

Acts 27 – The Providence of God in Action

I. The Journey Begins (1-8)

A. Paul is Prepared to Travel (1)

1. Paul will be sent to Italy as a prisoner
2. Paul is delivered with “other prisoners”
 - a. These prisoners are most likely headed to Rome to be placed in the gladiatorial games
 - b. Paul is the most distinguished person on the ship and probably the only Roman citizen
3. Paul is given into the custody of Julius the Centurion

B. From Caesarea to Sidon (2-3)

1. They set out from Caesarea on an Adramyttium ship (2)
 - a. Adramyttium is an ancient port city of Mysia in Asia minor. The ship was probably headed home as it stopped along the ports of Asia to trade.
 - b. Paul is accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus (2b)
 - i. Notice the “we” phrases – Luke was with them
 - ii. Aristarchus is mentioned as Paul’s companion in Col. 4:10 and Philemon 24)
2. They arrive at Sidon (3a)
3. Julius allows Paul to be cared for by friends (3b)
 - a. Paul is treated kindly by Julius
 - b. These “friends” probably fellow Christians, provide for Paul’s needs on the journey

C. From Sidon to Myra (4-5)

1. They sailed north of Cyprus due to the wind (4)
2. They sailed along the coast of Cilicia to Myra (5)

D. From Myra to Fair Havens (6-8)

1. Julius contracts a grain ship in Myra (6)
 - a. Egypt supplied 1/3 of Rome’s grain
 - b. This was an Alexandrian grain ship trading in the area (later they will dump the wheat into the ocean)
2. They sail slowly and difficultly around Crete (7)
3. They arrive at Fair Havens (8) (*Kaloi Lemenes*)
 - a. The bay here offered some protection from the winds



II. The Journey Turns Deadly (9-20)

A. Paul's Advice is Rejected (9-12)

1. Paul warns to postpone the Journey (9-10)

- a. Sailing was known to be too dangerous during the winter months
 - i. The "fast" refers to the Day of Atonement for the Jews
 - ii. The day of Atonement was on the 10th day of Tishri – in 59 A.D. it occurred on October 5th
 - iii. Navigation on the Mediterranean was shut down between November and March due to winter storms, fog, overcast skies, etc.
- b. Paul warns that continuing the journey will be costly and dangerous (10)
 - i. Paul gives a general warning as an experience traveler – this is not a divine prophecy
 - ii. He is simply using his common sense, telling them something that they already knew well.

2. The Men decide to go a little further (11-12)

- a. The Centurion believes the ship captain rather than Paul (11)
- b. The majority decides to try and reach Phoenix (Phenice) which is a harbor in Crete (12)

- i. Most likely, they believed the Fair Havens and the city close by (Lasea) was not suitable for them to stay the winter
 - ii. Paul definitely thought so, but the majority decided to push to another port city on Crete.
- B. The Journey Becomes Hopeless (13-20)
 - 1. The ship is caught in a great storm (13-15)
 - a. Conditions look favorable so they set out from Fair Havens (13)
 - b. “The Northeaster” came upon them suddenly (14)
 - i. The word is *Eurakulon* – which means “northeaster”
 - ii. This was a well known winter wind coming from the North east that made sea travel treacherous during the winter months.
 - iii. This same wind is well known today in the Mediterranean world as the grigal or gregale.
 - c. The ship is helplessly caught in the wind (15)
 - 2. The men do all they can to steady the ship (16-19)
 - a. They secure the lifeboat (16)
 - i. The word “boat” is *skaphes* (where we get the word skiff) not the previous word *ploion* which is the ship as a whole.
 - ii. In v. 17 – they “take up” the life boat
 - b. They add supports to the underside of the ship (17)
 - i. This process is called “frapping” – they use supports (i.e. helps) like bands, chains, etc. wrapped under the boat to keep it from breaking apart.
 - c. They drop the sail and let the wind drive them (17)
 - i. They were afraid of being pushed into the shallows of Syrtis (quicksand in KJV)
 - ii. The “striking of sail” here could either mean they lowered the sail or they lowered the “sea-anchor” which was pulled behind the boat steadying it
 - d. The next day they threw out some of the cargo (18)
 - i. The ship was still being tossed around
 - ii. They tried lightening the ship so it would ride higher on the water
 - e. On the third day they threw out the rigging (19)
 - i. They took the tackle and everything they didn’t need for the sails out
 - ii. They threw then overboard with their own hands
 - 3. The Men Give Up Hope (20)

