

The Book of Acts / The History of the Apostles

Lesson 70 – Acts 21-28 – In Defense Part 5

INTRODUCTION / REVIEW

Acts 27 takes up 44 verses and sits right between Paul's court scenes (Chapters 24–26) and his time sharing the gospel in Rome (Chapter 28). Luke was there himself ("we" in 1–2, 15, 37), so his details are real and trustworthy. This took place around AD 59 while Festus was in charge (Acts 24:27). This isn't just a sea story; it's a picture of God's hope, using the wild Mediterranean Sea to get His message out.

Back then, big grain ships from Egypt (v. 6) hauled food to feed Rome's huge crowds, but storms after the fall holy day sank tons of them.

Luke uses sea terms like "fathoms" (v. 28) that match what Josephus wrote about his own storm (*Life* 14–16).

Unlike Jonah running from God's Presence, Paul's trip shows him heading right where God wants, facing kings to tell about Jesus. This account is not about a divine storm but the faithfulness of God and Paul in the midst of peril.

Getting Underway (Acts 27:1–8)

It starts with "as it was decided" (ὥς δὲ ἐκρίθη; *hōs de ekrithē*; passive decision implying higher will; "when it was determined"); the quiet way of saying God is behind it, like in Acts 16:6-10 when the Spirit reroutes Paul's plans.

Paul, locked up but front and center, heads out with Julius from the "Augustan cohort" (elite imperial unit; "cohort of Augustus"), top Roman guards transporting someone who had done no violence or threats against Rome.

Aristarchus joins up, showing Paul's team sticks with him through the difficulty and danger. In Sidon, Julius gives a bit of "kindness" (φιλανθρωπία; *philanthrōpian*; humanitarian act; "favor") by letting Paul see friends who help him out. The method of God's care is in the fellow believers who help in times of need. Rough "winds" push them behind Cyprus.

This loops past spots where Paul started churches (Acts 13:4-12). There is no indication that they see anybody, but this would have been nostalgic and a good story for all the shipmates. At Myra, they switch to an Egyptian grain hauler (This ship is as big as a football field, holding 2,500 tons). Sailing slowly for a long time, they sailed off Crete to Fair Havens near Lasea; time is dragging on, with the sea not being very cooperative.

The Risky Move (Acts 27:9–13)

The Fast day goes by (probably meaning Yom Kippur), meaning late October, which is prime time for rough weather and shipwrecks. Paul sees trouble; "I perceive" (θεωρῶ; *theōrō*; perceive, observe) and warns of "damage" (ὑβρις; *hubris*; violent loss; "injury"). But they listen to the captain and owner, and vote for Phoenix (better spot on Crete's south side). A soft "south wind" (νότος; *nōtou*; gentle southerly; "soft south wind") tricks them into setting sail.

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This downhill breeze from the hills feels safe but leads straight to trouble. Old logs say most trips like this failed; Luke calls out the group-think trap (supposing they had attained their purpose).

Everything Falls Apart (Acts 27:14–20)

The storm is a northeaster, it is a “violent wind” (τυφωνικός; typhōnikos; whirlwind gale; “tempestuous,” a northeast blast locally called a “eurokludon”) and it hits hard. The ship can't fight the wind and is carried along forcefully, not facing the wind, so they give in and drift. Claudia island (20 miles off) gives a break, they grab the “lifeboat” (σκάφη; skaphē; small vessel; “dinghy”) before it bangs loose.

That tow-behind dinghy (20 feet long) was their backup, but pulling it up destroys the safety nets. Fearing the shallows of Syrtis, known as a ship-eater, swallowing 400 boats a year, this makes them “undergird” (bind with cables; “pass ropes under”). They drop the “gear” (σταυρόν; stauron; sail supports; “lowering the gear”) and start dumping the cargo, then the tackle and tools to be able to survive on a ship.

