

## Scripture Reading:

Acts 27:1 “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. 2 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. 3 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. 4 From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. 5 When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. 6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. 7 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. 8 We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. 9 Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Fast. So Paul warned them, 10 “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.””

# "Paul Sails for Rome"

At long last we are leaving Paul's powerful testimony & witness in chapter 26 behind and sending Paul off to Rome. Someone recently told me that chapter 26 was their favorite chapter in Acts because of this speech, but I guess because of my personal experience I am still partial to Paul's address on Mars Hill...

- A reminder: We should all have special portions of the Scripture!

Luke as he continues his orderly account crams a lot into these first few verses of chapter 27 which we will consider this morning. At first glance, it might appear to be one of those places where we have WAY too much detail, like all those chronologies or sacrifices or buildings plans in the Old Testament...

- Detail that we could be tempted to rush past to get to the much more exciting shipwreck and witnessing on Malta.

We will get there, but for today we want to allow Luke to introduce us to some of the characters we will encounter in the final chapters of Acts...

- And to remind ourselves about the truth of God's Word!

We know from chapter 24, that at least two years had past since Paul's arrest. Since we are NOT told how long Governor Festus took to hold his two trials and to arrange for this voyage, it may have been almost three years that Paul has languished here in prison. Of course, Paul took this opportunity to witness when and where he could & as we have discussed this is where he wrote, or prepared to write, what are called the prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

- What a blessing these books have been to the Saints down through the ages, and to US today!

As we have pointed out, from a human perspective there would have been times where Paul's circumstances did weigh him down!

Paul would have found comfort in the Scriptures that he knew so well and I was reminded of this when we came to Psalm 3 in our daily readings this week which King David wrote as he fled from his own son Absalom:

**“Jehovah, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. 2 Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God." Selah**

**3 But You, O Jehovah, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head. 4 I cried to Jehovah with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill. Selah**

**5 I lay down and slept; I awoke, for Jehovah sustained me. 6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people Who have set themselves against me all around. 7 Arise, O Jehovah; Save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly. 8 Salvation belongs to Jehovah. Your blessing is upon Your people. Selah”**

- **As King David fled Jerusalem, he did not know how God was going to solve the problem of Absalom’s rebellion, but his trust was in the Lord!**
- **This is how the Lord turns our despair into confidence!**

**Such would have been the case with Paul’s confidence as he prepared for this trip to Rome:**

- **Jesus Himself had promised that Paul would go to Rome!**

**Paul was not careless, but he was confident: He was willing to use his Roman citizenship to avoid a beating in Jerusalem and used information brought by his nephew to avoid an assassination plot and had appealed to Caesar to avoid a return to the Jewish counsel that wanted him dead! Paul knew that Jesus, the stone uncut by human hands pictured in the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, was going to crush the mighty Empire of Rome...**

- **But he certainly did not know all of the details...**
- **Nor could he even imagine them!**

**Thus Paul, with such confidence, wrote to the Philippians in one of his prison Epistles:**

**“4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 & the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

**This is a principle that we need to apply in so many ways today: For example: I know from the Scriptures that God has appointed the day of my death...**

- **There is nothing I can do to make it happen one day sooner nor one day later!**

**This great truth does not make me careless, but it should give me peace, and confidence, and reduce my anxiety. I still put my seat-belt on when I drive because it is a wise thing to do, but I do not fear to drive places because I might be killed in an accident, nor should I be anxious when I do so.**

- **As Paul lived out these great truths here in prison it would have been a great witness to the Saints who visited him AND to all those with whom he came into contact.**
- **I think this helps explain the relationship between Paul and Julius, the Roman Centurion who we meet in this first verse.**

**“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.” Julius will be in charge of all the prisoners as they journey to Rome and as we have seen with the other Roman Centurions that we meet in the Bible, he is not hostile to the faith and seems to have a good relationship to Paul.**

- **In fact, Roman centurions get very favorable treatment in the Scriptures  
*[would be an interesting study!]***

