



# Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



## The Acts of the Apostles

### Chapter 27

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# Introduction

## Chapter Outline:

- The Voyage to Rome
- St. Paul Warned of Disaster
- The Tempestuous Sea
- Shipwrecked on Malta



# Introduction

- Acts Chapter 27 is a great chapter to read during the difficult time of our life
- Not only it is a description of a literal, horrible storm and shipwreck, but it is filled with wonderful lessons about trusting God during those very difficult times
- The "storm" of Acts 27 is an interesting read from 3 perspectives
  1. St. Luke, the author,
  2. St. Paul and
  3. The other members of the boat



# Introduction

## First St. Luke

- He was the author of Acts and was aboard the ship
- You'll notice the pronoun "we" as we read through the chapter
- One of the things we can noticed in this chapter is a reference to St. Luke's *personal* lack of faith in the middle of the storm
- St. Luke records in Verse 20: "*we* finally gave up all hope of being saved"
- He probably included himself as he usually does in Acts when he uses the word "we"
- St. Luke records several chapters back that God spoke to St. Paul, and told him that he must testify of God in Rome (Acts 23:11)



# Introduction

- St. Luke was aware of this promise
- He was with St. Paul on an off for several years prior to this voyage
- When St. Luke said "we" gave up hope, because of this violent storm he fell into doubt about God's promise to St. Paul of reaching Rome
- St. Luke and St. Paul were on the same ship
- If God was going to get St. Paul to Rome, then they must survive this trip



# Introduction

- There are times when all seems lost
- It is during those times that we must trust in the promises of God
- God is faithful to his Word
- God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, (1 Corinthians 1:9)





# Introduction

## Second St. Paul's perspective

- He is probably relieved to get away from the Roman/Jewish trials
- God told him he was going to Rome, but he probably never expected to be as a Roman prisoner
- St. Paul is the Great Witness for Christ in this chapter
- We'll read how St. Paul made a good impression on the Centurion in charge of his life, we'll read how he encouraged the other sailors during the roughest times of the voyage and without directly preaching Christ (at least its not recorded), he becomes a great personal witness



# Introduction

- St. Paul has already been through several shipwrecks (See 2 Corinthians 11:25), as well as other tragic moments in his life
- St. Paul used that experience as a witness to others
- One of the main reasons God allows us to go through painful periods in our life is to be witnesses to others
- St. Paul's lapse in faith
- In Verse 27, an angel appears to him and says, "Do not be afraid...", which means of course, that St. Paul had his own doubts
- The whole ship was scared and it probably affected St. Paul
- The angel didn't condemn St. Paul for his fears, but encourages him





# Introduction

- That is an important lesson for us
- The Lord knows our fears, and wants us to turn to him *through* those fears
- That is how we overcome them



# Introduction

Finally the crew and other passengers' perspective

- Early in the chapter St. Paul warns of the impending dangers
- The crew, being experienced seamen, trust in their own experience other than the warnings from God
- This is the danger of *self-reliance*
- One of the mistakes we make as Christians is we turn over our weaknesses to God, but we don't surrender the areas of our life where we are strong
- As the storm grew worse, and the sailor's expertise was not being of any value, it was then that the crew started listening to St. Paul for advice



# Introduction

- What is not recorded in the chapter is St. Paul witnessing to them about Jesus
- St. Paul probably did because that was his nature
- Think of how non-Christians view God
- God is usually the last resort when all else fails
- That is usually when they turn to prayer or men of God
- That is often when we can be witnesses to them
- When they have lost hope in all their resources
- That is what we see with these sailors

# The Voyage to Rome Begins (27:1-8)



Sailed a Ship of Adramyttium (1-5)

- It was decided that the prisoners should sail to Italy
- St. Paul had requested a trial before the Caesar
- So he was being transported from Caesarea to Rome by ship

# The Voyage to Rome Begins (27:1-8)



- Who were being transported with St. Paul?
- Apparently, "we" included Luke, who wrote Acts and Aristarchus
- Also sailing were "some other prisoners" to be tried before Caesar and/or already tried, found guilty and sentenced to fight (to their death) in the coliseum of Rome
- Aristarchus was a "Macedonian of Thessalonica" who was with St. Paul in Ephesus during the riot (Acts 19:29) - and apparently accompanied him to Greece, and from there to Jerusalem, (Acts 20:1-4)
- He was a Jew and remained with St. Paul during his imprisonment in Rome, (Colossians 4:10-11)

