

# Storm & Shipwreck

Acts 27:1-28:10

Paul's trouble<sup>1</sup> in Jerusalem led to a series of trials and hearings, along with two years in prison in Caesarea. In Paul's trial before Governor Festus, he appealed to Caesar.<sup>2</sup> Festus replied, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!" (25:11-12). The Lord had earlier told Paul, "you must also testify in Rome" (23:11). Thus a trip to Rome became part of Paul's journey.

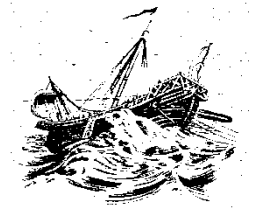
## Setting Sail

Paul was handed over to a centurion<sup>3</sup> named Julius for his voyage to Rome. They<sup>4</sup> boarded a ship in Caesarea and set sail, stopping at ports along the way (27:1-5). They changed ships in Myra and continued their journey, but the winds slowed them down and forced them to take a longer route around the south side of the island of Crete (27:6-8). (See map.) Read Acts 27:9-12.<sup>5</sup>

## Stormy Seas

Paul warned them of disaster ahead, but they decided to continue their voyage (27:10-11). They hoped to reach Phoenix (in Crete) and harbor there for the winter (27:12). What happened?

1. Read Acts 27:13-26. As the storm surrounded and battered the ship over many days, how would you describe the thoughts and feelings of the people on the ship? (27:14-20)
2. Paul was "only a prisoner," but he played a very important role in the ship's journey. Based on verses 21-26, what role did Paul play?
3. How would you describe Paul's attitude?<sup>6</sup> Why was he confident about his good news?



Paul knew they "must run aground on some island" (27:26). What happened next?

## Shipwreck

Read Acts 20:27-44. This story is written with many details, which give us information about an actual historical event in the first century. However, we may ask, "Why is this story important? What does it teach us? How does this story apply to my life?" As we consider these questions, it can be helpful to ask more specific questions.

<sup>1</sup> Paul's trouble resulted from the opposition to his proclamation of Jesus Christ. Some Jews falsely accused Paul, stirred up public disturbance, and conspired to kill him (21:27-31; 23:12). The Roman government responded by taking Paul into custody.

<sup>2</sup> By 'appealing to Caesar (the Roman emperor),' Paul demanded that he be tried in Rome, away from the influence of his Jewish opponents. As a Roman citizen, Paul had this right. Thus Paul must go to Rome.

<sup>3</sup> 'centurion' – a commander in the Roman army.

<sup>4</sup> 'They' includes Luke, the writer of Acts, who is included in the 'we' narration throughout Acts 27:1-28:16.

<sup>5</sup> 'after the Day of Atonement' (27:9) indicates the time of year, which was probably mid-October. Winter was approaching, and sailing was already becoming dangerous.

<sup>6</sup> Paul's statement in verse 21 may sound like a smug 'I told you so!' However, Paul is basically saying, 'You didn't listen to me before, and look what happened, so listen to me this time. I have good news!'

4. What can we learn about God from this story? (e.g., 27:23-25)<sup>7</sup>
5. What does this story show us about humans in times of great danger and trouble? (e.g., 27:20, 29, 30)<sup>8</sup>
6. What do we learn about God's servant (Paul) from this story? (e.g., 27:22-26, 25, 31, 33-34, 35)<sup>9</sup>
7. Considering the answers to questions 4-6, and Paul's example, how does this story apply to us? How can this story apply to us in a spiritual sense?<sup>10</sup>



## Snakebite

Read Acts 28:1-10. The island provided safety from the stormy seas, and the islanders were hospitable, but the island still had trouble. Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake,<sup>11</sup> but he was fine (28:3-6). The chief official's father was suffering from sickness, but God used Paul to heal him, which led to the healing of many others (28:7-10). God's grace was still at work.

## Reflection/Application

- In your own life-journey, you may enjoy "smooth sailing" at times. But you also face "winds" that slow you down or change your course. You are hit by "storms" that bring trouble into your life. You will eventually experience "shipwreck," if not during your life, then at the end of life. The question is: Will you make it through? Will you be saved? The Bible says we are saved by God's grace through faith. Do you need to trust in Jesus?
- Brothers & sisters, as you face fierce storms, are you like Paul? Reflect on his example. Read Romans 8:28-39 and regularly ask God to strengthen, guide and use you for His purposes.

<sup>7</sup> God is mentioned only in verses 23-25 & 35, but He is involved throughout the story. God makes sure that Paul arrives safely in Rome, and He graciously saves the lives of everyone else on the ship (27:24). God's sovereign grace is evident. Furthermore, God communicates an encouraging message to Paul through an angel (messenger) and this encouraging message extends to everyone on the ship (27:24-25).

<sup>8</sup> As humans usually do in times of great danger, they take action! But when conditions do not improve, or become worse, people can become distressed and lose hope (27:20). In times of trouble, humans often 'pray' to God or gods for help (27:29). Some people try to escape their trouble even if it's selfish or harmful to others (27:30).

<sup>9</sup> Paul knows God has a purpose for him (23:11; 27:24), and God is completely trustworthy. Thus Paul has 'faith in God' (27:25). Paul listens to God's message, and he shares the message with others (27:24-25). Paul encourages others (27:22, 25, 33-34) and gives wise counsel (27:31). Paul is thankful to God (in all circumstances) and openly expresses his thanksgiving (27:35; 1Thessalonians 5:18). The voyage is rough, but Paul remains steady.

<sup>10</sup> God has a purpose, and he is trustworthy to accomplish his purpose. God graciously saves people, not just from storms and shipwrecks, but from the consequences of a broken relationship with God. In our fallen condition, we are helpless in a 'sea' of sin, shame, and God's judgment. But God has provided the way of salvation through Jesus' death for our sins, and resurrection from the dead. God has communicated the good news of this salvation through his servants. When we trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, we can have faith like Paul. We can be steady and encouraging in a world of storms, shipwrecks and snakebites. As Paul wrote, 'we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28, NIV).

<sup>11</sup> Paul also faced misunderstanding due to wrong beliefs. When the snake bit Paul, the islanders thought he was a murderer being punished by a goddess (Justice), but when Paul suffered no harm, they thought he was a god!