

Acts (Part Twenty-Six)

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We will go back into the book of Acts in chapter 26 just for a little bit of review. Chapter 26 begins with Paul before Agrippa. Agrippa, remember, was a king under Rome at the time. He was considered by the Roman government to be an authority on Jewish affairs. Agrippa himself was a Jew, or at least mostly a Jew, and he came from a reasonably long line of Herodians. And he incidentally turned out to be the last of that line. Whenever he died, that was all she wrote for the Herodians. But at any rate, he was paying a courtesy call on Festus and Festus introduced him to the case that involved the apostle Paul. Festus wanted to hear what Agrippa had to say about it. And so Paul then had the opportunity to witness to this man of the Kingdom of God.

Now, exactly how much Agrippa knew of Christianity no one knows for sure, but undoubtedly he was at least somewhat aware of it. Maybe he had never heard any missionary evangelist/apostle so close at hand as the apostle Paul. But at any rate, the apostle Paul did get the opportunity to speak in his defense, which actually turned out to be a preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Again, we can understand that a great deal more was said than is actually given here in the book of Acts, that what Luke is writing here is not the entirety of Paul's speech. What we have here is just the essence of what he said and undoubtedly he spoke for a great deal longer time. As a matter of fact, early in the address here, he warned Agrippa that he was going to be speaking for quite a period of time. So we have the essence of what he said.

I think that we would have to understand that Paul gave the man a very strong witness of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He also told him a great deal about his conversion. And that is the third time that we have gone through that so we will not go any further into that.

Then, beginning in verse 19, he begins to talk about the things that occurred to his life after he was converted, how that he went from Damascus to Jerusalem and then into other parts of the Roman world preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. We find that at the end of Paul's defense here that Festus accused Paul of being beside himself, of having gone mad with too much learning. But Agrippa was more impressed positively by the things that Paul said and actually came to the place in verse 32 where he stated that if Paul had not appealed to Caesar, Paul could have gone free.

Now, we might review, just very briefly, why Paul was going before Caesar. In other words, undoubtedly, the major thing was that Christ called Paul to do such a thing. His commission was to go before the people of Israel and he was to go before the Gentiles and he was to go before kings. Well, here he was before a king. And so ultimately, he was going to get before the big king and that was the emperor.

Paul undoubtedly had that in mind whenever he appealed to Caesar. But we also have to remember that Paul felt that if he was released there in the land of Palestine, his life very likely would have been in jeopardy. And so he was actually seeking the protection and custody of the Roman government at the same time. Remember Festus asked him, "Would you go back to Jerusalem?" And Paul did not want to have a thing to do with that because he knew that he would probably be walking right into a death trap if he did that. And apparently that was Festus' terms, either go back to Jerusalem or . . . it was just left unsaid. So Paul picked up on immediately, knew that he should not go to Jerusalem, that his objective was to go to Rome. And if this was the way that God was opening up to him, then he was going to use his right of appeal.

There is another reason as well that Paul might have had in the back of his mind as to why he should exercise that appeal. And that is that he would take advantage of the opportunity of forcing a test case. And that he felt that his case, that is, he representing Christianity, that his case was very strong and that the chances of him being found guilty before the emperor were very small indeed. He had already won two cases. He had won the case with Felix, he had won the case with Festus. But each one of them, he understood, had made a political decision. That they were not really politically free to let the apostle Paul go free because the majority, the Jews, would have to be

dealt with. So they had to take into consideration the political realities and so it was much easier to hang on to one man than it was to face the anger and wrath of tens of thousands of people. And so they made that decision and kept Paul in custody.

So Paul understood that he won the cases even though he was not free. So if he could force the issue and go before Caesar and actually be freed there without having to be concerned about losing his life somewhere in Judea, not having accomplished what God had given him to do, that is to go before kings, he would then go before Caesar, be set free, and it would be very similar to in this day and age of the church winning a big case in the Supreme Court. And that would then give official approval from the highest court in the land that Christianity was a viable and an acceptable religion approved of by the emperor.

Unfortunately, Acts leaves us hanging. We do not know what happened before Caesar. We do not know the end of the story because Luke did not write it and tell us when he got to the end of the book exactly what happened. Now, undoubtedly Paul was let free, but exactly what the ramifications were we do not know. We just know that he spent time in prison there and then he was free for a while. But we do not know exactly what kind of decision was made.

