

Acts Chapter 27

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Date: 16 December 2013

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] We are continuing with the discussion of the shipwreck of the Apostle Paul. This is a circumstance that came about in his life that I'm sure he had no idea previously that he was going to be sent to Rome under these kinds of circumstances.

When the Lord first called Paul, he made it clear to him and to Ananias, who went to him after the Damascus Road experience, laid his hands on him, he received his sight, etc.

The Lord revealed to Ananias that this Saul of Tarsus was going to be raised up to be a witness before men, before priests, before Gentiles, before kings.

How in the world was that all to come about? Even though Paul was a Roman citizen, you don't just go into the presence of the king uninvited. You do not schedule an appointment to see the Caesar.

There have to be circumstances by which he is bringing you to him. And here are the circumstances. He has been placed under arrest. And because he is a Roman citizen, he is afforded a protective custody.

[1 : 09] He is handcuffed to a Roman soldier 24 hours a day. Four different soldiers each day. And they worked in six-hour shifts. And one guy would come and relieve another.

And Paul would have opportunity to communicate with this Roman soldier. And we can be sure that he did so. And when he wrote to the Philippians, he mentioned to them that even though he was imprisoned, even though he was a prisoner, and he referred to it as his bonds, his handcuffs, his bracelets, if you will, he said, the things that have happened unto me have rather fallen out to the furtherance of the gospel.

So sometimes God can use what appears to be negative circumstances in someone's life to accomplish a positive goal. And I've seen this time and time again over the years.

I've seen it with funerals. I've seen it with people coming to an appreciation of God and who he is and placing their faith and trust in Christ based on the death of someone else because they attend the funeral.

And hearts tend to be more open and more susceptible to spiritual truth at funerals because we are all faced with our mortality at a funeral.

[2 : 25] People will think about spiritual eternal things more at a funeral than perhaps they will any other time. And although it may have been the death of a loved one, God may use that to make an entryway into their heart to cause them to ponder what after this.

So even through negative things, sometimes positive things can come. And God is very good at doing that. So we find ourselves in the midst of a two-week-long storm.

Called Euroclidon. And these people are on board this huge Egyptian green ship. It was carrying a cargo of grain and other goods from Alexandria, Egypt, north up the Mediterranean with the destination of Rome.

But we will see shortly it isn't going to get any further than Malta. Paul had already told them, it's not a good idea to be setting sail from this port.

Why don't we stay here until the sailing season returns? Because the time of violent weather is about upon us. So the Roman officer, whose name is Julius, who's in charge of the whole shebang, went to the ship's captain and says, this guy, Paul, says he doesn't think we ought to go.

[3 : 47] What do you think? The ship's captain says, I think it'll be all right. It's going to be close, but we can make it okay. And the Roman army officer took the ship's captain's advice as opposed to Paul's advice, which would not be an unreasonable thing to do.

Because after all, this guy had been captain of a ship, probably been on this Mediterranean Sea for years and years and years. And who's this guy anyway? He's just a Pharisee, a Jew, a Roman citizen.

He's a landlubber. What does he know about being out in the sea like this? So they set out. And this tempestuous storm came upon them, and it was a doozy.

Lasted for two weeks. Couldn't see the sun. Everything is clouded, soaked in, waves, tempests tossed. They got to the place of where they frapped the ship, an expression that was used back then.

They had huge cables. Huge cables went underneath the ship, under the hull of the ship and up on the other side. And they had a way of lacing those cables or those ropes together in an effort to simply keep the ship from breaking up.

[4 : 58] It was an effort to reinforce the thing because the waves were doing such a job on it, it was close to coming apart. So they engaged in that frapping procedure.

And we are told that in verse 21, top of page 632, after long abstinence, and by the way, if you look at the previous page, you can see that this thing was so desperate, this storm was so great, that these sailors were saying things to one another like, man, we're not going to make it.

This thing's going down. We're going to lose all hands. And the text says that all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned, is the way the 20th century New Testament rendered it.

