

## The Great Storm

### Acts 27

The 27<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts could easily qualify as one of the greatest action stories of all time. For sheer adventure it would rival the non-fiction “Perfect Storm,” by Sebastian Junger. The true story of Paul’s Euroclydon experience on the open Mediterranean Sea is better because it has a good ending. On a more spiritual level, it has to be one of the greatest “faith-boosts” found in Scripture. In Psalm 107:23-31, we see another great storm explaining that those experiencing it are “...at their wits end” (Psalm 107:27b). Acts 27 tells how Paul among the 275 others made it through (only with the Lord’s help) when they were at their wits end. Let’s “batten down the hatches,” and take a ride with Paul, his comrades, the sailors, soldiers and convicts for the ride of our lives!

### **I. THE PATHOS OF FRIENDS**

#### Acts 27:1-3

Festus has delivered Paul over to Julius, the man now responsible for getting Paul to Rome. Paul has appealed to Caesar. Acts 25:12: “Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.”

#### A. Pathos of Old Friends

Aristarchus and Luke are with Paul. Paul had some degree of preferential treatment and was therefore allowed to travel with two friends or slaves. Proverbs 27:9: “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.”

#### B. Pathos of New Friends

The Bible says that, “...Julius courteously entreated Paul...(Acts 27:3:b). The word “courteously,” is translated from the Greek word φιλανθρωπως (*philanthrōpōs*). This is from where we receive our word philanthropy. It did not take Paul long to make new friends. Even this Roman Centurion could perceive the honest character and integrity of one who is worthy of trust. Julius knew that a Roman soldier who had been given charge of a prisoner was responsible to take the prisoner’s penalty if that prisoner escapes. Yet even with that knowledge, he allows Paul to take leave to find friends who could help him.

#### C. Pathos of Healing Friends

Julius allows Paul to refresh himself with friends in this locality. The word “refresh,” bears the connotation that Paul is sick and needs medical attention. No matter who we are, we all need friends.

### **II. THE PATHS OF THE SEA**

#### Acts 27:4-15

After arriving at Myra, the mixed passenger manifest is now required to get on a different ship to make the trip to Rome. The ship is coming from Egypt, no doubt loaded with grain because Egypt was the largest grower and exporter of grain in the world at this time. Myra, the southern most city in Asia Minor, was the port where grain was taken to be distributed to places in Asia and Europe. This ship from Alexandria is headed to Rome now with 276 passengers (Acts 27:37) as well as grain.

It was said there was a time in the early fall, that sailing the open sea was dangerous. Then beyond early November sailing the open sea would be considered suicide. Paul spoke prophetically in Acts 27:10: "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." According to Acts 27:11, the centurion chose to take the opinion of the captain and owner of the ship, perceiving that the old experienced "salty dog" knew better. But the caution light erected by Paul was ignored. As the weather was intensifying, the captain would rather winter, if need be, in Phenice on the island of Crete. When the south wind blew softly the captain read that as a "go-ahead" to sail on. Little did he or the other passengers, except for Paul, understand that the soft wind was soon to become the mighty furious Northeaster, called Euroclydon, which is a hurricane. This storm is defined as tempestuous, which is translated from τυφωνικός (*typhōnikos*) from where we get our word, typhoon.

God's desire is to give Paul the desire, not only of Paul's heart, but the very desire of His heart. God did not let everyone settle down for the winter months, but sent a storm to drive Paul and the team to their desired haven.

The Bible speaks of paths that God has placed in the seas: Psalm 77:11-19; Isaiah 43:2, 16. Although it is going to be one of the roughest, if not the roughest recorded storm that anyone has ever experienced, it is overseen by the Lord, who has blazed the paths of the seas. The little boat (dingy) that was customarily pulled from behind the ship as a rescue or means of getting to the land was pulled in lest being filled with water, begins to help pull the larger ship under. Then they undergirded the ship with binding ropes to hold the hull together. Cargo was being thrown overboard to survive the tossing turbulence. Even with these precautions, the Bible says in Acts 27:20, "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." All along, this ship is in the path God has chosen. I Peter 4:12: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."

### **III. THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD**

Acts 27:21-29

A. Paul Was Not Alone.

Acts 27:22,23; Hebrews 13:5: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

B. Paul Takes God at His Word. "...I believe God..." (Acts 27:25b).

Paul is told they would be cast upon an island. Fourteen days later they arrived at the coast of Melita, better know to us as Malta. This storm drove the ship 476.6 miles across the Adriatic portion of the Mediterranean Sea (in ancient days the Adriatic Sea extended far south of Italy).

### **IV. THE PANIC OF THE SAILORS**

Acts 27: 30-38

The sailors, much more familiar with a stormy sea than the soldiers, in their fear tried to make it look like they were preparing anchors to be lowered on the bow, but in fact, were trying to escape on the dingy. Again, Paul speaks prophetically warning that if

they try to escape all would perish. So the soldiers, ready to listen to Paul, immediately cut the ropes allowing the boat to be lost. Sensing the panic, Paul, with great hope now, rallies the men by saying, "Let's have some breakfast; we've got some work to do!" The crew had gone fourteen days without eating. Who could eat with this recipe of seasickness to the one hundredth power? With the panic attack over, they threw the remaining goods, specifically wheat, overboard. Acts 27:39 reveals unfamiliar land, but they spotted a shore amidst the rocks!

## **V. THE PROMISE OF GOD'S WORD**

Acts 27:40-44

I would like to join two pieces of Scripture, "...And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land...even as it was told me." (Acts 27:44b; 25b). The anchors were lifted, they unbound the rudders, they unfurled the massive sail, "...and committed themselves to the sea..."(Acts 27:40b). The soldiers were preparing to kill all the prisoners, but the new friend of Paul, the Centurion Julius, willing to save Paul forbade the order. Then Paul, (the true leader) now commands those who could swim to jump in and those who could not, should find some boards or broken pieces of the ship. Jeremiah 1:12: "Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it." Isaiah 55:11: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

### **Conclusion:**

Perhaps you are going through a storm today. Let us return to this statement in Acts 27:40b: "...they committed themselves unto the sea." As we beheld the Providential hand of God protecting Paul and his team and preserving Paul to ultimately get to his final destination, let us do more than commit ourselves to the circumstances around us; let us commit ourselves to the Lord. William Carey said, "Expect great things for God; attempt great things for God!"

-Pastor Pope-