

# I Will Praise You In The Storm

Acts 27

So, as you may recall, Paul was about to be set free by King Agrippa when we last met. However, the king knew that Paul had asked to be heard by Ceaser, so they sent him on to Rome by ship instead. This trip will take nearly a year for them to complete. We have a lot of ground to cover today so let's dive right in.

*<sup>1</sup> When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. <sup>2</sup> We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.*

They set sail Italy. Obviously, Paul was not the only Roman citizen, that was a prisoner and had requested be heard by Ceaser, which was their right. Then they stop at several ports along the coast of Asia. Notice what it says in verse 2, "was with us". What does that mean? Well, Luke and others were allowed to make this trip with Paul in order to care for his needs. The Romans did not feed, cloth, or much of anything for their prisoners. That was the job of friends and family. Verse 2 also talks about this man Aristarchus. He was a long-time fellow traveler of Paul's that was also seized by the angry mob back in Acts 19 but was not imprisoned. It is believed that he was a delegate from the church in Thessalonica. So why was he picked up as a prisoner in Italy? He went into voluntary imprisonment just so he could be with Paul.

Now what you need understand is that this is a man that was sick. So sick that he wanted to die. He said to Paul in Philipians 1:23-24, "<sup>23</sup> I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; <sup>24</sup> but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." So, he put Paul's needs, and a desire to learn as much from him as he could, above his own health. That tells me a lot about this man's character. How many of us would be voluntarily put into prison to take care of someone else? How many of us put someone else's needs that much ahead of our own?

Anyway, on the ship there was also a lot of Roman soldiers to watch over the prisoners. It was very common for soldiers to travel on ship headed to Rome, even cargo ships, because there were basically even pirate ships back then trying to steal grain or whatever they were hauling. All together there was roughly 276 people aboard this ship.

*<sup>3</sup> The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs.*

They land at Sidon and Julius, the commander of the Roman soldiers, goes to Paul and frees him from his chains and says, “go and hang out with your friends so they can take care of you.” Now, I might be reading something into this here, but I have no doubt that Julius knew all about Paul. I am sure he knew about all the prisoners aboard his ship. So, I am sure he had heard that Paul had been found innocent of doing anything wrong by so many people. Julius knew that he had nothing to worry about with Paul so he could let him move about freely. Notice though that it doesn’t say that he did this with any of the other prisoners. This is probably because they were all condemned prisoners being sent to Rome to die in the arena as gladiators.

*<sup>4</sup> From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. <sup>5</sup> When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. <sup>6</sup> There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. <sup>7</sup> We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. <sup>8</sup> We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.*

So, here they are sailing along, not making any more stops, because the wind conditions were unfavorable. The winds were so bad that they were staying close to the coastline so they could put into land quickly if they had to. This tells me that the ship they were on was probably a smaller one. It had finally gotten so bad that they put it into land at Myra. While there, the Roman commander, Julius found an Alexandrian ship headed toward Italy, so they got onboard that ship.

Why change ships? I did a little research and found that this ship was most likely a grain freighter that started in Egypt and sold its goods in Italy. The typical

Alexandrian grain freighter was 140 feet long and 36 feet wide. They were very sturdy ships but because of their design could not sail into the wind. So, because of the wind conditions they felt they would be safer onboard this ship. They set sail, very slowly, eventually arriving in Fair Havens.

*<sup>9</sup> Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Day of Atonement.<sup>[a]</sup> So Paul warned them, <sup>10</sup> "Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also."*

Here, Paul appears to be addressing the captain and crew of the ship as well as the commander. He tells them that the trip has been dangerous up to this point and now it is after the Day of Atonement. This means that it is probably around October 5<sup>th</sup>, which was the Day of Atonement in A.D. 59. Paul is telling them that winter is approaching and it going to become far more dangerous if we keep going.

Doing a little bit of research again I found that the dangerous season for sailing, during that time, began in September and lasted till around mid-November. After that all sailing stopped until winter was over. Paul tells them that this is going to end in disaster. You are going to lose the cargo and we all may die. We need to stay here.

I think that Paul was telling them this because he was a very experienced traveler by sea. He had already travelled around 3,500 miles that way and was very aware of the seasons and conditions of the Mediterranean. Also keep in mind that 2 Corinthians 11:25 tells us, *"<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea,"* So by this time he was acutely aware, having been shipwrecked 3 times, just how dangerous it was to sail during this time of year.

*<sup>11</sup> But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship. <sup>12</sup> Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. This was a harbor in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest.*

Of course, no one listened to Paul, and the commander took a vote. The captain and the owner of the ship vote to go on because they are putting the profits from

the grain above their own safety. The crew voted to go on because Fair Haven was a small town, with nothing to do, and they didn't want to be stuck there all winter. Also, the position of the bay there made it vulnerable to severe winter winds and storms.

I am sure they were all thinking that in a worst-case scenario they could make it as far as Pheonix, the next port and much larger city, which was only 40 miles away. The bay there faced south, making it less susceptible to winter storms, and there was a lot to do there. A much better place to set out the winter. Let's just go ahead and take that 3 hour tour.

