

The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it – but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”

Vance Havner

Text

Acts 27:1-26

Topic

When all hope was ended Paul stepped forward and began to lead the passengers, the prisoners and the crew through the storm

Title

“Pastors of the Mediterranean: At Hope’s End”

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

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

Acts 27:3 And the next *day* we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave *him* liberty to go to his friends and receive care.

Acts 27:4 When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under *the shelter of* Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

Acts 27:5 And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia.

Acts 27:6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board.

Acts 27:7 When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under *the shelter of* Crete off Salmone.

Acts 27:8 Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city *of* Lasea.

Acts 27:9 Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them,

Acts 27:10 saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

Acts 27:11 Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul.

Acts 27:12 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*.

Acts 27:13 When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.

Acts 27:14 But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.

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

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

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.

Acts 27:18 And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next *day* they lightened the ship.

Acts 27:19 On the third *day* we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

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

Acts 27:21 But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.

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.

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

Acts 27:24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

Acts 27:25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.

Acts 27:26 However, we must run aground on a certain island."

Introduction

"I'm not an expert. But I did stay at a Holiday Inn."

I sometimes feel a little that way when, as a Christian, I give people answers or advice. Except I'd have to say, *"I'm not an expert. But I did attend a Calvary Chapel."*

You know what I mean. The people you are around need help. They're struggling at home - in their marriage or raising their kids. They're struggling at work – not getting along with their bosses or co-workers. School isn't going very well. You give them answers and advice from God's Word. Instead of listening to you tell them about Jesus they'll listen to just about anyone who they perceive to be an "expert."

It's no surprise that the centurion took the advice of the ship's owner and the ship's captain over that of the apostle Paul. They were the experts.

But they were wrong. Disastrously wrong. So today are many so-called and credentialed "experts." Many if not most of the things people need advice about are essentially spiritual. **You** are the expert – if you know Jesus Christ.

People may not listen – at least not initially. But in the deepest despair of their personal storm they may need you.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Be Concerned For People Who Won't Listen To The Lord Speaking Through You, and #2 Be Compassionate Towards People When They Will Listen To The Lord Speaking Through You.

- being changed to bring change -

#1 Be Concerned For People Who Won't Listen
To The Lord Speaking Through You
(v1-12)

After two years of being held in protective custody Paul had appealed his case to the highest court. He was finally Rome-ward bound. Luke uses twice as many words describing the voyage to Rome as he does explaining what happened when Paul got there. It's a reminder that Jesus is in the journey as well as being your destination.

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

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

Luke (the author of Acts) and **Aristarchus** are the **we** of verse one. It's been suggested by scholars that they may have accompanied Paul officially as his slaves. What does it say about someone who volunteers himself to travel as the slave of a prisoner?

Acts 27:3 And the next *day* we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave *him* liberty to go to his friends and receive care.

Paul was on O.R. (own recognizance). He was allowed to visit the Christians at **Sidon** who gave him provisions for the journey.

Acts 27:4 When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under *the shelter of* Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

Acts 27:5 And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia.

Acts 27:6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board.

It was getting to be difficult sailing against **winds** that were **contrary**. Nevertheless ships were still putting out to sea. The **Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy** was part of the Roman grain fleet.

The Roman author Lucian described a Roman grainship he saw in the Greek port of Piraeus:

What a tremendous ship it was, 180 feet long and 45 feet across and 44 feet from the deepest part of the hold. And the height of the mast and the yard it bore, and the forestays that were necessary to keep it upright - the crew was like an army.

Though privately owned and operated, while contracted by Rome it would be subject to the centurion as the highest ranking government official.

Acts 27:7 When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under *the shelter of* Crete off Salmone.

Acts 27:8 Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city *of* Lasea.

Acts 27:9 Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them,

The conditions were worsening. The **Fast** Luke mentioned was Yom Kippur, the annual Day of Atonement. It was thus early in October. Ancient records reveal that the dangerous season for sailing was from September 14th to November 11th. After November 11th all navigation on the open sea was discontinued.

Acts 27:10 [Paul advised them] saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

This wasn't a prophecy because, in the end, no lives were lost. It was Paul's reasonable advice based on his experience. He was a world traveler. It's been estimated he traveled more than seventeen thousand miles in his lifetime as a missionary. By the time of this voyage he'd already been in three shipwrecks and had spent a night and a day in the ocean!

Acts 27:11 Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul.

Acts 27:12 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.*

The **helmsman**, or captain, and the **ship-owner** and the **majority advised to set sail**. Off they sailed – into the coming storm.

Yes, these guys were “experts” in their field. It's what they did for a living. But that didn't mean they exercised reasonable judgment. Their motives were suspect:

1. The **ship-owner** undoubtedly wanted to insure that his cargo arrived intact and unspoiled. A lot could go wrong as it sat wintering in harbor.
2. The captain undoubtedly thought himself a capable seaman. He would not be upstaged by a traveler!
3. The **majority** didn't like the accommodations! There were no In-n-Outs in **Fair Havens**. (More likely there was no night-life).