I think that what he was really seeking was toleration from the Roman government for Christianity throughout the entirety of the Empire. So he had very good reason for appealing to Caesar.

Acts 27:1 And when it was decided that they should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.

I think that there are a lot of things that we would like to know about Paul's two-year stay there in Caesarea. One of the first ones that comes to my mind is, where did he get his support? Did the church in Jerusalem support him? The state did not support him. They did not do that in those days. It is not like today where the prisoner is supported by the state government and it costs us tens of thousands of dollars every year for every prisoner that is in jail. That is a fairly recent innovation of government.

If any of you have read English history, if you got thrown into prison in England, you rotted to death there unless you had friends on the outside who brought you food in to keep you alive. Going to prison was virtually the same thing as getting a death sentence if you had no friends to bring you some food. Well, the Romans did not do that either so somebody had to support the apostle Paul. And of course, we can conjecture that it was probably the Jerusalem church or it was the Caesarean church, one or the other, that they kept the apostle Paul alive. And I am sure that they would have been very happy to do that. There is no indication that he was doing any work during that two years.

One of the things that triggers this question is that one of the reasons that Felix held on to the apostle Paul was he was trying to play the apostle Paul for a bribe. Remember he even says that he thought that Paul had a great deal of money and that maybe if he played his cards right, he would get some money from Paul. So Paul must have given the impression anyway that there was money available.

Now, what happened to Silas? Silas was Paul's constant companion for many years, you know, just like the Lone Ranger and Tonto, there was Paul and Silas. Everywhere you read, Silas was with Paul. He is not even mentioned. Where did he go? He just disappears from the scene and we never hear of him again as being a companion of the apostle Paul.

Luke appears to have been around Paul all during those two years. What was he doing? Was he writing the book of Luke? Was he traveling around the area of Palestine interviewing witnesses to the life of Jesus? He might have been doing that during that period of time.

We are going to meet Aristarchus in verse 2. And what about Aristarchus during those years? It appears as though Aristarchus was with him because he begins the journey to Rome with him. And we find a bit about Aristarchus a little bit later, but those kind of things are not given in the way of answers.

But I think that we need to think about those things because we are talking about human beings here. They were people like you and me. They had to get up in the morning and they ate, and they ate lunch and they ate supper

and they had to work. There had to be some kind of an income. You know, what did they do during all of this time? There are a lot of human interest things here that the Bible does not fill in.

But what would you do in that kind of a situation? Suppose that you were a companion of Mr. Armstrong or Mr. Tkach and they were in jail. What would you do? Would you sit there and hold his hands or would there be things that maybe he might have you involved in doing? Writing? Some have conjectured that several of Paul's epistles, rather than being written from Roman prison, that they might have been written from the Caesarean prison. Not very strong, there is not very much evidence to support it, but it is a thought. Time dragged on for two years. What did he do there?

Well, at any rate, we find that the period of time here beginning chapter 27 is late summer, very likely in September, moving up on mid-September. Now the year is a little bit in doubt, anywhere from 59 to about 61. The strongest seems to be somewhere around 59 AD, that they were leaving Caesarea with a centurion and the Augustan regiment.

Now you will notice in verse 1 that the "we's" enter in. Now we are beginning here another "we" section which indicates that Luke is directly involved in these activities and that he took the journey with Paul. It was not something that he got from third parties, but he was an eyewitness of these things. This is the longest of all of the "we" sections in the book and it is easily the most detailed. There are a lot of things in here that one would not think would appear in the Bible, but at any rate they are there.

In chapter 27, Luke is focusing as usual on Paul's journey. Paul is a prisoner and he is being transported from one prison to another. However, he, at least from Luke's standpoint, exerts a great deal of influence on the party of people that are traveling from there to Rome. I think you will be a little bit surprised a little bit later in the chapter (if you have not read it), how many people were involved here. But nonetheless, Paul plays a very key role in the events that are going to be taking place here.