Weymouth says the last ray of hope was now vanishing. New English Bible says at the top of the page, and our last hopes of coming through alive began to fade.

It's looking more and more dire. We're not going to survive this thing. But after long abstinence, and by the way, the read, the bold print is the King James Version, and we'll be just reading that, and the others are alternate translations below.

[6 : 19] But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, and he probably screamed, probably had to yell in order to be heard, and be reminded that there are 276 people in all, counting the soldiers, counting the crew, counting the prisoners, and there were multiple prisoners on this ship, and we'll see that later.

Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me. I guess even the Apostle Paul could not resist that, I told you so.

You should have listened to me. Didn't I tell you? Didn't I warn you that this is what was going to happen? You guys wouldn't listen. And we should not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

You see what it's brought upon us? And now, I exhort you to be of good cheer. What? What?

When all hope that we should be saved is lost? We're not going to make it? Man, I've been on a lot of voyages on this Mediterranean, and I've seen a lot of storms, but I've never been in one like this, that has lasted this long.

[7 : 38] We're going down. And now, Paul is saying, I exhort you to be of good cheer. Well, why in the world should they be? And then he makes this utterly bold, bold statement.

For there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. Ship's not going to make it. But all the people on board are going to make it. And here's how he knew that. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul.

These are always the introductory words that an angel utters whenever he confronts a mere mortal. And you see this all throughout Scripture.

Remember when the Lord appeared to Mary, she was terrified. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Mary, she was absolutely terrified. And the reason these angels are so scary is because in many instances, in fact, in most instances, these angels appear to be much like a human being.

[8 : 56] They don't appear with a big halo, big white wings, and a long white gown. That's not the way. They appear to be humans. But the thing that is so scary about them, that scared Mary, and that scared Joseph, when the angel appeared to her, was that you are looking at a space where there is nothing and no one.

And all of a sudden, bang, just like that, this being appears. And it's terrifying. Because when you're looking in a direction where there isn't anybody, and you don't see anybody coming, approaching you, but all of a sudden, just, there they are, out of nowhere.

That's terrifying. And when Zacharias experienced that in Luke 1, in the temple, when the angel came to inform him that he was going to be the father of John the Baptist, he was scared witless.

And Mary was scared. And Joseph was scared. They were all scared because there's not supposed to be anybody there. It's just as if someone would appear between me and you, standing

right here, where there was nobody before.

And you say, whoa! Where did they come from? What's going on? And that's how the angel appeared. And an angel always has to give the same entree. Fear not! That's what they always say. [10:14] Don't be afraid. Don't be scared. It's all right. It's all right. And then when he gathers his wits about it, the angel delivers the message. Fear not, Paul.

Thou must be brought before Caesar. That's the Roman emperor at the time. And lo, God has given thee all them that sail with thee.

Wherefore, sirs, and he's talking to the crew and everybody who will listen, and I'm sure that he is shouting because the storm and the waves are so noisy.

Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me. I can still imagine that some of these men, some of these seasoned old saints, some of these foul-mouthed, blaspheming old guys who've been on this board, this ship for who knows how many years, are thinking, this guy's probably nuts.

What's he talking about? An angel appearing. And I don't believe this baloney. He's just trying to make everybody feel better and this thing's going down and I know disaster when I see it. There are no doubt we're some doubters.

[11:31] And he goes on to say in verse 26, how be it, we must be cast upon a certain island. And this island, of course, is going to be the famous Isle of Malta.

Anybody ever see Humphrey Bogart's movie, The Maltese Falcon? Well, this is where the falcon came from. Malta. And there is a Maltese cross.

If you've seen the Maltese cross, it's a familiar configuration of the cross, but it's a little different than the typical standard kind of Christian cross. It's the Maltese cross.

And this island, there's an order of knights, the Knights of Malta. It's a fascinating, fascinating place. We were able to visit it when we were on a Mediterranean cruise. And it is unlike any place I'd ever been.

