

**Acts 27****Lesson 25  
Voyage to Rome—Shipwreck at Sea****Outline****I. From Caesarea to Fair Havens (vv. 1-12)****A. The way of travel (vv. 1-8)**

1. From Caesarea to Sidon (vv. 1-3)
2. Sailed over Cyprus to Myra (vv. 4-6)
3. Sailed to Cnidus, under Crete to Fair Havens (vv.7-8)

**B. Paul warned against continuing the voyage (vv. 9-12)**

1. Paul warned of losing the ship, cargo and lives (vv. 9-10)
2. They kept sailing (vv. 11-12)
  - a. The helmsman and the owner wanted to keep sailing (v. 11)
  - b. The harbor was not suitable to stay in winter (v. 12)

**II. From Fair Havens to Malta (vv. 13-44)****A. A storm at Sea (vv. 13-38)**

1. A strong wind and darkness scared all on board (vv. 13-20)
2. Paul warned that all must stay aboard ship (vv. 21-26)
3. As they sailed close to land, they put anchors down and waited for day (vv. 27-38)

**B. Shipwreck - yet all are saved (vv. 39-44)**

1. The ship ran aground and got stuck (vv. 39-41a)
2. The ship broke into pieces (v. 41b)
3. All escaped to land (vv. 42-44)

**Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter****Acts 27:41**

*But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground;  
and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable,  
but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves.*

Paul has appealed to Caesar, so he is being sent to Rome. In this chapter and the next, Paul is traveling from Caesarea, where he has been in prison for 2 years, to Rome where the book of Acts leaves him in prison.

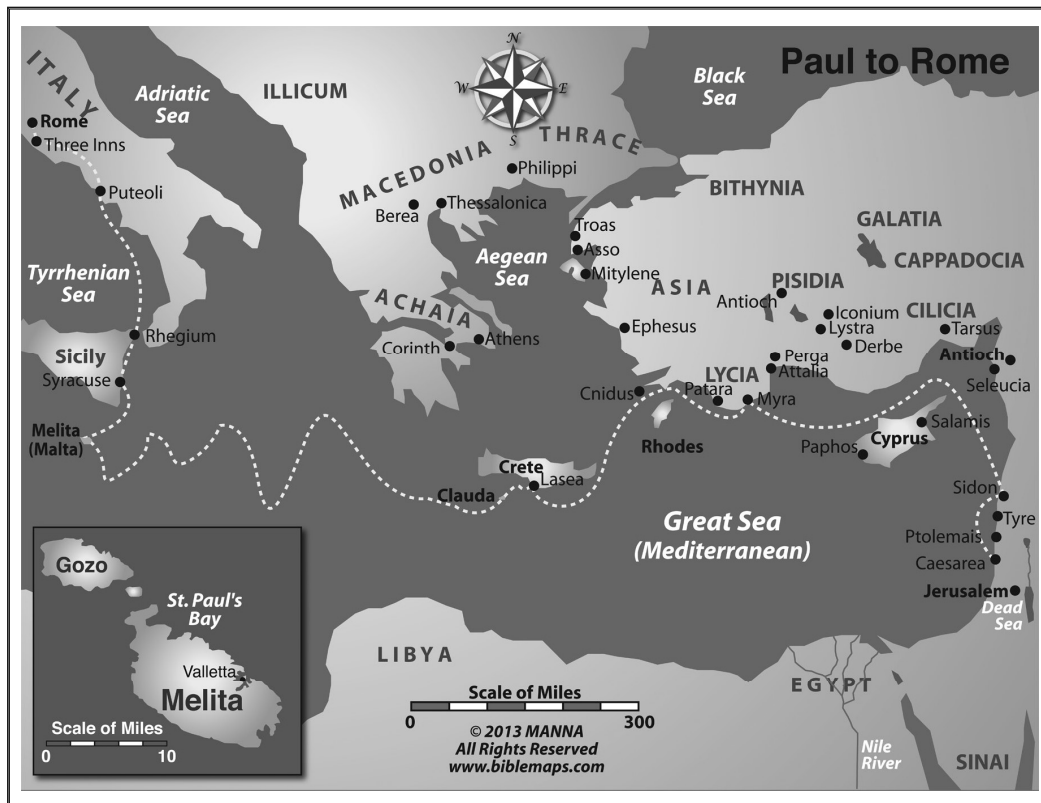
“This account of Paul’s voyage to Rome is like no other story in all the Bible. In it the reader’s attention is directed, not to spiritual truths and acts of devotion, but rather to such mundane things like ships and seas, winds and waves, islands, towns, and harbors. Altogether Luke has given a description of first century ships and seamanship surpassing anything else in extant Greek and Roman literature. A fascinating story of adventure, it stands also as a descriptive masterpiece.”<sup>1</sup>

This is a story of a servant of God in the midst of an extreme emergency. His faith remains strong. He does not cave under pressure.