Now, here is this word Augustan again. I mentioned to you the last time that it is actually the equivalent of the word emperor, or to paraphrase it in a more modern term would be, imperial, the imperial regiment. This imperial

regiment, their actual name is the Specularies and they were the Roman equivalent of the MP's, or the SP's for you navy people, the military police. And so they had a military police role throughout the empire and one of their major responsibilities, of course, just like MP's today, was to do police work for the army, make sure that the troops were behaving. And in this case, they were providing a military escort for a prisoner of Rome—Paul.

Acts 27:2 So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put out to sea, meaning to sail along the coast of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.

They sailed from Caesarea but the ship's home port was all the way up. . . Can you remember from the other Bible study where Troas was? Troas was on the northwest corner of what is today Turkey, just right across from Athens. Well, that is where the ship was from and it was sailing back there. They were leaving Caesarea and the plan was to take this ship as far as they could and then transfer to another boat and from there, they would be working their way on to Rome.

Now, Aristarchus. We need to just to look at a couple of scriptures involving him since he has entered the context here. So I want you to turn with me back to Colossians 4, verse 10. Colossians is one of those epistles that was written from prison and the strongest evidence is that it was written from Rome while Paul was imprisoned there. And we find that Aristarchus was with him.

Colossians 4:10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him).

And there are a couple of others who are there with him.

It is not really understood whether Aristarchus was actually in prison with him. He may simply have been referring to him as being a prisoner of Christ. It seems as though Aristarchus went along with Paul though for the purpose of being his personal attendant. Now, he also appears in the book of Philemon in verse 24. Again, Paul mentions several other people.

Philemon 23-24 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow laborers.

It is very unlikely that Aristarchus was actually in prison with him but Paul considered him that way since he was constantly attending to him.

So we begin to get a picture of Paul being taken to Rome as a prisoner, but he is apparently looked upon as a prisoner of some means. He has a personal attendant and in addition to that, he has his own private physician going with him as well in the person of Luke.

Acts 27:3 And the next day we landed at Sidon [going up the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. They are heading north from Caesarea]. Julius [the centurion] treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care.

Well, they made pretty good time. They went about 70 miles. The phrase "cared for" simply means to enjoy the company of. It does not indicate at all that Paul was infirm in any way, not sick. And it is also to be understood, we are going to see a couple of different times when Paul is seemingly free, but he is never free. He is always chained to a soldier, but he at least has liberty to walk around, to go into town. But wherever he goes, he is chained by his wrist to a soldier. So there is freedom and yet there is not the kind of freedom that you and I would like to have. But he is certainly not in jail.

Acts 27:4-5 When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

Now, some of these places you ought to begin to become at least somewhat familiar with. We have mentioned a couple of them before. And when it says that we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, you have to begin to know a little bit of the weather patterns here. The winds were blowing out of the northwest. They were going west and so they were going against the winds. Now, when it says that they sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, it means that

they went along the northern edge of Cyprus hoping to catch the leeward of the island under the shelter of it. So they were sailing in between Cyprus and Asia Minor or what is today Turkey.

Acts 27:6 There [that is, at Myra] the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board.

Alexandria is in Egypt. Remember the ship that they originally got on was going up near Troas. So it was going to go around the western edge of Turkey and head on north. But they wanted to go to Italy, which was directly west of there and so they had to transfer ships. Now this ship was hauling grain. The grain was grown in Egypt, but the big markets were in Rome. And so they were shipping the grain into Rome late summer, hurrying, trying to get there before the winds became too contrary and they would not be able to go. Remember they were sailing ships. They could not tack very well in those days so they could not go against the winds. And so they were at the mercy, pretty much, of the direction that the wind was blowing. And so they had to make it there within a short period of time. And if they did not, why, they were going to have trouble.

Now, these were all privately owned ships in which grain was being shipped to the big markets in Rome.

Acts 27:7 When we had sailed slowly many days [they are still going along the southern shore of Turkey], and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, . . .