# The Voyage to Rome Begins (27:1-8)



- Two years later, Aristarchus, who may have spent those two years tending to St. Paul in Caesarea, was now accompanying him from Caesarea to Rome
- Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment, took custody
- August Regiment: One of five Roman regiments stationed at Caesarea
- Julius bore the responsibility of delivering all of the prisoners to Rome without loss
- If any prisoner escaped, he would be tried for a crime punishable by death



# The Voyage to Rome Begins (27:1-8)



- Adramyttium was a port on the northwest corner of modern day Turkey
- The ship was from Adramyttium and started its journey northward from Caesarea, arriving the next day at Sidon, 75 miles to the north in modern day Lebanon
- 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
- In those days there were no regular lines of passenger ships, and in making a voyage from Judea to Rome several ships might be necessary to complete the voyage
- St. Paul took three before he reached Rome

# The Voyage to Rome Begins (27:1-8)



- Sidon today is part of Lebanon
- At Sidon, Julius treated St. Paul kindly
- It is remarkable how uniformly St. Paul commanded the respect of the Roman officials with whom he came in contact
- Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7-12), Gallio (Acts 18:12-17), Felix (Acts 24:22,23), Festus (Acts 25:12-14), and Julius are examples of this
- Julius treats the apostle throughout with such marked courtesy (Acts 27:3, 43; Acts 28:16)
- He trusted St. Paul
- This says a lot for St. Paul's witness to Julius
- They have only known each other for a day at this point
- It was still a matter of great trust to let him go

# The Voyage to Rome Begins (27:1-8)



- They sailed near Cyprus, Cilicia, Pamphylia, and arrived at Myra
- “Sailed under Cyprus”, Near the eastern coast, where, by keeping near the shore, the contrary winds would be less felt, being broken by the highlands of the great island
- The wind must have been from the northwest
- At Myra, the centurion found an Alexandrian ship headed to Italy
- They boarded this ship and departed
- 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

# The Voyage to Rome Begins (27:1-8)



## Sailed a Ship of Alexandria (6-8)

- They sailed slowly for many days
- The wind made it difficult to sail
- They continued to sail with difficulty near Cnidus, Crete off Salmone
- Where is "Cnidus" (Acts 27:7)?
- It's a port at the southwestern tip of modern day Turkey, about 140 miles west of Myra
- While that distance could have been sailed in 2 days with favorable winds, the ship took "many days" because of the headwind
- They arrived at Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea

# The Voyage to Rome Begins (27:1-8)



- Fair havens was on the southeastern part of the island of Crete
- It was probably not so much a harbor as an open roadstead, which afforded good anchorage for a time
- This port still remains and is known by the same name
- The city of Lasea - There is no city of this name now remaining
- Sailors must make the best of the wind
- And so must we all in our passage over the ocean of this world
- When the winds are contrary, yet we must be getting forward as well as we can



# St. Paul's Warning Ignored (27:9-12)



Sailing Became Dangerous; St. Paul warned of Disaster (9-10)

- Much time had passed, and sailing became dangerous
- It is evident that when they started they had hoped to reach Italy before the dangerous time of navigating the Mediterranean should arrive
- In the Mediterranean, ships rarely traveled in the wintertime due to the storms
- But they had been detained so that they were now sailing in the most dangerous and tempestuous time of the year
- The "fast" here is evidently intended the fast which occurred among the Jews on the great day of atonement
- That was part of September and part of October





# St. Paul's Warning Ignored (27:9-12)

- St. Paul advised, "I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss..."
- St. Paul had some experience as a sailor
- During his 3 missionary journeys he spent time on ships, plus whatever prior experience he had, if any
- Although St. Paul's message was prophetic of what actually happened, it is not described whether he was speaking from revelation from God or just his own experience
- The Centurion was responsible to get St. Paul and the other prisoners to Rome, so he had the decision of whether or not to stay on the ship or stay in a harbor for the winter

# St. Paul's Warning Ignored (27:9-12)



## The Centurion Ignored St. Paul's Warning (11-12)

- The Centurion took the advice of the ship captain over St. Paul
- On the surface, it seems like a logical decision
- Fair Havens was not a good harbor, and they hoped to reach a better one
- Men cast themselves willingly into an infinite amount of dangers, when they choose to follow their own wisdom, rather than God, when He speaks by the mouth of his servants
- Phoenix was a port or harbor on the south side of Crete, and west of the fair havens
- It was a more convenient harbor, and was regarded as more safe



