

Acts Chapter 27 Continued

Acts 27:26 "Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island."

In the last lesson, we saw a ship out of control throwing overboard cargo, and even tackle, trying to save the passengers' lives.

After three days of total darkness in a terrible storm, Paul announces that an angel of God told him not to worry, that they would lose the ship, but no lives would be lost.

Now we pick up the lesson in verse 26 above.

Paul tells them that they will be washed up on an island.

Acts 27:27 "But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;"

“Fourteenth night”:

Since they sailed from Air Havens (verse 13).

“Adria”:

The central Mediterranean Sea, not the present Adriatic Sea located between Italy and Croatia.

The modern Adriatic was known in Paul’s day as the Gulf of Adria.

This storm had continued for fourteen days, and they were blown with the waves this way and then that.

Not knowing exactly where they were, the only way to tell if they were near land was to tell how deep the water was.

Acts 27:28 "And sounded, and found [it] twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found [it] fifteen fathoms."

“Sounded”:

With a weight attached to a length of rope they measured the depth of the sea.

“Twenty fathoms ... fifteen fathoms”:

120 feet ... 90 feet.

The decreasing depth of the water confirmed the ship was approaching land.

The shipmen determined how deep the water was by casting a weight over on a rope and measuring the depth.

They know they are near land, because the water is getting shallower with each throw.

Acts 27:29 "Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day."

“Cast four anchors out of the stern”:

An attempt to hold the ship in place and keep the bow pointed toward the shore.

To make this more frightening for these sailors, this happened at midnight.

Acts 27:30 "And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,"

“The boat”:

The same dinghy hauled aboard earlier (verse 16).

“Cast anchors out of the foreship”:

This would have been for additional stability (verse 29).

“Under color as though” (Greek *prophasei*) means “under the pretext that.”

Paul knew their safety was with him.

God is going to bring Paul through this to go to Rome.

Fear causes people to do strange things.

These shipmen were going to abandon the ship and their passengers.

They were not under orders to do this of their captain.

They were pretending to put out more anchors.

They were just acting in fear.

Acts 27:31 "Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

This verse along with verse 24 illustrates the relation between both divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

Though God has unconditionally promised to Paul that every life would be spared, Paul warns that the sailors must stay on board to man “the ship.”

The sailors had a responsibility to fulfill (verses 39-40).

When Paul tells them they must stay with the ship, they remember the angel appearing to Paul.

Acts 27:32 "Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off."

This was the life boat.

Now, they do not even have it to try to get to land.

Acts 27:33 "And while the day was coming on, Paul besought [them] all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing."

“Continued fasting”:

Because of seasickness and the difficulty of preparing and preserving food, the passengers and crew had eaten little or nothing in the two weeks since they left Fair Havens.

It seems when this storm got so bad that they thought they would die, they started a fast and have continued fourteen days.

This makes your body very weak, and Paul knows if they shipwreck, they will need strength to swim.

He tells them to eat meat to strengthen them.

Acts 27:34 "Wherefore I pray you to take [some] meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you."

“Not an hair ... fall from the head”:

A common Jewish saying (1 Sam. 14:45; 2 Sam. 14:11; 1 Kings 1:52; Luke 21:18), denoting absolute protection.

This is encouragement that they all need to hear.

Acts 27:35-36 "And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken [it], he began to eat." "Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took [some] meat."

We see here a great respect has grown for Paul.

They feel that whatever Paul does is okay with God.

When Paul eats, they eat also.

Acts 27:37 "And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls."

“Two hundred threescore and sixteen souls”:

As an ocean-going vessel, this ship was considerably larger than the smaller vessel Paul sailed in from Caesarea to Lycia.

Now for the first time, we know that 276 people are on board ship.

Acts 27:38 "And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea."

“Lightened the ship”:

See note on verse 18.

They had kept back food to eat when they had cast out the other things before.

As a show of confidence that they were about to be saved, they threw the wheat overboard.

Acts 27:39 "And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship."

This was not a port, but was a possibility to get a little closer to land before the ship broke up.

They would try to get the ship to sail into this creek.

Acts 27:40 "And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed [themselves] unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore."

This wind is still very heavy.

They brought the mainsail up, but could do very little in the way of direction, because of the contrary wind.

Acts 27:41 "And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves."

“Place where two seas met”:

A sandbar or reef short of the shore.

This ship violently broke apart, as these heavy winds brought huge waves against the ship.

Acts 27:42 "And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape."

“Soldiers’ counsel was to kill the prisoners”:

Knowing they could face punishment or death if their prisoners escaped (12:19; 16:27). This would have included Paul.

Some of these prisoners were, perhaps, hardened criminals who might have been a problem to society, but Paul surely does not fall into this category.

God had compassion on these soldiers, but they were not showing compassion for the prisoners.

Acts 27:43 "But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from [their] purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast [themselves] first [into the sea], and get to land:"

This centurion knew that Paul was a man of God.

He would not allow anyone to be killed, because he was saving Paul's life.

The faster the swimmers could get to land, the faster help would come.

Acts 27:44 "And the rest, some on boards, and some on [broken pieces] of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land."

Just as Paul had been told by the angel of God, who stood beside him.

They all were spared their lives.

It appears anyone who could not swim used anything at all that would float to take them to land.

Acts Chapter 27 Continued Questions

1. Where would Paul and the others be cast?
2. What had the angel of God told Paul?
3. After how many days of terrible storm, did they realize they were near some land?

4. What time was it?
5. How deep was it the first sounding?
6. How deep was it the second sounding?
7. Why did they cast anchors and stop here?
8. After dropping anchor, what did they wish for?
9. Who was about to flee the ship?
10. Why did they not flee?
11. What happened to the lifeboat?
12. What did Paul tell them to do just before daylight?
13. What had they been doing fourteen days?
14. What were they to do this for?
15. What harm did Paul say would come to them?
16. Why did Paul eat first?
17. Verse 36 says, "Then they were all of good _____."
18. How many people were on this ship?
19. After they had eaten enough, what did they do?
20. When daylight came, what did they see?
21. What happened when they fell into a place where two seas met?
22. What did the soldiers want to do to the prisoners?
23. Why would the centurion not do this?
24. Who jumped ship first?
25. How did the others make shore?
26. Was anyone lost?