This city is at the extreme southwest corner of Turkey. Now, here they would have been entering the Aegean Sea and probably wanted to go up a little bit northwest and go to Greece, and then from Greece they would have hopped over to the eastern side of Italy and then walked across Italy to Rome. However, it did not work out that way. So they got there,

Acts 27:7-8 . . . the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salome. Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

Now they are really off course. If you have a map in the back of your Bible, you will find that what occurred is, instead of going from the southwestern end of Turkey up to Greece and then across to Italy, the winds blew them almost directly south toward Crete. And so they came around the south side of Crete. Crete is a pretty good size island. I believe it is about 150, 160 miles long. And they came to this place that is named here, Fair Havens. We are going to find out it really was not a fair haven at all, really misnamed. It was not a very good harbor, but they were trying to make their way along there and got that far when things began to become unglued.

Acts 27:9-10 Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will end with disaster and much loss, but not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

As I mentioned to you before that, it is felt that this voyage took place in 59 AD. If it did, the Day of Atonement was on October the fifth that year. Now, according to ancient writings, sailing in the Mediterranean at that time, not having the ability to tack with a sail ship very well, it usually was considered best that one not try to travel after September the 15th. If you were going to go west or northwest, the winds just did not blow right.

Well, here it was already October the fifth. Now, Paul was a well traveled man. He had been all over the Mediterranean. He understood it reasonably well. He not only walked all around the place, he also rode all over the place on these boats. And so his counsel was that they just stay right there because he felt that if they got out on the Mediterranean, it was already past the Fast and it was approaching the time that nobody wanted to be out there. Now, the absolute deadline according to these ancient writings was November the 11th. You did not go out on the Mediterranean in a boat after November the 11th. So they were approaching that. Now how close they were, nobody knows for sure, but they were getting there. Paul thought it was too dangerous to go on.

Normally, sailing did not start on the Mediterranean again until—it was considered risky, but nonetheless, fairly sailable—in the middle of February. If you really wanted to be safe, in the middle of March. Now, the owner of

the ship, he had a cargo full of grain and he wanted like anything to get as close to Rome as he possibly could and maybe make it there. He wanted to sell that grain. And I am sure that there were enough passengers on board that they wanted to get to Rome too. Who wanted to spend the whole winter on an island in the middle of the Mediterranean? Well, none of them did.

And Julius, probably his vote was pretty important. Well, Julius listened to the arguments of both sides and it says in verse 11,

Acts 27:11-12 Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.

Well, they thought that they could make it to that harbor where they would be more protected from the winds that they knew that were going to be blowing. So we find that,

Acts 27:13 When the south wind blew, . . .

Superstitious people, they thought this is a good time. A good breeze blowing in the direction that we want to go in. Off we go, everybody in the ship, let's go!

Acts 27:13-14 . . . blew softly, supposing they had obtained their purpose, putting out the sea, they sailed close by Crete.
[Remember, they are still going along the south shore.] But not long after, a tempestuous headwind arose, called a Euroclydon.

Well, believe it or not, Euroclydon means what we would call a nor'easter. That is what it means. Northeaster. Apparently what happened was this: if you look on a map of Crete, you will find Fair Havens a dot right in the middle of the southern side of Crete. Now you will notice right where the dot is there is a bend in the island of Crete. I do not know how to describe it. In my Bible it is right where the dot for Fair Havens is.

Well, apparently what happened is they pulled out of the harbor. They had not been going more than a couple of hours when they got to where that bend was and when they turned the bend, they ran full force into this wind. Now, some commentators will tell you that it was probably a hurricane. Maybe it was. I think that we can say that it was probably at least gale force winds, pretty strong, and it lasted a long, long time. Now there was nothing that they could do. It says in verse 15,

Acts 27:15 So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive.

In other words, they just ran before the wind. What they did is they tied the rudder and they stripped it of most of its sail, and they just let the winds push it, tried to keep it headed as best as they could. And because they could not tack and keep the thing headed into the wind, they just tried to run before it and tried to minimize the damage. And it says,

Acts 27:16 And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty.

The skiff was a little dinghy that normally hung out the bow of the ship. And apparently the thing was becoming swamped and so they pulled the thing up so that it would not be banging against the ship or they would not lose that thing.

Now, this island is a tiny island that is about 20-some miles south of Crete. It is so small it is not on most Bible maps. But when they got there, they decided to take advantage of the shelter of that little island. They pulled the skiff up, tied it so there was not banging around.

Acts 27:17 When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven.