### From Caesarea to Fair Havens (vv. 1-12)

*The way of travel* (vv. 1-8). Paul was put into the hands of Julius, a centurion, along with other prisoners (v. 1). They boarded a ship headed to Adramyttium, a seaport city in Mysia that opened toward the island of Lesbos. The intent was to travel along the coasts of Asia. Obviously, it didn’t turn out that way.

Notice the use of “we” starting at verse 2. Luke was with Paul on this trip.<sup>2</sup> Aristarchus from Thessalonica was also a companion on the trip.<sup>3</sup>



1 Garth L. Reese, *Acts*, 890.

2 See Acts 16:9-16; 20:5- 21:17.

3 He was one of two taken into the Theater at Ephesus (Acts 19:29). He was with Paul on his third journey (Acts 20:4). See also Col. 4:10; Philemon 23.

The first leg of the journey took them from Caesarea to Sidon. Julius gave Paul liberty to go to his friends who helped provide his needs (v. 3).

They sailed from Sidon going north of Cyprus using the island to block the strong west wind. Sailing off the coasts of Cilicia and Pamphylia they docked at Myra in Lycia (v. 5). At Myra they found a ship of Alexandria headed toward Italy and got on board (v. 6). From Myra they sailed slowly for many days and had troubles, but finally made it to Gnidus (v. 7). The strong winds would not allow them to follow the coasts of Asia, so they sailed around the east end of Crete (where Salmone is) and went to the south side of Crete to Fair Havens which was near Lasea where they stayed awhile (v. 8).

*Paul warned against continuing the voyage* (vv. 9-12). Continuing to sail would be dangerous since the Fast<sup>4</sup> was already past (v. 9). Paul warned that sailing on would likely end in loss of the ship, cargo and even the lives of those on board (v. 10). However, the centurion listened more to the helmsman and the owner of the ship than he did to Paul (v. 11). Since Fair Havens was not suitable to stay the winter, they set sail hoping to make it to Phoenix<sup>5</sup> and spend the winter there.

### **From Fair Havens to Malta (vv. 13-44)**

*A storm at Sea* (vv. 13-38). Leaving Fair Havens, they had a soft south wind and things looked good (v. 13). However, a tempestuous<sup>6</sup> head wind called Euroclydon (northeaster, RSV) arose and drove them off course (vv. 14-15). So they sailed around the eastern and southern sides of the island Clauda (less than 30 miles south of Crete). The life boat had to be brought on board, which was difficult to do in the storm (v. 16). The shipmen had to use cables to undergird the ship to keep it together.

They were fearful of running aground on the Syrtis Sands<sup>7</sup> so they struck sail<sup>8</sup> and the ship was driven by the wind and waves (v. 17). As they were violently battered by the storm, they threw the ships tackle overboard (v. 19). The darkness of the storm did not allow them to see the sun or stars for many days (14 days, v. 33). All hope to come out of the storm alive was fading (v. 20).

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4 The Day of Atonement which fell late September or early October.

5 This was west of Fair Havens on the southern part of Crete. Much discussion among commentators is given to "opening toward the southwest and northwest". "According to the English Revised Version, kata (NT:2596) means 'down:' 'looking down the southwest and northwest winds,' i.e., in the direction toward which they blow, namely, northeast and southeast. This latter view assumes that Phenice and Lutro are the same, which is uncertain" (M. R. Vincent, *Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

6 The NIV translates this "a wind of hurricane force."

7 The quicksands on the northern shore of Africa.

8 "...lowered or took down the mast, or the yards to which the sails were attached. There has been a great variety of interpretations proposed on this passage. The most probable is that they took down the mast, by cutting or otherwise, as is now done in storms at sea, to save the ship. They were at the mercy of the wind and waves, and their only hope was by taking away their sails" (Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).