There was a huge battle that was fought there between the Christians and Muslims several hundred years ago. And it was a rousing victory for the Christians. This is, it's a wonderful place to visit.

[12:36] And I'll tell you why later. Some of you have read the book about Paul's anchors. So he says, we must be cast upon a certain island. And, but when the 14th night was come, two weeks, two weeks they've been under this storm.

And as we were driven up and down in Adria, that's the Adriatic Sea, about midnight, the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country.

This is the crew. Now we don't know how many there were, but on a ship of this size with 276 people on it, there could very well have been 30, 40 crewmen because they have to handle all of the sails, all of the rigging and, and, and care for everything that needs to be done on a ship of this size.

So it's a pretty good sized ship. And when the, the shipment deemed that they drew near to some country, they were seeing it off in the distance, they sounded and found it, that is, they took soundings, these are probing of the depth, they put down these instruments to determine what the depth is of the water where they're at because they know what's a safe depth and what is not.

They sounded and found it 20 fathoms. Now a fathom is, what's a fathom? 6 feet? So this would be 100, this would be 120 feet deep.

[14:06] And we are told that, and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again and found it 15 fathoms.

So now it's a little more shallow. Now it's 90 feet deep. Then fearing, lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern and wished for the day.

They're just praying, hastening, wanting daylight to come badly because the visibility, of course, would have been really cut down and they just couldn't see that well where they were and what was going on.

And they were, if they fall upon these rocks, if the ship goes upon the rocks, it's going to be curtains for everybody. They cast these four anchors out of the stern. And I won't belabor the point, but those of you who read the book, The Lost Shipwreck of Paul, can appreciate the fact that out of everything involving that ship, the only possibility of anything on it surviving for 2,000 years would be the anchors.

And the anchors were made of metal. The anchors had a particular configuration. There were Greek anchors that were built in a certain way. There were Roman anchors that were built and shaped in a certain way.

[15 : 31] And an anchor could virtually be identified by the shape because different countries had different kinds of anchors. And a large ship had multiple anchors on it. And this ship did.

And when we were on Malta, we were able to see and touch some of those anchors that were suspected of having been the anchors that were on board this ship.

And they were brought up by fishermen. There on the island of Malta, there are a lot of men who fish for grouper. And these are large groupers. And they would fish, they would go down and spear these groupers.

No scuba diving, no gear like that at all. They're just seasoned fishermen. They go down with spear guns and they shoot these groupers, bring them up, and sell them to the local restaurants.

And these were the men who discovered those anchors. And one of them didn't have any idea what it was all about. And he actually had the thing melted down and made into something else, which is tragic.

[16 : 29] But they had the anchors on the display there at the Nautical Museum on the island of Malta. And it was fascinating to see those. So let's continue on. They cast the four anchors out of the stern and wished for the day.

And as the shipmen, that's the crew, were about to flee out of the ship. These guys are abandoning ship.

This is the crew. And they, of course, are looking out for number one. Now we're at the bottom of page 633, and we're going to turn to the new sheet that you've got. And when they had let down the boat into the sea, this was the lifeboat because they had, just like modern ships today, have lifeboats on it in case something happens to the main vessel, they can put the lifeboat over.

This was a large ship that was carried alongside of the main ship and these guys were cutting it loose so that they could drop it down and get in that ship and make for land.

Because this would be a ship that had oars on it, and when you're even in a tempestuous sea, if you've got oars, and a lot of oars, and a number of oarmen, you can make some headway, even against the kind of waves.

[17 : 47] And these were probably a bunch of hardy guys, and sailors, and used to rowing, and everything, and they were actually going to abandon the ship and leave these people there to their fate, because they obviously didn't believe Paul when he said that not a soul will be lost.

These guys were very skeptical, and they thought, hey, this is our chance now. We need to put down the boat. All of these guys probably were buddies. They knew each other well, and they were just going to leave everybody else on the ship to their end.