What they did apparently was this. Nobody knows for sure what this means where they used cables to undergird the ship. The best that anybody can figure out is that they took ropes and they wrapped them around the ship in a

longitudinal way. In other words, up and down. Now what that would require would be, apparently, for somebody to take hold of the rope, go down under the ship, come up on the other side, hand the rope to somebody, and then they pulled the things tight as they could and tie them. Now they did that all around the ship because they were afraid the thing was going to break into pieces. It was being pounded so hard by the waves and they did not want it to come apart. So they were really tying the thing together with string so that they would not get lost out there.

Then they struck all the sail that they had and threw all their anchors down to try to keep them dragging on the ground so that maybe they could keep the thing from going toward this place called the Syrtis Sands.

Now, the Syrtis Sands are some sandy shoals that are off the coast of what is today Libya. And apparently it was the Bermuda Triangle of its day and they did not want to get dragged in there because the place had a bad reputation. The sands underneath the waters were constantly shifting and ships would run aground and then they would be helpless there, stuck, and the waves would pound them to pieces. And then the people who were in the boats would get out of the boats and try to make their way into shore and they would come up on the sands. And there was quicksand there and the people would sink in the quicksand and die. Sounds like a nice place.

But it worried these sailors, you see, they did not want to get into that thing in the worst way. And so now they are working frantically. I will give you an idea how frantic they were. They were no closer than about 350 miles, but they were still terrified. They were so terrified that Luke put it in the Bible.

Acts 27:18-19 And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship. On the third day, we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

Three days have already gone by. They are doing everything they possibly can to save the ship, at least piece by piece, the owner probably being concerned about seeing all his profit go over the board overboard with the grain. But nonetheless some of the grain went over. We are going to find out that not all of it went over. But they are throwing over the ship's tackle and whatever, to try to lighten the thing. Now, everything they did so far has

been inadequate. They are probably taking on water. And he mentioned an interesting little thing, just a little aside, that they threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands, which is just a little indication that they had no lifting gear or no cranes on board and so everything had to be done by hand.

Acts 27:20 Now when neither sun nor star appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.

Now, they needed the sun and the stars to get their bearings. They did not know where they were. So they were caught in the midst of this gale, and the clouds, the rain beating down, and they knew that they were drifting, but there was no way to get their bearings as to where they were.

Anybody in that kind of a situation, knowing that your ship is being tied together with ropes and probably creaking and groaning and water sloshing on the decks all over the place, you are going to get very frightened and discouraged. And that is what was happening. Everybody was giving up. And in fact, I think the indication is here that Paul's party too was discouraged. Now, they are human. They have problems with fear, wondering whether they are going to survive anything like this.

Acts 27:21 But after long abstinence from food [we are going to find out how long in just a bit], then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me.

Paul was just human enough to be able to say I told you so. Now I just happen to think about the food here. It is very likely that nobody felt much like eating anyway. I mean, if you are going up and down in the sea like a cork, it was probably "vomitous all over the places." So the apostle Paul prophesied,

Acts 27:22 "And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

I have good news and I have bad news. The good news is we are going to live through this. The bad news is we are going to live through this. If you think you are sick now, this thing is not over yet. There is more to come.

Acts 27:23 "For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, . . .

Now, it is this verse that makes me think that Paul was getting discouraged about this thing. And we have a reaffirmation of the prophecy and also the encouragement that occurred in chapter 23. Remember where the angel appeared to him and he was told that Paul still had work to do, that he was going to get to Rome. And undoubtedly as this thing with the ship dragged on and on and on, he began to wonder, is he ever going to get there? He must have been discouraged. And so Christ gives him some encouragement through this vision. Yes, they would get there. Now, how much the angel told him we do not know. Maybe he did not tell him anything and Paul just felt that the ramification of him being saved meant that the others were going to be saved as well.

Acts 27:24-26 'Do not be afraid [this is what the angel said], Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' [Oh, he did tell him. So they are all going to be safe.] Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island."

Paul wanted them to share his confidence and he certainly gave them, I think, some.

Acts 27:27 [here is how long they had not eaten] Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, . . .

