

Introduction

1. As we dive into Acts 27 today, we are on the final leg of Paul's journey from Jerusalem to Rome
2. As if he hasn't faced enough trials along the way, this leg of the journey is the most harrowing
3. Throughout the story, it seems as if Paul will never make it to Rome, and will likely die in the process
4. From a human perspective, Paul's trip appeared doomed from the start and at times it appeared all hope was lost
5. However, from a divine perspective, we see how there was reason for courage and opportunities for trust

- A. From a human perspective, Paul's trip to Rome appeared to be doomed from the start (READ Acts 27:1-13)

**show map

1. After meeting with Festus and Agrippa, they agreed Paul should be sent to Italy (Rome) because he had exercised his right as a Roman citizen by appealing to be tried by Caesar (Nero at this time)
2. So, they sent him on his way under the care of a Roman centurion named Julius, along with some other prisoners; he was also accompanied by Luke and another one of Paul's traveling companions from Thessalonica named Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; 20:4; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24)
3. The fastest way to Rome was by sea and a trip from Caesarea to Rome under normal conditions would take about five weeks:
 - a. In Paul's day, there weren't any passenger ships; instead, you went to the harbor and found a merchant ship traveling to where you needed to go
 - b. Longer trips like Paul's would involve multiple ships and smaller trips between ports (sort of like layovers when flying today)
 - c. Show the route Paul likely would have taken between Achaia and Crete, along the coast of Macedonia and toward Italy
4. Paul's trip was anything but normal, however:
 - a. They were starting out in the Fall which made travel more dangerous, especially the closer it got to Winter
 - b. The first problem they encountered is in v. 4 where the winds were not in their favor; so, they had to travel north of Cyprus along the coast of Cilicia to be sheltered from the wind
 - c. The second problem is in v. 7 where the trip took much longer than expected; it should have been a short trip but instead they "**sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty**"
 - d. The third problem is in v. 8; because the winds would not permit them to go any further east toward Achaia and then Italy, they had to sail south and go under the island of Crete, against "**with difficulty**"
 - e. The fourth problem is mentioned in v. 9:
 - 1) The journey had already taken way longer than expected (at this point it had been approximately three months), and it was now too dangerous to sail

- 2) The most dangerous time to sail was from early September to early November, and based on Luke's comment about the fast being over (the Day of Atonement), they were already deep into October
 - 3) Due to the dangers, the shipping industry was almost entirely shut down at this time of year
- f. This leads to the fifth problem on this leg of the journey, and it's mentioned in vs. 11-13:
- 1) Paul tried to warn the captain and the centurion that proceeding any further at this time was far too dangerous and could lead to damage and great loss to not only the ship, but it's cargo, and even human life
 - 2) Why might Paul know this? He was likely a seasoned sailor due to his extensive travel; heck, he had already been shipwrecked at least twice and spent a day and a half in the water according to 2 Corinthians 11:25-26)
 - 3) The problem was, the harbor they were in was not suitable for docking the ship through the Winter—it was likely a smaller port without much protection from winds and waves
 - 4) As a result, the captain and the centurion ignored Paul's warning and decided to set sail for another port on Crete that was better suited for sitting out the Winter
 - 5) As we'll learn next, they would have been better off staying put
5. Takeaway: from a human perspective, things didn't look so good for Paul; his trip looked doomed from the start
- a. How often do we face something similar?
 - b. When things get difficult or don't go the way we plan, do we begin to fret or think that maybe God's not quite in control?
 - c. Do we only look at things from our human perspective and allow that to dictate how we view the situation or circumstances?

<p>B. From a human perspective, all hope of being saved was gone (READ Acts 27:14-20)</p>

1. Almost immediately after setting sail, they were hit by a violent storm:
 - a. The NASB reads a "**there rushed down from the land a violent wind called Euraquilo**":
 - 1) The Greek word for wind here is typhonikos which is where we get our word for typhoon; it was a violent hurricane-force wind
 - 2) Euraquilo is the Greek word for a nor'easter which refers to storms that form with strong northeast winds, swirling clouds, and moisture drawn up from the sea—we see these often form during late Fall and Winter in the Northeastern United States
 - 3) In the Mediterranean Sea, they were the most feared of all storms
2. Ships in Paul's day were not designed to sail directly into such violent winds so all they could do was allow themselves to be driven along by the storm, and do their best to protect the ship:
 - a. Day 1:
 - 1) They pulled the lifeboat up onto the deck of the ship (likely to keep it from slamming into the ship and damaging it and the ship)
 - 2) They then used cables to hold the ship together in case they ran aground in the shallows around Syrtis which was known for its shifting sandbars—it's unclear exactly what they did here but there were four different methods used in Paul's day including running cables underneath the ship from one side to the other
 - 3) They let down a sea anchor to help slow their speed

- b. Day 2: the storm was still raging so they jettisoned the cargo to lighten the ship to raise it up in the water
 - c. Day 3: to further lighten the ship, they jettisoned the ships tackle (gear)
3. Luke doesn't state specifically how long the storm lasted except that they went "**many days**" with the sky so dark that they couldn't see the sun nor the stars—since the sun and stars were used for navigation, this would have left them without any way of knowing where they were or how far off course they had been driven
 4. As a result, Luke writes, "**from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned**" (20)
 5. Takeaway: that's the way it is when we face difficult circumstances or challenges and only look at them from an earthly perspective:
 - a. We can't imagine how we will survive
 - b. We lose hope and might even give up
 - c. This is precisely why James reminds us of the spiritual side of trials: "**consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance, and let endurance have it's perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing**" (James 1:2-4)
 - d. In other words, when we look at trials from a human perspective we can lose hope, but if we look at them from a divine perspective (e.g. God's perspective), the result is quite the opposite
 - e. And, this is precisely what we see next with Paul and his companions