Every great disaster movie reveals some ulterior motive, usually greed, for putting lives at risk. It's a common plot theme because it's too often true. The "experts" have ulterior motives that affect their better judgment.

The captain and the owner may have been concerned about their livelihood. The majority seemed concerned about their temporary quality of life. Paul had said he was concerned about **loss** of lives (v10).

As Christians we look upon people who don't know the Lord and are concerned that they do not have eternal life. Thus if they perish they do so eternally.

Eternal life isn't just about the future. It is a quality of life here-and-now. We see people overly concerned about their livelihood, living for this world. Too often they experience the loss of the things that really matter in life.

The same is true of nonbelievers who are pursuing some worldly lifestyle. In the end it's a loss of life because it doesn't fill the emptiness in the heart that only a relationship with God through Jesus Christ can satisfy.

We should look upon all nonbelievers with great concern for their loss of life. In that regard, since we know the Lord, **we** are the experts.

#2 Be Compassionate Towards People When They Will Listen
To The Lord Speaking Through You
(v13-26)

Paul the prisoner and passenger becomes Paul the pilot of the ship in their moment of greatest need. **Tempest tossed and all hope... finally given up**, they listen to him.

Acts 27:13 When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.

You don't have to be an expert to know how fast weather conditions can change. The soft wind meant nothing.

When we share about Jesus people tend to look at their lives and see a soft wind blowing rather than the approaching storm. They don't see their need. So they continue along, pursuing their livelihood and lifestyle, when all the while they are heading into treacherous situations that only Jesus Christ can navigate.

Acts 27:14 But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.

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

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

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.

Acts 27:18 And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next *day* they lightened the ship.

Acts 27:19 On the third *day* we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

What a fantastic description of maritime procedures. These were skilled expert sailors indeed. But all of their expertise could not save them. Instead it had made them overconfident.

I'm not saying the average Christian is 'smarter' than an expert in their field. I'm saying we have an eternal perspective and it is that perspective that gives us wisdom the experts do not possess.

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

A nonbeliever can pursue livelihood and lifestyle into their old age and seem to live a comfortable life. Sooner or later the **tempest** comes and they face eternity. Maybe they have time to react; probably they don't.

People ignore God until they find themselves tossed about by life. Things start falling apart and failing. It's then they need us and we ought to be ready with expert advice of our own.

Acts 27:21 But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.

Why mention they had not eaten for some time? To remind us who believe that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from God!

Paul wasn't saying, "*I told you so!*" He probably wished he had been wrong.

He was taking them back to the place where he had shared God's wisdom with them. He was showing them that a life led by God gives you true hope rather than false hope. If you want to live for your earthly livelihood and lifestyle you will incur disaster and loss. Eternal life is abundant life.

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.

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

Acts 27:24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

Acts 27:25 Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.

Paul based his expert advice on the Word of God. In his case an **angel** stood by him and gave him an immediate Word from God. In ours we have the written Word. Everything we need in order to advise people is contained in it. Marriage advice; parenting advice; how to get along at work and at school; what kind of citizen you should be; etc., etc. It's all in the principles and precepts of God's inspired, inerrant, infallible Word.

Acts 27:26 However, we must run aground on a certain island."

Whoa! How is that abundant life? If God really cared for them, why not just calm the storm?

He didn't just calm the storm because He had a lesson to teach them. Doing business with God requires faith. Paul said (v25) **I believe God**

it will be just as He told me. Later in this chapter some of the sailors try to escape the ship on their own by secretly launching the lifeboat. They heard the Word of God but did not believe it by faith. They trusted their own ways instead. It would have led to their deaths and the deaths of all on board.

It's so sad when a person is being tossed about in a personal storm but will not exercise simple faith in God to get them through it. They try to find some lifeboat in the world, some expert that tells them either they don't really need God and His Word or that they need more than God and His Word. It sounds good; after all, these people are experts, are they not? They have education and degrees. They have recognition.

But they don't have Jesus. Or, if they do, they don't really rely on Him because they think they've found a better way.

With compassion you need to go on sharing with storm-tossed travelers the simplicity of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Their needs are essentially spiritual. Their greatest single need is to know the Lord or to know Him better. If you know Him and are walking with Him, **you** are the expert.

There is a notable storm at sea in the Old Testament involving a man of God on board the tempest-tossed vessel. It's the story of Jonah. In his case, *Jonah was the cause of the storm!* He was walking in disobedience to the Word of God. The sailors had to throw him overboard in order to preserve their physical lives.

We want to be Paul and not Jonah! We're the experts but need to humble ourselves to walk with God. We need the faith to believe that livelihood and lifestyle are not as important as living for the Lord. It's too easy to get caught-up in the things of the world and just go along for the ride. It's too easy to be sleeping in the boat while nonbelievers are perishing.

Ask the Lord what He wants you to do to reach your mission field. Then give biblical answers and advice to your fellow 'passengers.'