That is not correct. It is the Adrian Sea. The Adrian Sea was an extension of the Adriatic Sea and was generally considered that piece of water. We do not even mark it anymore. It is all just considered the Mediterranean. But it was

that piece of water between Crete and Sicily. The Adriatic Sea is that piece of water that is between Italy and present day Albania, Yugoslavia, that area over there. In the Greek, it says the Adrian Sea and it means exactly that. It was not a mistake and Adriatic is not correct.

Acts 27:27-29 . . . about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. [they must have heard the waves crashing on shore] And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms [a fathom is 6 feet, something like that, so 180 feet deep]; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms. Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come.

So being washed ashore at night would have been extremely dangerous. The sailors recognizing that, put out the anchors. Now verse 30, interesting little sidelight:

Acts 27:30 And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, . . .

Apparently their ruse was that they were going to pull off a little bit from the bow of the ship and they were going to put some anchors out there. But we find Paul again, at least fairly familiar with sailing, and he knew that that was not what you do in that kind of a situation, figured that the sailors were up to no good. And so he alerted Julius.

Acts 27:31-32 . . . Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.

Now, the sailors had to stay there.

Did any of you ever read *Robinson Crusoe*? They did that same thing in *Robinson Crusoe*. Do you remember that part of the story? When the ship ran aground, it ran aground at night, and they all hopped out and they got in

dinghies. The only one that survived was Robinson Crusoe. Everybody else that was on the ship drowned on the way in. It is a dumb thing to do. That is why Robinson Crusoe was alone until Friday came along. But they tried that same thing and Robinson made it back to the ship.

Acts 27:33 As the day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing.

Now, whether they all fasted 14 days is of course unknown. It may be a generalization again that the majority of the people there really did not eat because they were in no state to eat, the ship tossing up and down, and nothing really could be prepared anyway with being in such a bumpy condition in a fairly small boat. And maybe if they had eaten, it probably would have come up anyway. So for 14 days, they were generally, at the very least, eating very little. Maybe some of them did go 14. How would you like to do that? 14 days on a tossing ship without eating anything? You would have been weak, very weak.

Acts 27:34 "Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you."

I am sure that Paul figured that they needed the strength in order to get the ship in closer and beach the thing and be able to live.

Acts 27:35 And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat.

So Paul leads in prayer in a mixed company of probably 99% pagans. But I think that by the time they got to this point in the voyage, they were pretty glad to have Paul along.

Acts 27:36 Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship.

That was a pretty good number of people. Now, we might ordinarily get the impression there that Paul was on a little ship that was maybe 25 or 30 ft long. But this thing seems to have been considerably larger than that.

Now, Josephus gives a story in here of being in a shipwreck very similar to what Paul went through here and the ship that he was on had 600 people on it and only 80 survived out of the 600 in the shipwreck that he was in, almost in exactly the same area that the apostle Paul's took place. So we really see here some divine intervention. I think it is one of the reasons why that Luke actually included it, to show that God blesses those who are around those people that He is blessing or that He is with. Just exactly as God showed earlier in the Old Testament that other nations would be blessed because of the sons of Abraham. And so here is a son of Abraham, the apostle Paul, and 200-some other people owe their lives to the fact that Paul was in their midst and God had things for Paul to do. And so it was a blessing to them that Paul was not only heaven sent, he was also heaven protected as well.

Acts 27:38 So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw the wheat into the sea.

So there is how we know what they were carrying wheat from Egypt to Rome. And now they got there so they threw the remainder of the cargo over there to make it as light as possible.

Acts 27:39-41 Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land [There was land, but they did not know where they were. Remember, they still had not been able to take a sighting yet as far as we know.]; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. And they let go of the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes [remember I told you earlier that they tied the rudder]; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore. [But the plan went awry.] But striking a place where two seas met, . . .

Now, the only thing that commentators can figure out here is that they aimed to go between the main island and another small island and they met a current. It was coming in two different directions. One going in one way and

one in another and that they got caught in that, were unable to steer the ship, and it forced them right on to a sandbar.

Acts 27:41-42 . . . and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. [They are still in the storm, it is not completely over yet.] And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape.

Remember we mentioned to you earlier how that if you were guarding a prisoner and the prisoner escaped, then *you* received the punishment that the prisoner was going to get. Well, the guards were going to kill everybody. That way they would make sure that they did not get the punishment that was waiting for the prisoners that had not yet escaped, but thought they were going to escape.

