raging mob (19:29). In Colossians 4:10, written while Paul was a prisoner in Rome, the apostle refers to Aristarchus as “my fellow prisoner. (PBC)

**27:3 Sidon**. About 70 miles north of Caesarea. (CSB)

The Gospel had been preached in this area earlier (Phoenicia; 11:19). (TLSB)

*go to his friends*. Fellow Christians. (TLSB)

**27:4 the lee of Cyprus**. They sought the protecting shelter of the island by sailing north on the eastern side of the island, then west along the northern side. (CSB)

The ship sailed on the east and north sides of the island so that it was shielded from strong westerly winds. (TLSB)

*winds were against us*. Prevailing winds in summer were westerly. (CSB)

**27:5 Cilicia and Pamphylia**. Adjoining provinces on the southern shore of Asia Minor. From Sidon to Myra along this coast would normally be a voyage of 10 to 15 days. (CSB)

*Myra in Lycia*. The growing importance of the city of Myra was associated with the development of navigation. Instead of hugging the coast from point to point, more ships were daring to run directly from Alexandria in Egypt to harbors like Myra on the southern coast of Asia Minor. It was considerably out of the way on the trip to Rome from Egypt, but the prevailing westerly wind would not allow a direct voyage toward the west. Myra became an important grain-storage city as well. (CSB)

**27:6 ship of Alexandria**. A ship from Egypt (with grain cargo, v. 38) bound for Rome. Paul and the others could have remained on the first ship and continued up the coast to Macedonia, then taken the land route over the Egnatian Way across Greece and on to Rome, entering Italy at the port of Brundisium. But Julius chose to change ships here, accepting the opportunity of a voyage direct to Rome. Some suggest that Aristarchus from Macedonia stayed with the first ship and went to his home area to tell of Paul’s coming imprisonment in Rome. If so, he later joined Paul in Rome. (CSB)

Most likely, the ship hauled grain from Alexandria, Egypt, to Asia Minor and Rome (cf v 38). Switching to another ship was part of the centurion’s plan for the transport of the prisoners. (TLSB)

**27:7 Cnidus**. From Myra to Cnidus at the southeast point of Asia Minor was about 170 miles. The trip probably took another 10 to 15 days. (CSB)

*Crete*. An island 160 miles long. Rather than cross the open sea to Greece, the ship was forced to bear south, seeking to sail west with the protection of the island of Crete on the north (“to the lee of Crete”). (CSB)

The ship sailed to the east and south of the island to avoid strong northwest winds. (TLSB)

*Salmon*. A promontory on the northeast point of Crete. (CSB)

**27:8** *Fair Havens ... Lasea*. The former was a port about midway on the southern coast of Crete, and the latter was a city about five miles away. (CSB)

**27:9** *the Fast*. The Jewish Day of Atonement fell in the latter part of September or in October. The usual sailing season by Jewish calculation lasted from Pentecost (May-June) to Tabernacles, which was five days after the Fast. The Romans considered sailing after Sept. 15 doubtful and after Nov. 11 suicidal. (CSB)

It was now Oct or later. (TLSB)

Paul’s observation about what would happen if they continued the voyage was not a prophecy but a commonsense warning that to continue to Sicily from Crete at that time of the year was too dangerous. (PBC)

**27:10** Most likely Paul is offering advice based on his experience as a seasoned traveler; he had already endured three shipwrecks (2Co 11:25). Paul later prophesies concerning the voyage (vv 22–24). (TLSB)

**27:11** *pilot*. Probably referring to the person in charge of the day-to-day operations of the ship; might also refer to the captain of the ship. (TLSB)

**27:12** *Phoenix*. A major city that served as a wintering place, having a harbor with protection against the storms. (CSB)

Winter months for sea travel were considered Nov 11–Mar 10. (TLSB)

*The Storm at Sea*

**13 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. 14 But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. 15 And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. 16 Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. 17 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. 18 Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. 19 And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned. 21 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. 22 Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. 23 For this**

very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, 24 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.' 25 So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. 26 But we must run aground on some island." 27 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. 28 So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. 29 And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. 30 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, 31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." 32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go. 33 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. 34 Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." 35 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. 36 Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. 37 (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

