



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

"RIDING THROUGH"

THE BOOK OF ACTS-LESSON 27

In chapter 27, we read Paul's last recorded journey in the Book of Acts. Two years earlier, God had promised Paul that he would see Rome (Acts 23:11). Little did he know that he'd be going as a chained prisoner.

In this chapter, we get a small glimpse of what travel was like in the New Testament. Luke gives us a very detailed, eye-witness description of the journey. (The pronoun "we" had not been used since Acts 21:17-18.) Luke keeps a careful record of the events, painting a great picture of the story for us. We almost feel as if we were there. Just another exciting day in the life of Paul the apostle ...

First Day

Our journey begins in Caesarea in August, A.D. 59. They were looking to board a coastal vessel in Adramyttium, which was a city south of Troas. This would take them to a port where they could hop on another ship headed for Rome. Their plan was to reach the imperial city by the end of October.

1. Read Acts 27:1-44. Note any key words, repeated words or phrases as you read. Write down any questions that you have. Look up the cities on a Bible map, if possible. Define the sailing terms.

2. What do we learn about Paul at first reading? What do we learn about God?

3. Read Acts 27:1-3 again. Who was on the ship with Paul?
4. Who was Aristarchus? Read Acts 19:29, Colossians 4:10, and Philemon 24. How did Paul refer to him? What does this tell us?
5. Where was Paul going? Who was going to meet them?
6. According to verse 1, who delivered Paul to Julius?

The meaning of the phrase "**other prisoners**" in verse 1 suggests that the prisoners were in another category. These "other prisoners" may have already been sentenced to death. Paul may have been the only Roman citizen on board who was requesting to see Caesar.

7. How was Paul treated when he arrived in Sidon, thanks to Julius? What was Paul allowed to do?

As we read the first three verses of this chapter, we can already see God's perfect plan in setting up this day in history. He arranged this meeting long ago. Things in our life don't just "happen," do they?

Memory Verse of the Week: "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me." Acts 27:25

Second Day

Write your memory verse. What does it mean? How can you apply it today?

1. Read Acts 27:4-20. What was the weather like?

From Caesarea, the ship traveled 80 miles north along the coast, stopping first at Sidon (vs 3). The ship then kept to the east and then to the north of Cyprus to gain some shelter from the rough winds. By sailing along the mainland coast, the ship was able to take advantage of the land winds, together with the current winds which ran to the east.

The centurion was in luck! He found a ship headed for Rome, just what he was looking for (vs 6). It was an Egyptian grain ship (vs 38). Egypt was the granary of the east. Many of its huge grain ships were, at this time, engaged in the service of the Roman government. They were given special consideration to those who ran these ships.

Even after boarding their new ship, the strong winds hindered their travel, so it took many days to go the 130 miles from Myra to Cnidus. They then went southwest to Crete, passing Salome, and ending up in Fair Havens. Now the centurion had to make a decision whether or not to remain in Fair Haven for the winter months, or try to get to the port of Phoenix, about 40 miles away. Fair Haven was a very small bay about halfway along the southern coast of Crete, not far from the ruins of Lasea. It was not a good place to "winter."

2. What was Paul's opinion on the matter? Why?

3. Was Paul speaking from experience? Had he ever been shipwrecked before?
Read 2 Corinthians 11:25.

In verse 10, the word "perceive" means to speak from past experience. Isn't that interesting ...

4. Who was gathered to make the decision? What decision did the centurion make?

The centurion was the senior officer on command. He was responsible for delivering the prisoners to their destination safely. The captain was responsible for navigating and recruitment of the crew. The owner of the ship was employed by the captain, and would be under contract with the government.

The "fast" that Luke is talking about in verse 9 refers to the Day of Atonement which occurred towards the end of September, or in the beginning of October. Mid-September was considered to be the end of the period of safe navigation of the Mediterranean, and after the middle of November, sailings normally ceased for the winter because the sea was too dangerous.

5. What happened that confirmed to the centurion that he was doing the right thing? (vs 13)

6. After deciding to continue on to Phoenix, what immediately happened? (vs 14)

This stormy wind that arose was basically a typhoon. Sailors call this wind "**Euroclydon**," a Greek and Latin word that means "a Northeastern." This wind was a compound of the east wind and the north wind. This typhoon blew down from the mountains of Crete. As a result, they were no longer able to "hug" the coast and were driven into the sea. The wind drove the ship 23 miles south to the island of Clauda.

