

Acts 26:30: *'And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: ³¹ And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. ³² Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.'*

Acts 27:1: *'And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. ² And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. ³ And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.'*

And so, Paul is finally on his way to Rome, the heart of the Empire where he will evangelize Caesar's household and write several of his Epistles to be preserved for us down through these many centuries.

Verse 4: *'And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. ⁵ And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.'*

Since a centurion commands of 100 soldiers, we can assume they are here, under his command to safely escort Paul to Rome. Festus is well aware of the Jews' lust for Paul's blood and he also knows that he would be held accountable before Caesar if Paul were killed while under Roman protection. A ship large enough for so many was necessary and as soon as a Roman centurion decided on which ship they would board, there would be no argument from any ship's captain or owner.

The first ship commandeered took them the relatively short distance to Sidon where the captain may have been taking on additional cargo while Paul was allowed to visit the believers of Sidon after which they continued on to Myra, on the S.W. coast of Turkey, which may have been that ship's final destination and, so, another ship was needed to continue on toward Rome.

Verse 6: *'And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.'*

This ship appears to perhaps have a regular route throughout the Mediterranean; its home port is Alexandria, Egypt; it would be like our modern long haul truckers: pick up a trailer full of goods in one city, haul it across several states to offload and pick up a different load to then be taken to another far off city and on and on. This ship's route is Egypt to Turkey to Italy and probably many ports along the way; always looking for another load to make more money for the ship's owner; the more the captain makes for the owner, the more the captain is paid by the owner. Now they are really on their way to Rome.

Verse 7: *'And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; ⁸ And, hardly*

passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.'

Remember, ships at this time, unless manned by slaves with oars, are wholly dependent upon wind for locomotion; if the winds were at your stern, you were good to go; if not, it's very difficult to get to where you want to be. However, real sailors understand how to sail forward even in the face of headwinds; it's called 'tacking' which involves moving back and forth, zigzagging; it's slow going but it works. In fact, it's far better to be sailing into the wind than to have no wind at all, being in the *doldrums*: no winds and no movement.

This particular Alexandrian ship is having a tough time traveling west; they finally made it to 'fair havens,' on the south side of Crete which would have been a natural inlet port protected from fierce weather. Crete is about halfway from Caesarea to Italy.

If Julius had been wise, he'd have insisted upon staying on Crete, even longer than they did, until the weather was better for sailing but he was not wise...

Verse 9: *'Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past,'*

'The fast was already past': this refers to the *Day of Atonement* which falls in the fall - our October. Late fall, early winter - bad weather... not the best time for sailing. The Holy Spirit has warned Paul that trouble lies ahead...

Verse 9b: *'Paul admonished them,¹⁰ And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.'*

First, Paul 'perceives' that great danger is ahead if they continue on: the ship, the cargo and the lives of men. Earlier, we saw that Julius, the centurion, was kind enough to allow Paul to disembark and join other believers in Sidon... will Julius be wise enough to listen to Paul's warning at this time?

Verse 11: *'Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.'*

Notice: the owner of the ship is on board; it's possible he actually lives on the ship, reigning over his own little kingdom, the man in charge of everything but we see that the one who's really in command is the Roman centurion; everyone submits to Rome. The ship's captain and the ship's owner say: 'Let's go, we can make it!' Paul, the lowly prisoner who hears directly from God, says: 'Don't sail; extreme danger lies ahead!' The centurion, who is most anxious to get this mission over and accomplished, wanting to spend as little time as possible out on a boat... he is a land soldier, trained to kill people and break things on land, not at sea!

Verse 12: *'And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west'*

Fair haven is not large enough or protected enough to withstand winter storms.

Phenice/Phoenix/foynix is a little more than 50 miles west along the southern coast of Crete but was known as a larger and more protected port in which to spend the winter and, so, off they go, happy in knowing that the captain and owner always know best...

