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By Dan Maines

Acts 27

Acts 27:1-2

Now when it was decided that we would set sail for Italy, they proceeded to turn Paul and some other prisoners over to a centurion of the Augustan cohort, named Julius. And we boarded an Adramyttian ship that was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, and put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica.

† Luke again uses "we," showing his presence. Aristarchus also accompanied Paul, demonstrating loyalty even in chains. The

Augustan cohort was an elite Roman unit, confirming the importance of this mission.

Acts 27:3

The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care.

† God granted Paul favor with Julius, the centurion. Roman law allowed such leniency for citizens under escort.

Acts 27:4-6

From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it.

† The Alexandrian ship was likely a grain vessel transporting wheat from Egypt to Rome, a vital supply route.

† Historical records, including inscriptions, confirm Rome's dependence on Egyptian grain fleets.

Acts 27:7-8

When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us to go farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone; and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

† Luke's precise nautical details match known geography, further proving his eyewitness testimony.

Acts 27:9-10

When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul started admonishing them, saying, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will

certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."

† The "fast" refers to the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), placing the voyage in late autumn, when Mediterranean sailing was risky. Paul, though a prisoner, warned them prophetically.

Acts 27:11-12

But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul. Since the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

† Human reasoning prevailed over divine warning. Paul's word was dismissed in favor of sailors' expertise.

Acts 27:13-15

When a moderate south wind came up, thinking that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, closer to shore. But before very long a violent wind, called Euraquilo, rushed down from the land; and when the ship was caught in it and could not head into the wind, we gave way to it and let ourselves be driven along.

† The dreaded northeaster, Euraquilo, was a known terror to ancient sailors. Their overconfidence led to disaster.

Acts 27:16-17

Running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, we were able to get the ship's boat under control only with difficulty. After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and let themselves be driven along in this way.

† Ancient sailors sometimes "undergirded" ships by passing ropes around the hull to prevent breaking apart. Luke's description matches maritime practices of the time.

Acts 27:18-20

The next day as we were being violently tossed by the storm, they began to jettison the cargo; and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.

† The storm stripped them of all human hope. Without stars, ancient navigation was impossible.

Acts 27:21-22

When many had lost their appetites, Paul then stood among them and said, "Men, you should have followed my advice and not set sail from Crete, and thereby spared yourselves this damage and loss. And yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, only of the ship."

† Paul's authority rose as God's word proved true. Despite despair, Paul offered hope.

Acts 27:23-24

"For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong, whom I also serve, came to me, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has graciously granted you all those who are sailing with you.'"

† God's providence was declared: Paul would stand before Caesar, and all lives on the ship were preserved through him.

Acts 27:25-26

"Therefore, men, keep up your courage, for I believe God that it

will turn out exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on a certain island."

† Faith in God's promise brought courage amid disaster.

Acts 27:27-29

But when the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven around in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors began to suspect that some land was approaching them; and they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and a little farther on, they found it to be fifteen fathoms. And fearing that we might run aground somewhere on rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and prayed for daybreak.

† Ancient soundings with weighted lines confirmed approaching land. Fear gripped them, but Paul held to God's promise.

Acts 27:30-32

But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the ship's boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men remain on the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved." Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it fall away.

† Paul's leadership became decisive. Survival depended on obedience to God's word.

Acts 27:33-36

Until the day was about to dawn, Paul kept encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing. Therefore, I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your survival; for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish." Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all, and he broke it and began to eat. All of them were encouraged and they themselves

also took food.

† Paul gave thanks and broke bread, foreshadowing the Lord's Supper imagery. His faith uplifted the entire crew.

Acts 27:37-38

We were 276 people on the ship in all. When they had eaten enough, they began lightening the ship by throwing the wheat out into the sea.

† The specific number of passengers shows Luke's attention to detail. Throwing the wheat, their cargo, showed total surrender of wealth to survive.

Acts 27:39-41

When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did notice a bay with a beach, and they resolved to run the ship onto it if they could. And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach. But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the bow stuck firmly and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the force of the waves.

† The shipwreck fulfilled Paul's prophecy. They lost the vessel but their lives were spared.

Acts 27:42-44

Now the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would swim away and escape; but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from accomplishing their intention, and gave orders that those who could swim were to jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest were to follow, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And in this way it happened that they all were brought safely to

land.

† Roman policy demanded execution of prisoners to prevent escape, but God moved Julius to spare Paul and all with him. Every word of God was fulfilled.

How it applies to us today

† God's promises are certain, even when storms rage and hope seems lost.

† Human wisdom and power cannot save, but obedience to God's word preserves life.

† Faith strengthens not only believers but also those around them.

† Christ, through His servants, still brings hope in the darkest storms of life.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

Source Index

† Josephus, Antiquities 20.8.9 – Jewish plots against opponents

† Roman grain fleets – Historical records of Egyptian wheat trade to Rome

† Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts – Paul's example of courage in storms

† Ancient maritime practices – Undergirding ships and navigation soundings

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