Paul warned that all must stay aboard ship (vv. 21-26). He told them that they should have listened to him and not left Crete. Had they listened they wouldn't be in the midst of the disaster they were facing (v. 21). However, he urged them to be encouraged because no one would lose their life; only the ship would be lost (v. 22). He knew this because an angel (of the God to whom Paul belonged and whom he served)<sup>9</sup> appeared and told him not to be afraid for he would stand before Caesar (v. 24).<sup>10</sup> So, God assured him that he and all those on board with him would survive the storm. However, the ship would run aground on an island (v. 26).

Paul's response was "I believe God that it will be just as it was told me" (v. 25). What a statement of total trust, reliance and confidence in God. Paul chose to believe the words of God even when the circumstances around him were dismal, Paul chose to believe the words of God. We will face many circumstances in life wherein human wisdom will point in a different direction than the word of God. If we belong to God and serve God we will choose to believe God!

After two weeks of being driven and tossed around in the Adriatic Sea, the sailors thought they were getting close to land<sup>11</sup> and decided to take sounding<sup>12</sup> to see how close they were (vv. 27-28). The first sounding measured 20 fathoms (120 feet).<sup>13</sup> They went a little further and took another sounding which measured 15 fathoms (90 feet). Thinking that they could run aground, they dropped four anchors and wished for the daylight to come (v. 29). Meanwhile, some of the sailors were seeking to escape by letting down the life boat, saying they were putting out anchors (v. 30). Seeing this, Paul told the centurion and the soldiers that if these men didn't stay on board they would not be saved. So the soldiers cut the ropes to the life boat and let it fall (vv. 31-32).<sup>14</sup> As it drew near to daybreak, Paul urged all to take food for they had not eaten in 2 weeks (v. 33).<sup>15</sup> He stated that they needed to eat to have strength for what they were about to face (v. 34). The total of those on board was 276 people (v. 37). They all ate. When they were full, they threw the wheat into the sea to lighten the ship.

*Shipwreck - yet all are saved* (vv. 39-44). When the sun rose, they saw land they didn't recognize, but saw a bay with a beach. So, they planned to run the ship into the bay (v. 39). The anchors were left in the sea. The main sail was hoisted and they headed for shore (v. 40).

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9 This is a description of total devotion and commitment to God. Paul did not serve a god that belonged to him. He belonged to God (Rom. 12:1). His god does not serve him, rather he serves his God (Gal. 2:20).

10 Paul had already been told this (Acts 23:11). There are times we need to be reminded of what we've been told and already know.

11 How could they sense they were close to land when it was in the darkness of the storm as well as at midnight? Perhaps they could hear the breakers crashing against the shore (F. F. Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 490).

12 This is done by dropping a line with a weight to measure how deep the water is.

13 A fathom is 6 feet.

14 By this point Paul has gained the attention of at least Julius, the centurion, and his soldiers.

15 "No regular meal. It cannot mean that they had lived entirely without food, but that they had been in so much danger, were so constantly engaged, and had been so anxious about their safety, that they had taken no regular meal, or that what they had taken had been at irregular intervals, and had been a scanty allowance" (Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft)

The ship struck a sandbar where two seas met while they were still some distance from shore (v. 41).<sup>16</sup> The prow (front) of the ship stuck fast in the sand, while the stern (back) of the ship was broken into pieces by the violent waves (v. 41). The soldiers were going to kill all the prisoners lest they escape. However, Julius, wanting to save Paul stopped them from doing so. So the centurion commanded those who could swim to jump overboard and swim to shore. Those who couldn't swim hung on to boards and pieces of the wreckage to make it to shore. The chapter ended by saying that they all made it safely to shore just as God had told Paul.

### Questions

1. Who is with Paul on this trip? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. How was Paul treated by Julius? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What time of the year did Paul's voyage take place? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. What was Paul's warning at Fair Havens? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. Why did they leave Fair Havens? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. What measures were taken to prevent disaster at sea? \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. What did Luke and the rest of the passengers think would happen at sea? \_\_\_\_\_  
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<sup>16</sup> A sandbar which is washed up on both sides by the two seas.

8. How long did the storm last? \_\_\_\_\_

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9. What did Paul tell those on board with him and how did he know what he told them? \_\_

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10. Think of some practical applications of Paul's statement, "I believe God" (v. 25). List some circumstances in life wherein human wisdom will point in a different direction than the word of God. \_\_\_\_\_

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