

Paul's Voyage to Rome (Acts 27-28:16)

Introduction:

1. The journey itself:

Paul's Journey to Rome: AD 57-62



2. The people on board the ship with Paul:
 - Luke rejoined him (note the “we” reference in Acts 25:1), along with Aristarchus from Thessalonica. (See Acts 19:29, 20:4, Colossians 4:10, Philemon 24)
 - Julius (A Centurion of the “Imperial Regiment”)
 - A host of prisoners and personnel

3. It is a little ironic that Luke spends so much time writing about the voyage from Caesarea to Rome.....here are some possible reasons:

- It was Rome that Paul was most desirous to go and somewhere in which God had ordained that Paul would go. As such **the path in arriving there involved severe opposition in the form of a pretty big storm.**
 - 1) Perhaps Luke wanted to draw the conclusion that it wasn't just human effort that tried to stop Paul (i.e. angry mobs and opposing religious views), but he also faced opposition from evil forces (demonic and Satanic) bent on keeping Paul from preaching the Gospel in Rome.
 - 2) We never want to underestimate the power of the "spirit world" and especially the evil forces that exist (Daniel 10:13-21). Their capabilities and powers are beyond our comprehension and although one day Satan and all his evil forces will be defeated – you can be sure they will use every means available to them to try and stop their eventual demise!
 - 3) Paul survived opposition and storms before, but this one was a little different; in that (in my opinion) Satan threw everything he could at Paul to attempt to stop him from what was probably his most important mission yet....the conversion of a pagan Empire (Rome) and eventually the whole of Europe!
- **God is sovereign** and no matter what the circumstances and opposition – **God will prevail!**
- It was on this journey that **Paul's ability to lead** was clearly visible and that (in my mind) helps us to see that Paul (the primary spokesman to the Gentiles) was **God's man for the hour.**

The Journey Begins (Acts 27:1-8)

1. Julius (The centurion) secured a ship that was headed for its home port in **Adramyttian** (located on the northwest coast of Asia Minor near Troas), with the probable intention of securing another ship somewhere in Asia Minor that would take them on to Italy.
 - The time of the year that they made this journey was dangerous as far as sea travel goes which explains the route that he took.
 - It is possible that Julius may have planned this route in the event that the weather did not permit continuing by ship and thus by putting into port at **Adramyttian** he could take the Egnatian Road and transport the prisoners via land. This would not have been his best option but a viable one depending on the weather.
2. Their first stop was Sidon (about 70 miles north of Caesarea)
 - Luke records that Paul had friends in Sidon
 - 1) It is probable that there was a church there that may have started sometime around the time that Christians fled Jerusalem during the subsequent persecutions after Stephen was martyred. (Acts 8:1-4)
 - 2) It is rather ironic that Paul (once the chief persecutor of Christians) was now **receiving care** from the very ones who may have bore the brunt of the persecution.
 - 3) We don't know how much time that Paul spent in Sidon but he no doubt taught them sound doctrine and enjoyed fellowship with them.
 - From Sidon they sailed along the island of Cyprus, then hugging the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, they made port in Myra. This route was a better choice due to the probable size of the ship and its inability to handle the long stretch of the open ocean.

3. Since Myra was a chief port for the Roman Empire it would be a little easier to secure a ship that could take them on to Italy without having to go all the way up to Troas.
- It was pretty common (during that time) that grain ships from Egypt would make port in Myra before continuing on to Rome and Julius was able to secure one of those ships to transport his prisoners.
 - After arriving at **Cnidus** (see map) and due to unfavorable and harsh winds, the ship turned from going west and headed south toward the island of **Crete** (see map).
 - They continued to hug the (southeast) coast of Crete and arrived in place called **Fair Havens** (see map) and put into port there.
 - 1) Paul will later write a letter to **Titus** about those on the island of **Crete** (*Cretans were known for their laziness and sinful behavior*) and encourage Titus in his ministry there as he appoints elders and oversees that ministry. (Titus 1:5)
 - 2) They remain in **Fair Havens** (probably awaiting more favorable winds) for what Luke refers to as “considerable time”, but this apparent lengthy delay puts them at great risk for winter is coming.
 - 3) Although we are not told by Luke, we can only assume that Paul ministered to the inhabitants of Crete and this may have been what prompted Paul and Timothy to visit there sometime after Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome, and subsequently write his Epistle to Titus.
4. The lengthy stay in **Fair Havens** creates a problem due to the coming winter and subsequent storms associated with it. As such, the decisions as to what to do become the topic of the next set of verses we will look at.