*<sup>13</sup> When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. <sup>14</sup> Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island. <sup>15</sup> The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. <sup>16</sup> As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure,*

A gentle breeze begins to blow so they set sail along the shore. Sounds like things are in their favor at this point. But before they get very far the hurricane winds sweep in from the shoreline. They can't turn back because this is a tail wind and it is pushing the ship wherever it wants to send them. They are completely out of control. It got so bad that they could barely secure the lifeboat. In those days the lifeboat was towed behind the ship so what that means is they could barely get the lifeboat on board and get it tied down. Paul must have been thinking, "I told you so."

In the original Hebrew the winds were called Euroclydon. This is a half-Greek, half-Latin word used by sailors of the time, to describe winds that were so bad it blew their ship off course. Now, notice how many times here Luke used the word "we". That means that he, along with Paul and the other passengers, were all doing this together. We were having trouble securing the lifeboat.

*<sup>17</sup> so the men hoisted it aboard. Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor<sup>[b]</sup> and let the ship be driven along. <sup>18</sup> We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they*

*began to throw the cargo overboard. <sup>19</sup> On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.*

Here they are, being driven by the winds, and now they are rapping the ship with ropes to keep it from being torn apart. Now remember that this ship is 140 feet long and they would have wrapped a rope around it every 4 to 6 feet. They are afraid that they will hit the sandbars near Syrtis.

Let me put that into perspective. Syrtis was a long stretch of desolate land along the coast of Africa between Tunis and Tripoli. It was known to have quicksand in the sandbars along the coastline. So, you see that they are afraid of what they are headed for, they are way off course, and they lower the anchor in an attempt to steer themselves away from all of this. Things were so bad that on the second day of fighting this storm they threw most of the grain overboard to lighten the ship and try to alter their course. That didn't work so on the third day they threw the tackle overboard. The tackle would basically mean anything that was not needed or tied down was thrown into the sea.

*<sup>20</sup> When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.*

Throwing all that stuff overboard didn't help and they were still being pushed along by the winds. The storm was so bad that they didn't see the sun or the stars for days and they had given up all hope.

*<sup>21</sup> After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. <sup>22</sup> But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed.*

Here we go. Paul actually stands up and says, "I told you so". But he also says keep up your courage because no one will die; only the ship will be destroyed. You see I have been praising my God in the midst of this storm. Then he begins to tell them about Gods plan.

*<sup>23</sup> Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me <sup>24</sup> and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' <sup>25</sup> So keep up your*

*courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. <sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.”*

You see, last night while we were all hungry, tired, and fighting the storm my God sent me an angel that stood at my side. The angel said, “don’t be afraid”, God still wants you in Rome to speak before Caesar. As an added bonus God is going to spare the lives of all of those that are with you on this ship. So keep up the courage everyone because I know my God will do what He has said He will do. Now pick a spot and let’s run the ship aground.

*<sup>27</sup> On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic<sup>[c]</sup> Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. <sup>28</sup> They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet<sup>[d]</sup> deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet<sup>[e]</sup> deep. <sup>29</sup> Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. <sup>30</sup> In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. <sup>31</sup> Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.” <sup>32</sup> So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away.*

At this point they had been fighting the storm for 14 days and nights. They are so far off course that they are in the Adriatic Sea now. Most likely headed toward Greece. The crew thinking they were getting close to land drop a weighted line into the water to see how deep it was. The first time they did it, it was 125 feet but a short time later it was only 90. They began to get scared the ship would break apart on rocks so they lowered the lifeboat into the water while pretending to lower the anchors. They wanted to make a getaway for themselves.

Paul saw what they were doing and told them, “unless you do what my God said to do your not going to make it.” They must have thought to themselves and said, “well we didn’t listen to this man the first time and look at the mess we are in.” We better do what he says and cut the lifeboat loose and let it drift away.

*<sup>33</sup> Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. “For the last fourteen days,” he said, “you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven’t eaten anything. <sup>34</sup> Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.” <sup>35</sup> After he said this,*

*he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. <sup>36</sup> They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. <sup>37</sup> Altogether there were 276 of us on board. <sup>38</sup> When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.*

Paul then tells them' "guys, it's going to be daylight soon and we are going to have our work cut out for us." We have been fighting this storm for 14 days and no one has eaten anything, so I need you to eat now. You are going to need your strength. I promise you that you will be alright because God said so. Then he took some bread and in front of everyone he praised God in the storm again and gave thanks.

Now do you think that Paul just gave thanks, or praised God, for the bread? I don't. I think Paul praised God for the storm, for sparing all of the lives on the ship, for His promise being fulfilled, and for the bread. I think that this time of praise probably sounded like a sermon. With that Paul broke the bread and they all began to eat as much as they wanted. Then they threw the remainder of the grain overboard to fully lighten the ship.

*<sup>39</sup> When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. <sup>40</sup> Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. <sup>41</sup> But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.*

*<sup>42</sup> The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. <sup>43</sup> But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. <sup>44</sup> The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely.*

You know it is funny to me how most believers only praise God when things are good and only pray to God when things are bad.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 says; <sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Guys, if we learn nothing else from Paul let us learn this. We must pray and give praise to God no matter where we are at in our lives. We have to do it through the good times and the bad times. Whether we are riding out a storm or setting on a sandy beach. This is Gods will for our lives. Trust me, when we learn to do that, we will find peace and rest in any situation.

Hebrews 13:15 says; <sup>15</sup> *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.*