

Outline

1. Journey to Rome begins
 1. From Caesarea to Sidon
 2. From Sidon to Myra and transferred to a ship heading for Italy
 3. From Myra to Cnidus
 4. From Cnidus to Fair Havens
2. Paul warns of dangers ahead
 1. Danger to life and property
 2. Both the pilot and ship owner want to press forward
 1. The harbor was unsuitable
 2. Hoped to make Phoenix
3. Shipwrecked
 1. Driven by a northeastern wind
 2. Threw over the ship's gear on the third day
 3. After "many days" they despaired of life itself
 4. Paul's encouragement
 1. Angel told him that he must go to Rome and that the lives of all on the ship were granted to him
 2. But, they would have to run aground
 5. Ship's launch cut away by the soldiers when the sailors tried to abandon them
 6. They ate food following a 14 day fast
 7. Saw a beach and hoped to run aground there
 8. Bow of ship stuck on reef
 9. Order given to swim to shore

Commentary

It's possible that Paul is first placed aboard a prison ship. Many commentators believe that the ship puts in at Sidon in order to take on cargo. This is not a necessary conclusion but

makes sense given that the ship's home port is stated to be Adramyttium, not Rome. If it is a prison ship, then Julius may put Paul aboard the second ship in Lycia in order to give him better conditions (which would be in keeping with their relationship as stated in Acts 27:3).

Acts 27:28 tells us that this second ship was a grain ship. Rome could not possibly grow enough food to support its population from within its own general area. The grain for bread had to be imported from elsewhere across the empire. The cargo is so important that soldiers were sometimes used to secure it — which also made it a good candidate for the transportation of prisoners.

Luke provides the basis for Paul's prediction of impending doom on their voyage: It was late in the year when such things would tend to happen. Luke describes that as "much time had passed, and ... even the Fast was already over" (Acts 27:9). Paul does not state a prophecy so much as offer his opinion ("Sirs, I perceive..." - Acts 27:10), likely based on his experiences as a somewhat seasoned traveler.

Luke describes that "cargo" was thrown overboard in Acts 27:18. The ship was large enough to warrant carrying a small boat and to hold 276 persons, so we can suppose that the cargo thrown overboard would be the personal possessions of these people and whatever other cargo might have been aboard other than the grain (which is only thrown out in Acts 27:28).

We should not be surprised that Paul would tell the centurion that the sailors needed to stay with the boat or the lives of all would be lost. The sailors had a job to do which the soldiers could not handle — having neither the training nor the experience to do so. If they, in their fear, had abandoned the ship, then it would only make sense that those remaining aboard would be lost.

That all would be saved from the storm is remarkable. Josephus recounts that a ship that he was on capsized and that most people were lost:



Accordingly I came to Rome, though it were through a great number of hazards, by sea; for, as our ship was drowned in the Adriatic Sea, we that were in it, being about six hundred in number, swam for our lives all the night; when, upon the first appearance of the day, and upon our sight of a ship of Cyrene, I and some others, eighty in all, by God's providence, prevented the rest, and were taken up into the other ship... (Josephus, 2).

Thought Questions

Consider the following thought questions:

1. Why would Luke give the name of the centurion?
2. Create a timeline or a map which shows the route that Paul took in chapter 27.
3. What was the worst storm that you have lived through? How does it compare to the one described here?
4. How confident was Paul in what he had been told about surviving this journey?
5. Why would the soldiers need to save all of the prisoners in order to save Paul?