27:14 "*northeaster.*" A typhoon-like, east-northeast wind (the Euroquilo), which drove the ship away from their destination. (CSB)

From a word combining Gk "east wind" and Lat "northeast wind." This particular northeaster probably blew down from Mount Ida on Crete. (TLSB)

27:15 *could not face the wind.* Lit, "could not look the wind in the eye." The sailors were unable to bring the bow of the ship into the wind. (TLSB)

27:16 *Cauda.* About 23 miles from Crete. This provided enough shelter to make preparation against the storm. (CSB)

Small island 22 mi S of Crete. (TLSB)

*managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat.* A small boat was being towed behind the ship. It was interfering with the progress of the ship and with the steering. It may also have been in danger of being crushed against the ship in the wind and the waves. It had to be taken aboard (v. 17). (CSB)

A small boat, used for transporting passengers and as a lifeboat, was usually pulled behind the larger ship. Here the small boat was probably brought aboard. (TLSB)

The lifeboat was usually towed behind a ship. Such a "trailer" would cause problems in a storm, as the wind and waves tended to dash it against the mother vessel. (PBC)

27:17 *after hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird.* Probably crosswise, in order to keep the ship from being broken apart by the storm. (CSB)

Large cables or ropes were secured around the hull of the ship to help it weather fierce storms. (TLSB)

*Syrtis*. A long stretch of desolate banks of quicksand along northern Africa off the coast of Tunis and Tripoli—still far away, but in such a storm the ship could be driven a great distance. (CSB)

One of two treacherous sandbars (here the larger one is meant) off the coast of Libya. They were much feared by ancient sailors. (TLSB)

*lowered the gear*. Lowered apparently to keep the ship from running onto the sandbars of Syrtis, but the Greek for this expression should perhaps be rendered “mainsail.” (CSB)

**27:18** *to jettison*. To lighten the ship. They kept some bags of grain, however (see v. 38). (CSB)

**27:19** *ship’s tackle*. Spars, planks and perhaps the yardarm with the mainsail attached. At times these were dragged behind, serving as a brake. (CSB)

**27:20** *sun nor stars* – Ancient sailors steered by the sun and stars. When these were hidden for several days during a raging storm, it was impossible to navigate intelligently. (PBC)

*no small tempest*. Understatement; the storm prevented them from navigating by the sun or the stars. (TLSB)

**27:21** *should have listened to me*. Although they had not done so, Paul had good news for everyone (vv. 22–26). (CSB)

At that worst moment Paul gathered them together. His reason for the reminder was to get them to heed and believe his words of encouragement. Although they had not done so, Paul had good news for everyone (vv.22-26). (CSB – LL – PBC)

**27:22–26** Paul focuses on building up the hope of those on the ship through his powerful and reliable God. (TLSB)

**27:23** *the God to whom I belong*. Paul powerfully expresses his trust and confidence in the one true God by emphasizing God’s ownership of him. (TLSB)

**27:24** *stand before Caesar*. This vision gives divine assurance that God’s promise to Paul regarding Rome would be fulfilled. Luther: “Because there are some godly men, or only one godly man, in the same ship, the ship must reach port safe and sound, however much it has been tossed about by a heavy storm, even though a thousand devils have been fighting in opposition and causing tumult in the same ship. So also for the sake of Paul alone, a ship is saved and 276 men who were with him in the ship” (AE 6:217). (TLSB)

**27:25** Paul bases his encouragement on his faith that God would fulfill His precise promises of deliverance. Perhaps the shipmates listened closely because of their perilous situation. (TLSB)

**27:27** *fourteenth night*. After leaving Fair Havens. (CSB)

For 14 days, the storm drove the ship west from Cauda to Malta. (TLSB)

*Adriatic Sea*. The sea between Italy, Malta, Crete and Greece. In ancient times the Adriatic Sea extended as far south as Sicily and Crete. (Some think this sea included all the area between