- a. No navigation is possible
 - i. The sun and stars didn't appear for many days
 - ii. In the dark overcast skies they had no way of knowing their location or direction
- b. The storm was pressing upon them
- c. The men lose all hope that they will be delivered from this voyage

III. Paul Trusts The Providence and Promise of God (21-37)

A. Paul Encourages the men (21-26)

- 1. Paul tells the men they will survive (21-22)
 - a. They had gone many days without food (21)
 - b. Paul establishes his credibility
 - i. He says they ought to have followed his advice and stayed at Fair Havens
 - ii. This is not an "I told you so," this is establishing the fact that he is an experienced traveler and setting them up to heed his next advice
 - c. Paul tells the men to take courage (22a)
 - d. Paul assures them that only the ship will be lost, no one will die (22b)
- 2. Paul describes his word from God (23-24)
 - a. An Angel of God has appeared to Paul (23)
 - b. Paul has been promised to stand before Caesar (24)
 - c. Paul has been granted the lives of those with him
 - i. This probably means that Paul has been praying for the lives of these men
 - ii. God's angel assures Paul that his request for them has been granted
- 3. Paul exhorts the men to trust God's promise (25-26)
 - a. Paul encourages them that God will deliver on his promise (25)
 - b. Paul also warns that the ship must go aground on an island (26)

B. Paul Trust's God's Promise to The End (27-37)

- 1. The Ship's progress is halted until daylight (27-29)
 - a. At midnight on the 14th night, the sailors suspected they were approaching land (27)
 - b. The sailors take measurements to determine if they were approaching land (28)
 - c. The sailors cast four anchors to stop the ship until daylight (29)
- 2. The Ship's Crew try to abandon the ship (30-32)
 - a. The sailors try to sneak off the ship (30)
 - i. They let down the lifeboat
 - ii. They pretended to be laying out anchors from the bow

- b. Paul warns the soldiers that the ship's crew were endangering their lives (31)
 - i. Paul's vision showed the ship destroyed but the people on the ship delivered
 - ii. Paul warned the centurion and the soldiers that these sailors must stay on the boat for the promise to be fulfilled
 - c. The Soldiers cut the lifeboat away from the ship (32)
 - 3. Paul prepares for God's deliverance (33-37)
 - a. Paul prepares and reassures the men (33-34)
 - i. Before dawn Paul encourages the men to eat to preserve their strength (33-34a)
 - ii. Paul reminds them God has promised they will be delivered (34b)
 - b. Paul exemplifies trust in God's promise (35-37)
 - i. Paul blesses the food and begins eating (35)
 - ii. All 276 men take food and are encouraged
- IV. God's Providence Fulfills His Promise (38-44)
- A. The men make final preparations to beach the ship (38-40)
 - 1. After eating, they threw the grain overboard (38)
 - 2. They resolve to run the ship onto the beach (39)
 - 3. They cut the anchors free (40)
 - 4. They lower the steering rudders
 - 5. They hoist the sail to catch the wind
 - B. The men make it to shore unharmed (41-44)
 - 1. The ship begins tearing apart (41)
 - a. The ship hits the rocks (or reef?) before reaching the beach
 - b. The rear of the ship begins breaking apart in the tempestuous waves
 - 2. The soldiers plan to kill the prisoners (42)
 - a. They feared the prisoners would escape if they all swam to shore
 - b. Roman guards suffered the penalty of their prisoners if they allowed them to escape
 - 3. The centurion orders the men spared (43-44a)
 - a. The centurion desires to keep Paul safe (43a)
 - b. The centurion orders those who can swim to jump first and swim toward the beach (43b)
 - c. The centurion orders those who cannot swim to follow on planks and various pieces of the ship (44a)
 - 4. God brought every single man safely to the island (44b)

Notice that God, who stilled the storm that threatened the disciples, brings Paul and the ship through this storm. This shows that the storms are not always taken out of the way. However, God promised Paul that he would stand before Caesar in Rome.

God could accomplish this through miracles and divine intervention, but most often He accomplishes his purpose through providence and circumstances.

Paul faced every hindrance possible and God brought him through it all. The centurion certainly didn't have to be kind to Paul. The centurion didn't have to protect Paul and the other prisoners from being killed (in fact, that is what would have happened in most cases). The outlook for their survival got worse and worse even though Paul continued telling the men that they would be alright. The storm blew the ship until they were lost at sea, the ship finally came close to land in the dark of night and was forced to stay there through the night, when they finally saw the beach, they ran into the rocks before they could get to it. The ship began breaking apart and they were forced to jump into the water. Even though each of the 276 men went into the swelling ocean on his own, everyone made it to shore safely.