Acts 27:43-44 But the centurion, wanting to save Paul [now we find the prisoners being protected by God a second time], kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get the land, and the rest, some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.

So everybody got there the best way they possibly could, but they still did not know where they were. We find out where they were.

Acts 28:1 Now when they had escaped [that is, escaped the ship], they found out that the island was called Malta.

Now Malta is 58 miles south of Sicily and Sicily is right at the toe of Italy. So they, in the storm, actually got pushed in the direction that they needed to go in, which was west and a little bit north. They were not pushed all the way there, but at least they did not go through the Bermuda Triangle and they were able to get them to at least part of the way to Rome. Malta at this time was mostly a Phoenician outpost colony. And it says in verse 2,

Acts 28:2 And the natives showed us unusual kindness; . . .

The word for natives there is barbarians. Now barbarian to a Greek did not mean what barbarian means to an English-speaking person. It is actually a corruption of three very similar words that sounds something like bar, bar, bar. And thus a word was born—barbarian—and it simply means "strange language." A rough approximation of its meaning is "ignorant of Greek." A barbarian was somebody who was ignorant of Greek. The person could have been very intelligent. To you and me a barbarian is somebody who was crude, primitive, savage, but it did not mean the same to them. It was just simply a person who is ignorant of Greek.

They showed unusual kindness. Now, the kindness came in the form of:

Acts 28:2 for they kindled a fire and they made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.

Now cold, here it was November, let us say, early November, middle of the Mediterranean. I doubt very much whether it was cold like Alaska or cold like Michigan or cold like Kansas. It was probably cold like Los Angeles, probably about 50 to 60 degrees but they were wet, they were frightened. They had not eaten regularly for 14 days. They have been tossed all over the place and I am sure that 50 degrees after a dunk in the ocean probably felt pretty cold. And so the fire was very welcome. And we find,

Acts 28:3-4 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live."

Well, there they were. They tried him and convicted him in a matter of a couple of seconds. The apostle Paul cannot go anywhere without running into a jury! Instant justice. Well, their reasoning was that you cannot escape your due. They knew he was a prisoner. He probably still had a chain on him, maybe. I do not know. But they knew that he was a prisoner and the sea

had not gotten him, so now the snake was. The interesting thing is there are no snakes in Malta now, but then there were, and apparently some poisonous ones.

The reasoning here reminds me of the movie *Lawrence of Arabia*. (I see my whole family laughing back there. "I knew he was going to say that.") Did any of you see in that movie they are on that long march where they are going to come and attack that Turkey stronghold from the desert side. All the guns are pointed out to sea. Anyway, it was a real long march across the desert on the camels. And one of the guys, one of the Arabians, the Bedouins, fell off his camel and everybody just kept right on going. Well, Lawrence went back to get him. A real triumphant scene in the movie because they tried to argue Lawrence out of about going back because, he fell in the desert, therefore, he must have had to die out there. It was his fate. It was his destiny. Well, Lawrence goes back because Englishmen do not think that way. You try to save your buddy. So he goes back and gets him and he comes back. Everybody rejoices. Yay, yay! You know, Lawrence did this great thing.

Well, a little while later, the same fellow that he rescued off the desert kills another man. And justice is swift. And so because he killed another man, the man that he saved had to be killed. And guess who executed him. It was Lawrence. So then Anthony Quinn, he was playing one of the Bedouin chieftains, said, "See, it's fate. It was written. You should have left him out on the desert."

That is the thinking here. You cannot escape your destiny. If you are a prisoner and you are worthy of death, and somehow or another you escape the sea, now you see, the gods are still after you. Now the snake is going to get you. And so immediately they leap to the conclusion that he is guilty.

Acts 28:5-7 But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god. [Boy, from one to the other, just like that.] In that

region, there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island [it literally says the first man of the island], whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days.

Now, how many the "us" was nobody knows. I kind of doubt very much it was all 276 of them. But Publius undoubtedly was responsible for the governing of the island and it was undoubtedly also that through him, that the ship's company was directed to go to other people's homes so that those people could be taken care of because there was going to be no sailing until the winter was over. And we find in verse 11 that they actually waited there for three months. So, apparently though, Paul and Luke and Aristarchus were put up in Publius' home, which is interesting. Here is Paul now, the prisoner, he is living in the leading citizen of the whole island's house!