The storm left them with no “sun or stars,” meaning total darkness in the storm. All hope of being saved is utterly removed. Luke builds it with sounds of wind, no light, and wild shakes. The situation is dire, but remember that Paul was promised that he would make it to Rome.

The Voice of Reason (Acts 27:21–26)

Paul stands up and speaks to the hungry crowd: I told you so: “It should have been” (ἔδει; edei; past necessity; “you ought to have,” looking back on ignored advice). This is not to demean them or for Paul to build himself up; rather, it was done to have them heed his next advice.

Then the turn: “Take courage” (εὐθυμέω euthymeō; be of good cheer; keep courage), no one dies, just the boat.

God's messenger shows up: Paul tells them of a divine messenger from the God whom Paul serves, sent a messenger stating that he must stand and face Caesar, and God “granted” (graciously given; “has granted to you”), promising to save all 276 lives. Paul reiterates it: I believe God that all will happen as I have been told.

That count of 276 mixes crew, riders, guards, a slice of all kinds of people saved by Paul's link to God. As an apostle, this disaster is going to be an opportunity for the furtherance of the Gospel.

Cutting Loose (Acts 27:27–32)

Night 14 of being adrift in the Adriatic Sea, they check the depth of the water drops from 20 to 15 fathoms. They would have done this with a rope with a weight. They drop “anchors” and wait for daylight to see if they can find land. The crew tries sneaking off using the lifeboat, but Paul stops them: *remain in the ship* (stay aboard; “unless you stay in the ship, you will not be

The Book of Acts / The History of the Apostles

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saved, you will not survive). So, the centurion orders the soldiers to slice the lines to the lifeboat.

The Word Comes True (Acts 27:33–44)

Paul pushes food for "salvation" (σωτηρίας; sōtērias; deliverance; preservation). He "gave thanks" (εὐχαριστήσας; eucharistēsas; express gratitude; "gave thanks," v. 35) over bread. They dump more to lighten the load. They run aground and were stuck. Guards think of killing the prisoners, but the commander who wants to bring Paul safely argues against it, and they eventually relent.

Some swim, some go on boards, but get everyone to shore. Crete's bay is the suspected spot. This event demonstrates how God is faithful to His promises, with Paul as the line for unexpected breaks.

Insights into Paul

Paul's encounter with the brutal Mediterranean storm in Acts 27 stands as one of the most vivid "terrifying events" in his story. Yet amid the chaos, Paul's actions reveal a mental attitude of remarkable calm, bold leadership, and confidence in God's promises. He warns of danger (v. 10), encourages the crew (v. 22), shares a divine promise (vv. 23–25), and even leads a meal of thanks (v. 35). To understand this poise, we remember Paul's history of perils in Acts and his Epistles (2 Corinthians 11:23–28), alongside God's repeated rescues. Paul views trials not as random threats but as arenas where God's message is given opportunity.

Paul's life was a gauntlet of dangers that could have shattered anyone, yet they honed his outlook from terror-struck persecutor to fearless apostle.

- **Escape from Damascus**
- **Stoning in Lystra**
- **Philippian Jailing and Earthquake**
- **Riot in Ephesus**
- **Shipwrecks and Beatings**

In his letters, Paul frames these as "light and momentary afflictions" compared to "eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17), revealing a godly and eternal mindset: Early terror turned into glorying in weaknesses, because "power is perfected in weakness." By Acts 27, Paul wasn't naïve; he knew storms could kill, but his history told of a God that is bigger than peril.

Throughout Paul's saga, God's direct interventions built a mental framework of reliance, not recklessness. These weren't vague feelings but an understanding built upon not only his experience but upon visions, angels, and the very words of Jesus, fostering a "God is with me" assurance (Acts 18:9-10, 23:11).

Paul had resilient courage, action in the midst of fear. He knew that he would make it to Rome, but it did not mean he knew how. His words were indicative of an expectation of God's faithfulness. Paul used that to lead and give others courage in the midst of their expected demise.