7. What did the crew do when they reached Clauda? (What's a skiff?)

8. What did they do on the third day to make the ship lighter? (vs 19)

9. Why was it discouraging for them not to be able to see the stars? (v 20)

Because the sky was so bad, the captain couldn't steer. The only compass they had was the stars and the sun. If they couldn't be seen, the crew was at the "mercy" of the storm.

10. Describe what emotions the people on board must have been feeling.

11. The centurion didn't follow Paul's advice, and it got him into trouble. That advice was really a warning from the Lord. Does God still give people warnings? Has God ever warned you about something? What happened? Did you heed His voice?

12. Have you ever been in a situation that was so hard, you just wanted to "give up"? How did God encourage you?

13. Often we become disappointed and discouraged in this life. There are four things we can do in order to overcome our disappointments:
 - a. **Let trust prevail** - Read Habakkuk 3:17-19. What are "**we**" supposed to do? What will "**He**" do?

 - b. **Put God first** - Matthew 6:33. What's first in your life?

 - c. **Accept God's plan** - Romans 8:28. This discouragement is part of God's plan for you. Can you praise Him anyway?

 - d. **Remember God's promises** - 2 Corinthians 1:20. Do you believe this? What promise are you forgetting?

14. Read Mark 6:31a. What should we do when we are weary? Read Luke 21:28. What are we waiting for that should change our attitude?

There is a time when we are supposed to "give up." We are supposed to "give up," or surrender our cares to Him, rather than feel defeated. If you feel like "giving up" today because of some situation, surrender it to the Lord. And remind yourself of what your memory verse says -- take heart; God will do what He said!

This ends our lesson for today. Let's end with this quote, **"Every time a believer is defeated, it is because he has taken his focus off of God."** What do you think about that?

Did you find a "Reason the Rejoice" today?

Third Day

What's your memory verse? Are you "taking heart"?

In today's lesson, Paul the prisoner becomes Paul the encourager. While the other crew members were losing heart, Paul never gave up hope. He believed what God told him. Someone once said, "Our peace is not dependent on the removal of the storm, but on the One who has the power over the wind and the sea." Paul was completely dependent on the Lord, even in the eye of the storm! Let's read together, shall we?

1. Read Acts 27:21-29.
2. What phrase does Paul repeat twice when encouraging them?
3. How does he encourage them? What does he say will happen? Why?
4. Who appeared to Paul, and what did he say?

Paul encouraged them by throwing out the anchor of God's presence! God said He would be with them. They didn't have to be afraid because they could hold fast to Him -- He wasn't going anywhere!

5. Read Hebrews 6:19-20. Explain this verse in your own words.

6. According to Acts 27:27, how many nights had they been out at sea?

The men probably thought they were nearing land because they heard the sounds of the breakers crashing on the rocks.

7. What's a "sounding"? (vs 28) Look the word up in the dictionary.

Isn't it interesting that even though Paul is the prisoner, he certainly seemed almost in charge of the situation. He is the one who comes along to encourage, to exhort, to let them know that God was with them. Paul received **courage** and **confidence** from the **Comforter**! God can give us the courage to be fearless in the face of danger, if we trust Him. He is the only reason that Paul could en-"courage" others.

The Bible is filled with great examples of men and women who were very courageous. Let's look at a few that can encourage us to be courageous!

8. Read the story of Gideon in Judges 7:1-25.

- a. How is Gideon an example of courage?
- b. What was he called to do?
- c. Was it dangerous?
- d. What was God's promise to him?
- e. What can you apply to your own life by the example of Gideon?

9. Read some of Joshua's life in Joshua 1:1-11.

- a. What was God calling Joshua to do?
- b. Whose footsteps did he have to follow after?
- c. What was God's promise to him?
- d. How do these verses apply to you?

Joshua is a great example of an obedient warrior for God. He may have needed encouragement from God, but once he got it, away he went! He didn't mope or complain or worry; he took "courage" in God's "encouragement!" (vs 10 ... let's go!) Paul is a great example of courage. He is facing death once again, and he chooses to trust in God's Word, and His promises to him.

10. Do you need some courage today? Read Psalm 31:24. Where can we find it? Is there a certain area in which you are lacking courage?