**In the early chapters of the Gospels we meet a centurion from Capernaum who appeals to Jesus to heal his trusted servant:**

- **Jesus declares that this Centurion is a man of great faith, with faith like none He has seen in Israel!**
- **Mark tells us how the Centurion who supervised the death of Jesus declared in the end, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”**

**Of course we should fondly remember the account of another Roman Centurion here in Acts:**

- **God fearing Cornelius whose conversion is used by the Spirit of God to convince Peter and the other Jews that the Gospel will go to Jew & Gentile alike.**

**When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem during his final visit, it was a Roman Centurion who took Paul’s appeal to the commander which stopped his beating, and another Centurion who took Paul’s nephew to the commander with news of the plot to assassinate Paul.**

**And finally Paul was cared for here in Caesarea by another Roman Centurion who may or may not have been Julius. We are not told how much contact Julius had had with the Apostle Paul but it would be hard to believe that he would have trusted him with an on-shore visit if they had just met.**

- **We will see the two of them interacting in some very important ways in the coming weeks.**

**In the second verse of our text Luke begins to give the details of the voyage and inform us that Paul will have Luke and Aristarchus traveling with him:**

**2 “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.”**

**It is likely that they traveled with Paul as his attendants, or servants which would not have been unusual for a prominent person to have in those days.**

**Once again we see Luke’s presence in the “we” set sail, and Aristarchus has been with Paul since he left Thessalonica to travel to Jerusalem with the gifts for the Saints there.**

**3 “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.”**

**Luke does not give us the details about what needs were met by these Saints, but Paul could have needed spiritual refreshment, physical care or financial help after almost three years in prison!**

**It could well have been all of the above!**

- **We clearly see here the first kindness shown to Paul by this Roman Centurion demonstrating that they had some sort of relationship.**

**Jesus had promised Paul that he would go to Rome, visiting him after his arrest in Jerusalem and telling him:**

**“Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”**

- **Paul knows that he will reach Rome and he knows what his mission there will be...**
- **To be a witness for Jesus!**

**Paul’s witness in Rome is going to be the climax of Luke’s orderly account and is certainly the important part of the story, so I think it is appropriate to ask why does Luke now spend SO much time on the early details of this trip?**

Before we look at these details and discuss why they are important, we need to remember that this is not the first time that Luke has grounded his account in verifiable facts of history:

In chapter three of Luke's Gospel he introduces the ministry of John the Baptist with these words: "1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness."

- So what is the important point or truth revealed here by Luke?
- Right, the Word of God came to John in the wilderness!

So why does Luke, writing under the influence and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, preface it with a history lesson about the rulers of the day?

For the same reason that Luke gives us details of the trip here before the shipwreck and miracles at Malta and the final witness of Paul in Rome itself!

-- How do I know that the Word of God came to John on that day in the wilderness?

-- How do I know that Paul recovered from a fatal snake bite on Malta or that He witnessed for Jesus in Rome?

- BECAUSE Luke tells us these facts in his orderly account, just as he gave the other historical facts!

IF Luke were wrong when he gave us details of history that can be verified or if he described a voyage that made NO sense, then why should I believe the other truths that he presents? This is certainly an attack that the world makes on the Christian faith and the Bible:

- But sadly there are Christians who will tell us that when the Bible touches on history or science the details are NOT important because it is not a science or history text book.

While it is certainly not such a textbook, the Bible does claim to be giving us TRUTH and as such when we find things we can see and test, they must be as true as those we cannot see or test.

- So with all of that in mind, let us look anew at all these details that Luke gives and marvel at the truth of the Scriptures!

*[the map is included in the order of worship that is linked to this Sunday on Sermon Audio]*

4 "From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us."

*Those seasonal winds are a known problem in the Mediterranean Sea and Cyprus gave them some protection.*

5 "When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia & Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.

*[they could have continued the trip in such a manner ending up near Troas, but the Centurion made another choice]*

6 "There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board.

*[here again we see real history with the grain ships traveling from Egypt.]*

7 "We made slow headway for many days & had difficulty arriving off Cnidus.