Acts 28:8 And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of the fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.

Well, turn about is fair play. Also it is interesting to note that wherever the servants of God go, they are always on duty. I think I mentioned to you in the last Bible study something about, you know, the servant of God is never a man without a country. Everywhere he goes, he is always a citizen of the Kingdom of God and he always has a nation wherever he goes. And that is the way Paul was.

So here he was being put up by these people and God responded by healing. He not only responded by healing Publius' father, but also we find,

Acts 28:9 So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.

This is one of those statements that helps you to understand that you cannot outgive God. If you treat His people with unusual kindness, He is going to respond in a way that is actually better than the way the unusual kindness was that was given. He has given these people back their good health.

Acts 28:10 They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.

Now, do you not get the indication from verses 7 through 10 that Luke and Paul and Aristarchus looked upon that three months probably as among the happiest that they had spent in a long, long time? To them, it was a wonderful diversion. They were at peace. There was a break from the rigorous pressures of being in prison. He was relatively free, he had a wonderful host, and you can tell the way he is talking there that they had a very enjoyable time. And I am sure that it really encouraged them, lifted their spirits, put them into the right frame of mind and attitude for the things that were going to be coming when they got to Rome.

Acts 28:11 After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship [there they are back in another boat from that area] whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers [Castor and Pollux], . . .

You remember them from Greek mythology. They were the twin sons of the queen of Sparta. I cannot remember what her name was. But in mythology, Zeus transformed them into Gemini, see the twin stars up there, Gemini—Castor and Pollux.

Acts 28:11-14 . . . which had wintered at the island. And landing in Syracuse [Syracuse is on the east side of Sicily], we stayed three days. [So they are heading directly north from Malta to Sicily.] From there we circled around and reached Rhegium. [Rhegium is right on the western part of the toe of Italy.] And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli. [Puteoli was 180 miles. So they really got a good wind there, just blew them right up there.], where we found brethren, and we were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome.

That is interesting that Paul was able to leave the ship and be, again, with a measure of liberty. And again, you always have to understand that he was chained to somebody, but he had a great deal of liberty. I think that God

really gave him a lot of favor in the eyes of that centurion. And that centurion knew that this was a man to be trusted because the soldier that he was tied to, that man could have been overcome by a group of people. But Julius trusted Paul and Paul responded in kind, being a trustworthy individual, even though he was in chains.

Acts 28:15 And from there [from Puteoli], when the brethren heard about us [That is, the brethren in Rome. Now he is traveling from Puteoli into Rome on foot on the Appian Way.], they came to meet us as far as the Appii Forum [which is 43 miles from Rome] and the Three Inns. [A second group met him, which was 33 miles from Rome.] And when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

I had a question as I was studying through this. How did he know that there were brethren in Puteoli? Was he carrying a computer runout or something? Did they have some kind of list with names and addresses of people, who they were and where they lived? Now, if you are a stranger and you are going into a strange city, a city that you have never been to (for all we know, Luke had never been there, for all we know, Aristarchus had never been there) and you just walk down the street and ask people, are you a Christian? Are you a Christian? until you find one who is? If you start thinking about this, it gives you a little bit of an insight in that they had, it appears to me, a fairly well administrated system of knowing where their members were, who they were, and so forth. Very similar to what we have. Because all along the way, wherever Paul went, he always came in contact with brethren. I get the impression that he had lists of people, names and some addresses where he could get in touch.

So the brethren then in Puteoli undoubtedly sent a runner up to Rome and they contacted the brethren up there and they got at least two groups together, one to the Appii Forum, the other to the Three Inns. And I am sure that from what it says here, that "When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage" that he was very grateful. And I am sure that, you know, just like people who have gone all over the world in this era and they come back saying that whether you are in Samoa or South Africa or Germany, we are all

the same. There is a common spirit, a common attitude, a common approach that Paul recognized from the way these people talked, the way they acted, that they were brethren and he was grateful for it, and thanked God for it.

Acts 28:16 Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

He is under house arrest but has still a good deal of liberty. And we will stop there. He is in Rome and we will finish up Acts next Bible study.