The Journey Stalls (Acts 27:9-44)

1. The captain of the ship failed to heed the warning signs (Acts 27:9-12)
 - Since the ship had stayed so long in Fair Havens, it had now become dangerous to continue sailing.
 - 1) Paul himself had experienced 3 shipwrecks (II Corinthians 11:25) and he no doubt was not excited about experiencing a fourth one.
 - 2) Paul warns them that danger awaits them if they continue and we can conclude that he felt it best to remain where they were until winter had ended.
 - The captain, the pilot and the centurion all concluded it best to press on and they therefore did not heed Paul's warning.
 - 1) It may have been true that the harbor in Phoenix (see map) provided more shelter than Fair Havens due to its more favorable exposure to the winds, but the danger was in getting there because a storm was brewing!
 - 2) They should have listened to Paul and their decision will put their lives in peril!
 - This is a good lesson for us to pay attention to:
 - 1) Does the Lord sometimes send us warning signs that danger may await us if we continue down a particular path? What type of warning signs can we look for?
 - 2) Describe what you do, how you respond, how you discern, or how you arrive at a particular decision when it appears that trouble awaits if you proceed down that path?

2. Suffering the consequences of a bad decision (Acts 27:13-20)

- Almost immediately after the ship left the safe harbor of **Fair Havens**, they experienced hurricane like winds (called “Euraquilo” or “Northeaster”) and instead of continuing along the coast of **Crete** (as planned), they were driven into the open ocean which is precisely what they didn’t want. (See map)
- The storm that they faced was dreaded by anyone who sailed the Mediterranean Sea.
- They did experience some brief protection from the storm as they passed by a little island called “Cauda”.
 - 1) The sailors attempted to rig the ship to weather the storm but it was to no avail and despite all their human effort.....this one was in the hand of God!
 - 2) They continued to be beaten up by the storm and they were unsuccessful in keeping themselves from being drawn out into the open ocean.
- The ships crew even attempted to throw their cargo overboard in the hopes that it would lighten their load but even this proved to be useless as the storm became so intense they didn’t see the sun or stars for three days. This meant they could not get their bearings and for a sailor this is their only means to figure out where to go and why Luke records; “from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned”. (Acts 27:20)
- This is a good reminder that even though we do suffer the consequences of making bad decisions – we do not have to conclude that all hope is lost as the sailors did!
- What do you do when you recognize that you have made a bad decision that is not in the Will of God? How do you respond and what do you do to get back on track?

3. The blessings and benefits of godly leadership (Acts 27:21-26)

- Paul was well aware that the captain, the pilot, and the centurion had made a mistake for he says; “Men you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss” (Acts 27:21)
 - 1) What made Paul so confident of this fact?
 - 2) Is it possible for us to know whether we are in the will of God in the decisions that we make today? Explain your answer.
- How does Paul show godly leadership to those on the ship? What does he say, what does he not say? (Acts 27:22-26)
- I love what John MacArthur says; “Unbelievers have no idea how much they owe, in the mercy of God, to the presence of righteous men among them”. (John MacArthur; Commentary on Acts Vol. 2 page 351)
- Do you possess such confidence in God? Can you? Should you? Why or why not?
- In spite of the fact that Paul was a righteous man they still faced the imminent reality of their ship being destroyed. Their lives and their safety was totally in the hands of God but as we will see they will need to do precisely what Paul tells them in order to live! Once again they will be tested with the reality that decisions (be they right or wrong) have consequences!

4. Facing the reality of disaster (Acts 27:27-44)

- Getting their bearings:
 - 1) Luke tells us that it had been 14 nights since they had left Fair Havens and most if not all of those nights were spent without knowing precisely where they were.
 - 2) They (according to Luke) were somewhere in the Adriatic which in that day was simply the central Mediterranean Sea. Today the Adriatic Sea is the body of water between Croatia and Italy. (see map)
 - 3) They (the sailors) knew they were approaching land and although (at the time) they did not recognize where they were; they were approaching the island of Malta which is just south of Sicily.
 - 4) Take a close look at the map and see if you can see the chances that after being in that huge storm and in that big body of water with nothing but 600 miles between Crete and Sicily, they could end up on the island of Malta! Is it possible that God had something to do with it?
- The sailors were so sure they were approaching land that they feared they would run aground and began to take steps to avoid what they deemed would be a catastrophe. (Acts 27:27-32)
 - 1) First the sailors dropped the anchors to try and keep the ship steady until daybreak came.
 - 2) Then the sailors tried to abandon the ship out of fear they would die.
 - 3) Paul made it clear that everyone must remain on board so the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat so no one could leave.