*[compare this to the one day journey from Caesarea to Sidon in good conditions!]*

"When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone."

*[Now they are using the Island of Crete in the same way they did Cyprus]*

8 We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea."

- That is as far as we will go in the text this morning, saving the exciting storm & shipwreck for my message in two weeks, Lord willing.
- What I hope to leave you with this morning is a greatly increased confidence in the Word of God... *[especially for the children]*
- And I can use this town of Lasea as a good example?
- How do you think the explorers who discovered the ruins of Lasea in the 1850's knew where to look?
- That's right: Because of Luke's account of this voyage!

With that in mind, listen again to how Luke begins the account for his friend:

**Luke 1:1: "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed."**

- What are the things in which his friend had been instructed?

At bottom the Gospel, God's story of salvation that we reviewed last week. Luke gives his friend the truth of the Gospel and all that it involved with the lives of John the Baptist, Jesus and now the Apostles in Acts. This account includes the word of God coming to John in the wilderness, the birth of Jesus, His life, His crucifixion, His burial, His resurrection and His ascension into heaven.

It includes the account of how the Apostles were His witnesses in Jerusalem all of Judea and Samaria and now to all the earth.... Declaring that Jesus has died for the sins of His people and now the Spirit of God will use the Church to fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus!

Theophilus could easily have checked Luke's facts when it came to the rulers of that day and he probably knew or could talk with sailors who could verify the details of this voyage. It appears that Theophilus had trusted in Christ as his Savior and now Luke was giving him the confidence to believe and share this great truth.

- It should be the same with us today.

Please hear me when I say again that we cannot argue anyone into the Kingdom and just because someone sees that what we are sharing is the truth, it does not ensure that they will repent and believe...

- That requires a new heart which only God can give through His grace!

What I do want us to hear is the fact that we as Christians do NOT leave our brain at the door when we open our Bibles or come to worship!

- We are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, MIND, & strength.

There is NOT some sort of spiritual truth that is beyond reason that is somehow different from the truth of science and history that we have around us everyday!

Listen to how God pleads with His people in Isaiah chapter one after they have fallen into great sin: "16 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, 17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow. 18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says Jehovah, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. 19 If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; 20 But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of Jehovah has spoken. "

- God did not say, come let us leave reason behind and talk about faith!

- **He said come let us reason together!**

**In this passage God reasons about the forgiveness of sins which is something we cannot see, right along side helping widows or eating good food which we can certainly see and experience. [holding Bible]**

- **What has been given and preserved here is God's Word!**

**His revelation to all mankind with all that we need to know about His Creation, man's fall into sin and His gracious salvation.**

- **This is truth; which stands in opposition to the dominate world view of our day where they begin with only matter & chance.**

**Now I would certainly argue that such a world view requires a whole lot more 'faith,' but it is important that we see that they both do require faith:**

- **We as mere creatures must begin somewhere!**

**The prophet Isaiah tells us that God calls upon us to come and reason together with Him...**

**Luke has written his orderly account so his friend could have a certainty about the things he has believed.**

**John's Gospel is quite a different animal where he gives us the Gospel in a series of stories, not really caring about the details or chronology...**

- **And yet the Apostle John joins with Isaiah and Luke in telling us why his Gospel has been given.**

**John 20:30 "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."**

- **I trust that I have succeeded in giving all of you a bit more confidence in God's Word!**

**I hope that you covenant children will have a new appreciation for all those details you will find as you read through your Bibles!**

- **If you trust God's Word, it will never disappoint!**

**On the other hand I can assure you from first-hand experience that if you make time & matter your god you will never find any of the real answers to life's big questions, nor find any real peace.**

**As Moses gave God's final instructions near the end of his life, they included this call to life from God Himself:**

**"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; 20 that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days!"**

**Communion Meditation: Numbers 10:8-11 "The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; & these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations.**

**When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before Jehovah your God, and you will be saved from your enemies.**

**Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am Jehovah your God.'"**