And we are told that they were about to flee out of the ship, and when they let down the boat into the sea, now let's go to that next page, it says they had already lowered the ship's boat under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship.

Now this is a little confusing here, but when it says under color, Lomza's translation says under pretense that they were going in it to make the fast the ship to the land.

This was an act of deception. They were pretending to do one thing while they were really planning to escape, and the text makes that quite clear, as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship.

[19 : 06] Paul recognized what they were doing. He saw through it, and he realized what was going on, and he thought, uh-oh, these guys have to be stopped.

And then, verse 31, Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, now these are Roman representatives, Roman officers, as opposed to the shipmen, who were probably not Romans at all, they were probably Egyptian, and he said to the centurion, and to the soldiers under him, listen, except these abide in the ship, that is, these seamen, these deck hands who are planning to get away, except these abide in the ship, you're not going to make it.

These guys need to stay on the ship with everybody else. And then, the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

This time, they believe Paul. And the soldier says, oh, they are, huh? They're going to, well, we'll see to that. And they just take their knives and go over and slice those ropes, let the boat drop away, so there's no way those seamen can take those boats and get away.

This time they believed Paul, and they let her fall off. And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, take something to eat.

[20 : 37] And the reason for that is, they'd gone a long time without eating, probably snatch a bite here and there during this tremendous storm, but these people have some really rigorous activity ahead of them, and you're going to need some energy that you probably don't have now.

And he's encouraging them to take meat, and this phrase meat doesn't mean flesh meat like beef or pork or something like that. When the Bible uses the word meat, it usually means food in general. Sometimes it means flesh, but usually it just means food in general. Take something to eat. This day, is the 14th day, two weeks that you have tarried or that you have waited and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

This ship is tossing and turning up and down and back and forth and sideways every which way you can imagine. And to serve a meal on board a ship like this under these conditions would be impossible.

So these people have probably been just snatching a bite of something or many of them have probably taken nothing. It's a kind of a forced fast. But when you know that your life is in danger and you may die within the hour, you're generally not too concerned about eating.

[21 : 57] And all they're doing is hanging on and trying to survive. And Paul says, wherefore, I pray you to take some meat. For this is for your health and for your endurance.

you're going to need the energy whatever this food will provide. For there shall not be an hair fall from the head of any of you. You're going to make it.

And when he had thus spoken, he took bread and gave thanks to God in presence of them all. And when he had broken it, he began to eat.

This was nothing but a piece of bread kind of the size of our pancake. And they would just break it and use it kind of like a sandwich. And he says, I lost my place here.

He gave thanks in the presence of them all. He broke it, began to eat, and then were they all of good cheer. Spirits came up and they took courage and they also took some food and we were in all the ship, 200, three score, and 16 souls.

[23 : 14] And that is an interesting expression, really captured my attention. And this is the term that is used today on vessels, whether it's airplanes or ships at sea. And whenever you hear a captain of a plane, a pilot of a plane, talking about his passengers, he always refers to them as souls.

That is interesting. And he'll say, this is American Airlines, flight number so-and-so, disembarking with 122 souls on board.

And that's a curious expression. They use the same thing on board ship. And that's a term that goes all the way back to the biblical. They don't even call them persons, they call them souls.

And I'm not going to go into it, but we've dealt in the past with the makeup of the human soul and we believe that it's a material part and a new material part. And we base that on Genesis 2-7 where God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became a living soul.

Up until that time, he was just a lifeless lump of clay. He was a body, but he was not a soul. And it is the soul plus it is the physical body plus the non-physical spirit comprises the human soul.

[24 : 27] Which means you do not have a soul, you are a soul. and your soul is made up of materiality, body, and immateriality, your spirit.

Fascinating study. Three score, 200, three score, and 76. So we've got 276 people on board. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and cast out the wheat into the sea.

They're trying to lighten this vessel. and when it was day, they knew not the land. They couldn't recognize the land. They saw that it was land, but they couldn't tell what land it was.