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

## A Favorable Wind (13)

- The south wind blew softly
- The wind before had probably been a head-wind, blowing from the west
- When this wind arose, they supposed they could attain their purpose, and sailed along the southern shore of Crete to reach, if possible, Phoenix



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

## The Tempest Began (14-20)

- Shortly after sailing, a "tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon"
- The storm is now at its worse
- The original Greek word translated "tempestuous" is *tuphonikos*, from which the English word, "typhoon" is derived
- "Euroclydon", the name given to a violent wind that blow across the Mediterranean Sea from the northeast, "caught" the ship so suddenly that they couldn't even turn the ship around and "head into the wind" (Acts 27:15), let alone prepare the ship to ride out the storm



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

- So they just let the ship be driven southwest by the wind
- Remember that we're talking about professional sailors, who have experience with tough weather
- The ship was driven south of an island called Clauda
- Clauda is a small island 40 miles southwest of Fair Havens
- While the ship was south of it, Clauda provided enough "shelter" against the wind for the ship's crew to pull the "skiff" the ship's small dinghy - onboard and to undergird the ship
- The lifeboat is now on the deck of the ship
- The next step is to tie cables around the boat to make it more secure





# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

- The danger was that the ship would be destroyed
- The Syrtis, or quicksand, on the African coast to the southwest of Crete, were greatly feared by ancient sailors
- Had they let the Euroclydon continue to drive them southwest, the ship would have wrecked on the Syrtis Sands
- They lowered the anchor to slow down the ship
- Their aim was to keep from being driven into the quicksand (the Great Syrtis).
- What God is doing here is getting the sailors to the point where they abandon all hope
- That is the point where they will no longer be self-reliant and be willing to listen to St. Paul and his companions





# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

- God does not want to share his glory with anybody
- He will often patiently wait for us to finish trying things via our own resources so he can take over
- The following day, they lightened the ship probably by throwing out part of the cargo
- The third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard
- It is evident that the situation was dangerous
- The sailors were finally broken to the point where *they* lost hope
- Notice the "darkness" of this storm
- Neither the sun nor moon appeared
- That is how they navigated
- Without any celestial points of references, they didn't know where they were



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

## St. Paul Assured the Men of Survival (21-26)

- They had not eaten for many days; anxiety and necessity would enforce abstinence
- St. Paul reminded them: he had recommended to not sail from Crete
- St. Paul, who is just a prisoner and not a professional sailor was probably using this remark to get their attention
- And not meaning to reflect on them for the past, but to claim their confidence for what he was now to say:
- St. Paul then assured them there would be no loss of life; only the ship would be lost - the message came from an angel of God



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

- This must be joyous news to those from whom all hope that they should be saved was taken away
- This is the beginning of St. Paul's speech of encouragement
- "Whose I am, and whom I serve", this short sentence is a sermon
- It is the key-note of all St. Paul's ministry
- It is an expression of St. Paul's entire devotedness to God
- St. Paul sees *everyone* as a "witnessing opportunity" and not just people in charge of getting him to Rome
- St. Paul affirmed his trust in God to the men by saying, "for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me"
- While the crew were toiling at the pumps, St. Paul was probably wrestling in prayer, not for himself only



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

- With true magnanimity of soul for all his shipmates and God heard him
- "giving him" (remarkable expression!) all that sailed with him
- It is implied here that it was for the sake of St. Paul that their lives were saved
- St. Paul further revealed that the ship would run aground
- Their safety and wreck on a certain island were assured; the details were not yet revealed
- Why would God do this?
- One of the main themes of this lesson is that God allows the storms of life to happen to further our trust in God



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

## The Crew Attempted to Abandon the Ship (27-32)

- Adriatic sea is 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 in the vicinity of Malta
- After fourteen nights, the sailors sensed they were near land
- Imagine being tossed and turned for 14 days and nights, without stopping





# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

- We can see why they gave up hope
- That length of a trial would be difficult for anyone's faith
- 1 fathom is 6 feet, so 20 fathoms is 120 feet
- They took soundings and determined they were nearing land
- "Soundings" is dropping a line in the water with markers to know the depth
- It was dark; they dropped four anchors to avoid running aground and prayed for daylight
- They have given up all hope in their natural ability to save themselves and *now* are praying to God!
- However, Christianity emphasizes the opposite, of turning to God *first*





# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

- The sailors lowered the skiff to appear they were putting out more anchors; but they intended to leave the ship
- St. Paul told the centurion and soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."
- For the safety of all it was needful that they remain, in order to manage the ship when it was run ashore
- Also, if the sailors' escape betrayal would have triggered a chaos during which some of the prisoners would have escaped, which would have been capital offenses for the centurion and his soldiers
- The soldiers cut the ropes to the skiff and let it fall away
- St. Paul had such credibility with the soldiers by this time that they decided not to take any risk of the sailors escaping



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

- There are times God wants us to "take courage" and "stay on the ship"
- Although we can't possibly see a solution how God is going to get us through the storm, we simply have to have faith that *God* has the knowledge and the power to get us through those situations



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

## The Tempest Began (33-38)

- St. Paul encouraged them to eat
- When the world trembles, the faithful alone are not only at peace, but strengthen and encourage others by their example
- St. Paul indicated they needed food for nourishment and survival
- He reminded them they all would be safe; a promise of absolute safety
- St. Paul is *now* the encourager
- The message from the Angel of God a few verses back that *everyone* will be saved is now put into practice
- Notice it is after all hope is lost, and after they cut away the rowboat, St. Paul says "ok, time to eat some food; God is going to rescue you"



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

- St. Paul took bread, gave thanks to God, and began to eat before them
- They were all encouraged by St. Paul and ate as well
- The men were trusting in St. Paul
- More importantly they were trusting in St. Paul's God
- St. Paul, a faithful witness to them all, gave thanks for the bread in front of everyone
- That had to be a good witness to them
- They have just been through a 14 day & night storm
- All their hope was gone
- Here was St. Paul *giving thanks to God* despite all they have been through



# In the Tempest (27:13-38)

- The key to survival and having joy *through* all sorts of trials and troubles is to have the focus on God
- When we read through the entire Bible, it is *amazing* to notice that most sins occurred when people get their focus *off* of God and *onto* their problems
- When we are focusing on our problems, we are worried about how *we* are going to get out of the situation without God's help
- As a Christian expression says: If you are going to pray, why worry? If you are going to worry, why pray?!
- The cargo was thrown overboard
- As might be expected in an Alexandrian ship, the cargo was wheat
- Egypt was then the granary of Rome



# Shipwrecked on Malta (27:39-44)



## Attempted to Drive the Ship Onto the Beach (39-41)

- They saw a sandy beach and decided to make a run for it
- They unhooked all the anchors to gain speed and untied the rudder to steer, and well as hoisted the sail
- Remember that St. Paul made a prediction in Verse 22 that the ship would be destroyed
- Yet, when the crew saw the beach, they forgot about St. Paul's prediction and once-again, trusted in their own ability to get the ship to shore safely
- The ship struck a sandbar
- The waves violently began to break up the ship



# Shipwrecked on Malta (27:39-44)



They Swam and/or Floated to Shore; All Were Saved (42-44)

- The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to keep any from escaping
- They would rather kill the prisoners than to run the risk of their escape
- The centurion saw that St. 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

# Shipwrecked on Malta (27:39-44)



- St. Paul was a good witness to the centurion
- It makes one wonder if he ever became a Christian, after all he has been through
- The rest floated on boards or parts of the ship
- They all escaped safely to the island
- This was not St. Paul's first shipwreck, Compare 2 Cor 11:25, which was written at an earlier period of his life
- God never promises that our material possessions will be saved, no matter what, just our souls. Chapter 27 is a great chapter to read during the rough times of our lives



# Conclusion

- What was the assignment they gave to Julius?
- Identify St. Paul's travel companions and fellow servants who accompanied him
- Who was "Aristarchus"?
- What courtesies were extended to St. Paul when the ship stopped at Sidon?
- What warning does St. Paul give?
- What types of advices were provided to "the centurion" (Acts 27:11)?
- Explain why the Roman centurion was in ultimate control of the ship St. Paul was on.



# Conclusion

- Why did they disregard St. Paul's warning?
- What made St. Paul speak up? (Acts 22:25)
- Although it seems the others had lost hope of coming out of the storm alive, what prompted St. Paul to be of good cheer?
- How did he know that?
- What did St. Paul do to encourage everyone?
- Why did the soldiers want to kill the prisoners?
- Why didn't Julius let them do it?
- What one word or name helps you remember this chapter?
- When should you believe the man of God rather than the experts?