C. From a divine perspective, there was reason for courage (READ Acts 27:21-26)

1. Twice Paul calls on his shipmates to have courage:
 - a. V. 22: "**keep up your courage**"
 - b. V. 25: again he says, "**keep up your courage**"
2. Little had change with their earthly circumstances:
 - a. The storm may have settled, but they were still being driven about by the sea (later in v. 27)
 - b. They had been at sea likely between two and three months (on what should have been a five-week trip)
 - c. They were hundreds of miles off course and based on later verses appear not to have known exactly where they were
 - d. They had also "**gone a long time without food**"—they still had food on board because it's mentioned later so it may be that they were simply too seasick to have eaten
 - e. From a human perspective, why shouldn't they be afraid? How could Paul call on them to have courage?
3. It's simple: Paul had a divine perspective because he knew something they did not:
 - a. An angel of the Lord had appeared to him and informed him that while the ship would be destroyed running aground near and island, there would be no loss of human life
 - b. Paul had no need to be afraid because God's plan was that he "**must stand before Caesar**"
 - c. God had even "**granted**" to Paul all those who had been traveling with him:
 - 1) This suggests that Paul may have been praying for not only his safety but theirs and God answered that prayer

- 2) This is in line with Paul’s warning in 27:10 and his reminder that they should have listened to him in 27:21—both express his concern for the safety of all involved
- d. Paul’s courage was based in the conviction that he could “**believe God**” and that “**it would turn out exactly as [he had] been told**” (25)—that’s a divine perspective!
- 4. Takeaway: to develop courage in times of trial, we need to change our perspective from a human one to a divine one:
 - a. What matters is not our circumstances or situation
 - b. What matters is what God is doing in those circumstances and situation
 - c. At a minimum, He’s going to use them to make us “**perfect and complete**” as James wrote
 - d. Beyond that, He may have a more specific purpose and plan for what we face much like he did with Paul
 - e. And, like we’ve seen with Paul time and time again, we might ask how God might use the trials we face to further advance the Gospel and lead people to Christ

D. From a divine perspective, there were opportunities to trust the Lord (Acts 27:27-44)

- 1. After two weeks adrift at sea, there was a glimmer of hope (READ Acts 27:27-44):
 - a. The sailors suspected they were approaching land, so they began taking soundings which confirmed their suspicions
 - b. They dropped four anchors from the stern (back) of the ship to slow their speed out of fear they may run aground on some hidden reefs
 - c. While doing this, Paul discovered that some of the sailors went to the bow (back) under the guise of putting out more anchors, let down the lifeboat, and were planning to escape:
 - 1) He issued a warning to the centurion and the soldiers: “**Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved**” (31):
 - a) The implication here was that while Paul and his companions would be saved, the centurion and the soldiers would not
 - b) Whether Luke intended it or not, there’s some interesting reflection here back to the Flood where only those on the Ark were saved; the same would be the case here as only those who stayed on the ship would be saved
 - 2) Heeding Paul’s warning, the soldiers cut the lines to the lifeboat and let it float away (32)
- 2. While it was still night, Paul encouraged the men to eat (READ 27:33-38):
 - a. Luke records that they hadn’t eaten for at least 14 days—likely due to sea sickness or stress?
 - b. So, Paul encouraged them to eat so they wouldn’t die of starvation and reminded them that “**not a hair from the head of any of you will perish**” (33-34)
 - c. He then took bread, gave thanks to God in front of all of them, broke it and ate it
 - d. We finally learn how many were on the ship—276, and they all ate and were encouraged
 - e. After eating, they threw the rest of the wheat overboard to lighten the ship even further
- 3. As the sun came up, they finally arrived safely on land just as God had promised, though not necessarily how they might have wanted to (READ 27:39-44):
 - a. They saw a bay with a beach, but didn’t recognize the island (they were over 400 miles off course)

- b. As they aimed the ship today the bay, they ran aground on a reef and the ship began to break apart
 - c. Fearing that the prisoners would escape, the soldiers planned to kill them but the commander intervened because he wanted to spare Paul's life and safely deliver him to Rome
 - d. Ultimately, all the men were saved—some swam to shore, while others held on to planks and other pieces of the ship
4. Takeaway: at the beginning of this section, I stated that from a divine perspective there were opportunities to trust the Lord:
- a. There are three times in these few verses where all the men on the ship had to trust the Lord through the promise he made to Paul:
 - 1) The first is when Paul told them they had to stay on the ship to be saved—they demonstrated trust when they cut away the lifeboat and let it sail away
 - 2) The second is after they ate—they demonstrated trust when they threw their only remaining food overboard into the sea without knowing when their next meal would be or where it would come from
 - 3) The third is when they ran aground on the reef—they demonstrated trust when they jumped into the sea and started swimming to shore; this was especially true of those who could not swim
 - b. I'm not suggesting all of these men were saved spiritually, but every one of these actions required that they trust what Paul told them—that God would preserve their physical lives
 - c. Having a divine perspective is like that—it almost always requires that we trust the Lord