That's all folks! Aren't you encouraged to have courage? I am! I pray that we will not lose heart as we experience disappointments and discouragements. **Instead, let's rejoice!**

Fourth Day

Review your memory verse.

Let's continue reading Paul's adventures out at sea.

1. Read Acts 27:30-44.
2. As the crew was dropping anchor, what were some of the other sailors doing? Why? What did Paul say about it?
3. Paul gave some practical words of advice. Did they listen to him this time? (vs 33-37)

4. How did their attitude change?

Imagine 276 sailors that hadn't eaten for 14 days, were soaking wet, and probably freezing to death. Here they sit, calmly eating their food. No more panic, no more anxiety. Paul had confidence in the Lord, and that caused them to trust him. He was definitely an example of a confident Christian, don't you think?

It's crucial that we remember that our confidence can't be in our friends, our jobs, our house, our "things," or in ourselves. Our confidence is based on Jesus Christ and what He did for us on the cross.

5. Are you confident in His Word? Do you stand strong in adversity, knowing that He's with you, or do you cower because of lack of confidence in the Lord? What about a situation that you're in right now? Are you acting confidently in God?

6. In verse 38, what did they do to lighten the ship even more? How is this an example of trusting in the Lord?

We now find them spotting land in verse 39. How excited they must have been! You can just hear them yell, "Land ho!"

7. Describe what happened in verses 39-44.

8. What were the soldiers planning to do to the prisoners? (vs 42)

9. Whom did God use to intervene?

10. How did the sailors and the prisoners get to shore? Did they all make it?

Verse 44 tells us that some men used boards to get to land. Do you think that these were the very first "surfboards"? (ha ha ha)

11. God used the centurion to protect Paul. God promises to protect us from the evil one too! And He can use all kinds of methods and people, can't He? **Read Psalm 121.** Write a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for His protection in your life.

Let's end today's lesson in an attitude of prayer, shall we? **Isaiah 25:4** says, "For you have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat ..." Thank you, dear Lord, for protecting us, being our confidence, giving us courage, and meeting every need we could possibly have. We love you, Lord!

Fifth Day

Write out your memory verse. Let it encourage you today. Tell it to your family to encourage them.

This was a very exciting chapter, filled with many applications for us. As we look at a few, pray for the Holy Spirit to do surgery on your heart. He knows what you need.

Why did God allow Paul to be shipwrecked? We may be tempted to think that the poor guy had been through enough! Paul could have made this trip in a few weeks, instead it took seven months! What was God doing? Let's speculate a little ...

1. Could God have been using Paul to draw Julius to Himself? What kind of impact did Paul have on this man? What kind of witness was he?

2. Could God have desired to deepen Paul's spiritual maturity? Could God have been encouraging Paul by promising him that He would carry him through yet another disaster?

3. Can you think of any other reasons that God might have allowed this?

God doesn't always explain Himself, or His ways to us. The Lord never explained to Job why he suffered the way he did. Swindoll said, "**The Bible's focus isn't on who causes the pain or why it's allowed, but on our response to it.**" If your ship is blown off course, what will you do?

4. Have you ever felt like you've been shipwrecked? Maybe floundering in the waters of failure, or just plain sinking with the ship? There is a lot of debris floating in our lives. God wants us to be courageous and hold on to Him, the anchor of our soul! What do you need to do to stay afloat?
5. After reading about Paul's shipwreck, can you maybe see some reason for yours? Is there a Julius in your life that's sinking that you can reach out to? Do others in your situation need someone to offer them courage?
6. Paul brought others hope by his faith in God. Do you live in such a way that offers hope to those around you? Are your children encouraged by your faith?

7. If you are married, what are some ways that you can offer encouragement to your husband? When he is down, do you offer him courage, or discourage him even more?

God is not only our anchor, but He is our lighthouse. A lighthouse serves as a navigational aide to guide and warn ships coming in. A lighthouse is immovable; you can't budge it. It's constant and unchanging. We are to follow "His light" to guide us and direct us in our travels.

Finding God's direction in our life is sometimes very challenging. Just as sailors use a map and a compass to chart their course, we must also use the tools that God has provided for us to chart our course. He wants to guide us through all the rough waters in our life. Are you studying your map -- God's Word? **"If you trust in God, and follow His ways, He will guide you safely into new harbors."**

Let's end with this quote: "If you are not well anchored in Jesus Christ, when the storms of life come, you will want to jump ship."

Are you "anchored" in Jesus?