- Paul was totally confident that they would be saved because the Lord had told him so.
 - 1) One requirement was that everyone remain on the ship because that is where the providential protection was (a type of divine covering). To leave the ship not only put the lives of those who were trying to flee at risk but it put everyone who remained on the ship at risk.
 - 2) This is a good lesson that shows the importance of being in and staying in God's sphere of protection. When we get outside of that sphere of protection are their dangers? What are those dangers and where might they come from?
 - 3) Paul was adamant that they all remain on board. It is my opinion that evil completely surrounded them and to leave the divine protection of that ship was to place oneself into the hands of the evil one.
 - 4) Paul's warning was so strong that the centurion and his men heeded his advice (for sure this time) and kept everyone on board. They even did this at great peril for had Paul been wrong they lost their only real chance of escape because they no longer had their lifeboat.
 - 5) Paul encourages everyone to eat because they would need their strength for what awaited them.
- The ship strikes a sand bar (reef) and because the waves were beating against the ship it began to break apart the need arose for everyone to abandon ship.
- In spite of the danger and treacherous waves everyone swam to shore and just as Paul said not one person lost their life! (Acts 27:44)

The Journey Ends (Acts 28:1-16)

1. The island of Malta (where their ship had wrecked) was located about 60 miles south of Sicily. They had traveled approx. 600 miles from Fair Havens, Crete to the island of Malta.
2. Luke records that Paul and the others meet up with some natives (Acts 28:2)
 - Some translations use the words barbarians, which is simply how Greeks referred to non-Greek speaking people. In other words they were not Greek oriented in their culture.
 - They showed extraordinary hospitality by building a fire and welcoming the victims of the shipwreck to the island.
3. Apparently when Paul was gathering wood for the fire he picked up a viper along with the sticks and the viper (apparently stirred by the heat) latched on to Paul's arm.
 - Paul shook off the viper in to the fire and the islanders initially thought that Paul was some sort of criminal and this was a sign that he was getting his just punishment.
 - Apparently when no harm came to Paul the islanders instead concluded (because of their superstitions) that Paul was some sort of a god.
 - If you recall, Paul had been thought of before as a "god" and he humbly rejected their praise then as well. (Acts 14:8-18)
 - Can you see through this situation that here you have what would be considered both a non-Jewish culture and a non-Greek culture – yet they have a sense of justice and an understanding of right and wrong....where do people learn that?

4. Paul meets the head hauncho on the island of Malta (Acts 28:7-10)
- Luke identifies this individual as Publius and by all indications he was probably the Roman governor of Malta.
 - 1) The father of Publius apparently had a disease (accompanied by a fever and dysentery) and Paul laid his hands on him and healed him.
 - 2) As usual, this caused others to bring their sick to Paul and they too were prayed over and healed.
 - Paul and his companions were on the island for approx. 3 months and in that time he no doubt preached the gospel.
 - 1) Some conclude (based on tradition) that a church was founded around this time and Publius became their first pastor.
 - 2) We can also surmise from Acts 28:10 that Paul's influence and the influence of the gospel had a positive impact on their lives because of the honor they showed.
5. Arriving at their destination (Rome) just as God promised (Acts 28:11-16)
- Once the weather changed, Julius was able to secure another grain ship that came from Egypt and was on its way to Rome.
 - 1) After boarding the ship their first stop was Syracuse, then over to the toe of Italy where they docked at Rhegium (modern day Reggio).
 - 2) From there they set sail for Puteoli (modern day Pozzuoli) and after finding some fellow brothers in Christ they remained there about 7 days.

- 3) The fact that there were fellow brethren in Italy comes as no surprise because Peter already had a ministry there for some time, plus Jews from Jerusalem had scattered there from the earlier persecutions.
 - 4) Paul undoubtedly used the time he was there to minister to them and preach the gospel.
- Luke's provides a brief account of their journey along the Apian Way:



- 1) The Christians in Rome had heard about Paul's coming to Rome and many of them traveled a great distance (approx. 43 miles) to meet him.
 - 2) Paul was greatly encouraged to see them and they proceeded on to Rome.
- Upon arriving in Rome; Paul took up residence in a rented house and was under continual supervision by Roman soldiers. This was probably some sort of house arrest.

Concluding Remarks:

1. Although the journey to Rome ends – it is actually just the beginning, as the work that Paul will do in Rome while he awaits his hearing before the Emperor is enormous!
2. Luke’s remaining account (Acts 28:17-31) briefly reveals some of what Paul accomplishes while in Rome....and we will pick up with the conclusion of the book of Acts in our final lesson next week.
3. Before we do that – let me share what John MacArthur says about how God blessed His faithful servants (**John MacArthur; Commentary on Acts Volume 2, page 365**):
 - “God surrounds them with _____” (Acts 27:3, 28:1-2, 10)
 - “God meets their _____” (Acts 28:7, 14)
 - “God _____ them” (Acts 27:23-24)
 - “God _____ them from harm”
 - “God blesses their _____”
 - “God _____ their desires”