They could not make out what land it was. But they discovered a certain creek with a shore into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

They looked ahead and saw where it would be a good place to put the ship ashore if they could possibly do it. And verse 40 on the flip side says, And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea and loosed the rudder bands, that is, the lashings of the rudder, unloosed the gear of the steering oars, they cut the ropes and hoist up the mainsail to the wind and made toward shore.

[25 : 53] Let her go. And they've got the mainsail up. They're trying to catch all the wind they can. They've pulled the anchors. They've done everything they can to make the ship as navigable as

possible. And they made toward the shore and falling into a place where two seas met.

That means this is a place in the ocean where there is a configuration. This is probably a kind of whirlpool that is created there by turbulence.

where the current comes together and it's especially violent there where these two seas meet and they ran the ship aground.

Of course intentionally. And the forepart stuck fast. That is the bow of the ship was solidly implanted in the rocks and in the shore.

and it remained unmovable. It's a ground now. It's not going anywhere. But they are at least on something that is hard. They're not at land but they're on shoals out in the water some distance from what you would call the land or the beach.

[27 : 05] And they remained unmovable but the hinder part, the stern, began to break up because it's more susceptible to that turbulent current there and the back of the ship is just being ripped to shreds and with the violence of the waves and the soldiers council was to kill the prisoners.

What? Is this a time to be thinking about killing the prisoners? Yes. Because they assumed that these prisoners it's going to be an every man for himself thing and they're going to escape.

And you know what the Roman law was? about soldiers who guarded Roman prisoners? If they escape, the one who is guarding them pays the penalty for whatever would have been exacted upon that prisoner if he were found guilty.

And that means that the soldiers would be put to death. Why in the world would Rome have a law like that? Because they want to make sure that no soldier is going to take a bribe.

No soldier is going to take a bribe if he knows he's going to have to pay the penalty for whatever the guy would have been charged with if he got away. So they're going to put these prisoners to death.

[28 : 24] And I'm sure that was standard operating procedure, lest any of them should swim out and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, this is Julius, who struck up a relationship with Paul, kept them from their purpose.

he took charge of the situation, he was in charge, and he told them, fellas, we're not going to do what we would normally do under these circumstances. We would kill the prisoners.

We're not going to do that. Put away your weapons. We're not going to kill the prisoners. And he kept them from their purpose and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea and get to land.

And the rest, some on boards, planks, anything that you could use that would float. You stretched your body out on the planks. Remember, the ship was being all torn up and it was in pieces.

You get one of those pieces of flotsam or jetsam and you put your body on it and you paddle your way to shore however you can on boards, some on broken pieces of the ship.

[29 : 35] And so it came to pass that they all escape safe to land. Now, we'll take up chapter 28 next time. This is the last chapter in the book of Acts and we're almost finished with it.

This was a horrendous experience that they had in this shipwreck. Joe? It's interesting that this part of the Bible is such detail of an incident.

It is. Why the detail of such an incident where other incidents happen? You don't get detail, it just happens. I don't know other than to say, well, first of all, of course, it's inspired of God, so we know that's the first point.

But do you know who's giving this record? Who's writing this? Luke. Dr. Luke. Luke is a physician. And if you know anything about physicians, they do pay attention to detail.

Because detail can be very, very important. Doctors and lawyers go over details with a fine tooth comb. And it could well be. And for instance, when you read the birth narratives of our Lord, you read Matthew's account.

[30 : 45] What does Matthew know about birthing babies? He's a tax collector. Not much of anything. So you don't find it there other than the fact that it's a birth. But when you read Luke's account, Luke gives the whole thing.

Because Luke is speaking about birth from a doctor's standpoint. And not only that, but when you read about in Luke's gospel about the healing of different diseases and things like that, the kind of maladies that people had, which arm it was that was injured, that was healed, Luke always specifies and gives the details, where the others just kind of gloss over it.

So that's interesting when you keep in mind that Luke was a trained physician and he wrote from a doctor's standpoint as opposed to the others. These are good.

They are good.