

Acts of the Apostles

Week 33: Acts 27:1-44

Paul Sails for Rome (27:1-12).

- Paul, and some other prisoners, were handed over to a centurion named Julius. Julius is another example in Luke/Acts of an honorable centurion (see Luke 7:1-10; Acts 10; 24).
- Julius allows some companions to join Paul on the journey who could help provide for his needs.
 - o The “we” language indicates that Luke is on this journey with Paul. His firsthand account of the storm and shipwreck provide account for the vividness of the chapter.
 - o Aristarchus is also with Paul (v 2).
 - Aristarchus traveled with Paul to Jerusalem (19:29; 20:4).
 - Paul mentions him in Colossians 4:10 as a “fellow prisoner.” This is likely figurative language. Luke does not indicate that Aristarchus is under arrest.
 - He is also mentioned in Philemon 24.
 - o Julius may have shown kindness to Paul (v 3) since unlike the other prisoners, he had not been found guilty of a crime. He was also a Roman citizen.
- There were no passenger vessels in this day and age, so Julius and his prisoners pay for rides on a series of merchant vessels.
 - o Most of these vessels carried grain from Egypt.
 - o Rome paid a premium for grain delivered during the winter months providing incentives for merchant vessels to risk the weather.
- The ship struggled to make its way up the coast toward Italy (vv 7-12).
 - o The prevailing winds made travelling west difficult.
 - o Sailing became chancy in mid-fall.
 - o The Day of Atonement (v 9) fell in September or October.
- Paul, no stranger to shipwrecks (see 2 Cor 11:25), warns those in charge that pressing onward will result in great loss to both the ship and the people on the ship (v 10).
 - o The centurion's kindness does not extend so far as to include listening to a prisoner's advice (v 11).
 - o He, the ship's pilot, and the ship's owner, do not view Fair Havens as a good place to winter, and commit to move on as soon as possible (v 12).

The Storm (27:13-26)

- The ship's leadership seizes a turn in the wind as opportunity to set sail (v 13).
- Within a short amount of time a strong wind nicknamed the “Northeaster” pushed the ship off course (vv 14-15) so much so that they were afraid of running aground near Africa (v17).
- In response to the storm they pulled the lifeboat on board, looped the boat with ropes in order to hold it together, and began throwing cargo overboard (vv 17-19).

- Luke notes that after many days of being tossed around by the storm, even he gave up hope of being saved (v 20).
- Eventually Paul stands up to speak, this time not with advice but with a prophetic word of encouragement (vv 21-26).
 - o While the ship will be lost, no one will die (v 22).
 - o Paul notes that an angel of God came and spoke to Paul (v 23).
 - o The angel assured Paul that he would stand trial before Caesar and that the lives of the men onboard would be spared (v 24).

The Shipwreck (27:27-44)

- After two weeks of being tossed about, the sailors discover that they are drawing near to land (vv27-28).
- At first, they attempt to stop the ship by dropping anchors and praying for daylight (v 29).
- The sailors soon lose hope in that plan and decide to abandon the ship in the lifeboat – an attempt to save their own lives at the expense of everyone else’s (v 30).
- Paul recognizes what they are doing and warns the centurion that unless the sailors stay put, the soldiers will die (v 31).
 - o Pragmatically, the ship cannot be saved, but how it crashes into the rocks or runs aground will matter. Only by having the skilled sailors aboard can the best course of action be taken.
 - o The soldiers understand and cut the lifeboat lose. Whatever happens, will now happen to them all (v 32).
- Paul again speaks words of encouragement to the crew.
 - o He challenges them to eat and assures them again that they will not die (v 34).
 - o Paul then takes bread, blesses, and gives it to them (v 25). To us this looks like the Lord’s Supper, but it is probably simply the way most Jewish men would begin a meal.
- The men are encouraged. They eat all they can and then throw the rest in the sea to make the boat as light as possible (v 36, 38).
- Luke notes there were 276 aboard (v 37).
- When daylight comes, they see a spot that they think will work for running the ship aground (v 39).
 - o Their attempt is spoiled when they hit a sandbar.
 - o The boat is destroyed as it is pounded by the surf.
- Before the boat broke apart, the soldiers contemplated killing the prisoners – they would be held accountable if any of them escaped (v 42).
- The kind centurion prevents the soldiers from carrying out the plan because he wants to spare Paul’s life (v 33).
 - o All 276 people on board make it safely to land (v 44).
- Nothing will keep God from getting Paul to Rome – not jealous Jewish leaders, not corrupt Roman officials, not even nature. God acts in every instance to achieve his goals for Paul and for the gospel.

Sources

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