Greece, Italy and Africa and that it was known as the Adrian, not the Adriatic, Sea.) Its extent now has been considerably reduced. (CSB)

*suspected.* By the sound of breakers. (CSB)

**27:28** *took a sounding.* Measured the depth of the sea by letting down a weighted line. (CSB)

**27:30** *seeking to escape.* Without a port for the ship, the sailors felt their chance for survival was better in the single lifeboat, unencumbered by the many passengers. (CSB)

The sailors tried to make it appear that they were attempting to secure the ship's position, but they were actually seeking to escape under the cover of darkness. (TLSB)

Now with implicit faith in Paul's judgment, the centurion had his men cut away the ropes of the lifeboat. (LL)

**27:31** *Unless these men stay.* If the sailors had been allowed to desert the ship in seeking to save themselves, the passengers would have been unable to beach the ship the following day. (CSB)

If all the experienced sailors abandoned the ship, the prospect of safety for the remaining passengers was dim. (TLSB)

**27:33–35** Paul encourages the men to eat, leading by example. He was not officiating at the Lord's Supper, as some suppose (consider all the unbelievers present), but simply giving thanks to God for his food. (TLSB)

**27:33** *having taken nothing.* No provisions had been distributed nor regular meals eaten since the storm began. (CSB)

**27:35** *took some bread and gave thanks.* Paul gave two good examples: He ate food for physical nourishment and gave thanks to God. To give thanks before a meal was common practice among God's people (see Lk 9:16; 24:30; 1Ti 4:4–5). (CSB)

**27:37** *276 of us on board.* To note the number on board may have been necessary in preparation for the distribution of food or perhaps for the coming attempt to get ashore. The number is not extraordinary for the time. Josephus refers to a ship that had 600 aboard (*Life*, 15). (CSB)

Other ancient accounts of travel by ship show that such a large number of passengers on a grain ship was entirely possible; alternatively. (TLSB)

**27:38** *lightened the ship.* They threw overboard the remaining bags of wheat (see v. 18), which had probably been kept for food supply. The lighter the ship, the farther it could sail in to shore. (CSB)

Some of the cargo had already been thrown off. As a last resort, the remainder of the wheat was thrown overboard. (TLSB)

**27:1–38** Grave difficulties beset Paul's journey to Rome, yet the Lord assures Paul that he will reach his journey's goal. When the trials of life weigh us down, it is easy for us to lose hope and stop trusting God. Yet God promises He will never leave us nor forsake us (Dt 31:6, 8; Heb 13:5). Through Jesus' saving work, the Father keeps us with Him forever. • Father, be with us always in

this world, especially when we are tossed about by the everyday storms of life. Grant us safe passage until we reach our final destination of heaven. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Shipwreck*

**39 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. 40 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. 41 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. 42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. 43 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, 44 and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.**

**27:40** *loosing the ropes that tied the rudders.* In order to lower the stern rudders into place so the ship could be steered toward the sandy shore. Ancient ships had a steering oar on either side of the stern. (CSB)

Apparently the throwing overboard of the ship's tackle (v 19) did not include the anchors or the foresail. (TLSB)

**27:42** *soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners.* If a prisoner escaped, the life of his guard was taken in his place. The soldiers did not want to risk having a prisoner escape. (CSB)

The guards were subject to punishment if their prisoners escaped. (TLSB)

**27:43** Once more the centurion is to be admired for stopping this plan and trusting the prisoners. (CSB)

**27:44** *all were brought safely to land.* Paul's promise from God is fulfilled. Divine intervention causes everyone to be rescued. (TLSB)

**27:39–44** After a harrowing journey, the ship carrying Paul wrecks on an island. However, all the passengers are saved. Have you ever blamed God for the problems in your life? Have you forgotten that even through hardships, God is working for your benefit (Rm 8:28)? Rejoice today that His love and care for you are infinite (Rm 8:38–39)! • Lord, put all the problems in my life to good use. I praise You that nothing compares to the grace and mercy You show me, now and forever. Amen. (TLSB)