Verse 13: *'And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.'*

Good news! A soft south wind is ready to take us to Phenice; we'll be there in no time at all so just relax and enjoy the voyage; after all, don't they say that it's the voyage, rather than the destination that's important?

Verse 14: *'But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.*

¹⁵ *'And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.'*

Euroclydon/yoorokloo'dohn is a south east wind causing large waves and violent agitation; it is the last thing a sailor wants! The ship became caught and unmanageable in the storm; all they could do is let the wind take them where it will. These are wooden ships, far less seaworthy than those of 1500 years later which could carry men across all the oceans.

Now this is beginning to be reminiscent of Jonah's story but in that case, Job was running as far from God's direction as he possible could; here, Paul is submissive to God's leading but carnal man will always try to have his own way, even to his own destruction.

Verse 16: *'And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: ¹⁷ Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.'*

They tried for protection against the wind on the leeward side of Clauda, the side protected from the wind. They worked feverishly to bring the boat up onto deck; this is the small boat used to ferry men back and forth to land. They used supporting cables to hopefully hold the ship together. To keep from being grounded upon a sandbar, they lowered the sail, allowing the wind to drive them.

Verse 18: *'And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; ¹⁹ And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.'*

As their last resort, they began to throw everything overboard in hope that the lighter ship might just make it safely through this terrible storm.

Verse 20: *'And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.'*

The storm lasted many days and nights until, finally, all hope was lost: the fear of every sailor: we are going to die out here in this dark, dastardly sea.

But God is still, and always, in complete control of all things.

Verse 21: *'But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. ²² And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. ²³ For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, ²⁴ Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. ²⁵ Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. ²⁶ Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.'*

Paul once again brings the entire scene back into focus upon God. Remember, before they set sail, Paul had warned: *'Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.'* He'd said, *hurt and much damage* to our lives but not that anyone would perish. They are all beginning to really hurt and feel damage; every man on the ship, save Paul, is now terrified for his life, being certain of their own impending death and would be crying out to their own 'god, or gods.'

Now notice what the angel of God told Paul: not only would they all live but even more, that *'God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.'* I wouldn't be a bit surprised to learn that the Holy Spirit had been, over the past many days, preparing all 275 men on that ship to be wholly ready for the Gospel presented by the 276th man, the man of God *'whose I am, and whom I serve.'* (We'll learn how many men in verse 37.)

Verse 27: *'But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; ²⁸ And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.'*

Fourteen nights is a *'fortnight,'* 2 weeks terrorized on a dark and churning sea; that's enough to cause anyone to hunger for the security of God's Salvation.

'They sounded,' today, a ship's 'sounder' sends out a pulse to echo back to tell the water's depth. Then, what it meant was that the sounder is the man who drops a weighted line to measure the water's depth. He would sound out, 'Mark 20 fathoms!' One fathom is 6 feet, about the height of a man. They all know that the water is 120 feet deep: far more than plenty in which to quickly drown.

By the way... Samuel Clemens, author of Tom Sawyer, had worked on a riverboat in his younger years. As the sounder, he would call out, *'mark once'* for one fathom; *'mark thrice'* for 3 fathoms and for 2: *'Mark Twain!'*

All these men are terrified, expecting to soon drown in 120 feet of dark, cold sea. We're not told that Paul preaches the Gospel but having studied his life of ministry we can certainly assume he would take advantage of every opportunity and situation.

Verse 29: *'Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. ³⁰ And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,'*

For fear of drifting into the rocks, they set four anchors from the rear and then some of the sailors, selfishly try to drop the smaller landing boat, pretending to drop anchors from the front, plan to steal the boat and sneak off leaving all the rest to drown.

Verse 31: *'Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. ³² Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.'*

Now, finally, the centurion is ready to put his faith in Paul which is, of course, the next step in his salvation. Paul will write: *'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.'* 1Cor 11:1 He orders his soldiers to cut the ropes holding the boat... *'Now we trust Paul and his God!'*