

## 58—Acts 27.1-44—An Adventure or a Missionary Journey?

- I. Introduction
  - a. I don't have a seafaring story but I do have many stories of loss. Kimberly and Madi story.
  - b. And in seeing this story, I hope we see the salvation of the Lord.
- II. Main Point
  - a. See the salvation of the Lord—Losing everything that they might see and gain Christ who is our everything!
- III. Outline
  - a. The Adventure—Understanding the Storyline
  - b. The Missionary Journey—Understanding the other storyline
- IV. Exposition
  - a. We encounter a new scene in the storyline of Acts. We are nearing the end of the book but this story continues on. At first, I thought what am I to make of this chapter. Maybe I should have skipped it. But like many who have read C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia and only notice the amazing adventure and missed the clear applications to God's storyline, I finally saw it. Let's first try to understand this seafaring adventure.
    - i. Let's make some observations.
    - ii. When we ended last week, Paul was still in prison awaiting his transport to Rome.
    - iii. As we break into chapter 27, this is the story of Paul's journey to Rome to stand before Caesar. Jesus had visited him again and stated that he would in fact go to Rome. That has been in question several times, but every time the Risen Lord Jesus delivers him. The same is true in this chapter.
      1. Can Jesus be trusted?
    - iv. There in verse 1 we see the quest begins. (Acts 27:1) And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius.
      1. First, we see that the authorities have arranged passage to Italy with a centurion and cohort.
        - a. The passengers included are Paul and some other prisoners.
          - i. We don't know anything about the other prisoner.
          - ii. Also, Luke returns to the use of "we" in the passage.
            1. That means he is on this journey with Paul.
            2. And according to the end of verse 2, Aristarchus is also with them.
              - a. How they were able to travel with Paul is not clear. Paul calls Aristarchus "my fellow prisoner" in Colossians 4.
      - v. Second, we see in v. 2 this journey will be a seafaring journey. They board a ship.
        1. I've included a map for you to follow the journey. I think it's important to see how this plays out since we are not familiar with these locations and therefore cannot track them very easily without some help.
        2. It seems they leave from Caesarea where Paul has been for some 2 years and then make a quick stop in Sidon.
          - a. When you are reading a story and the author tells you something like Luke does there in verse 3, (Acts 27:3) And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for, this is important information.
            - i. I think it's funny and ironic that Roman named, Julius, shows benevolent kindness to Paul.

- ii. When they dock in Sidon, Paul was given the liberty to visit with his friends to obtain some kind of care.
  - iii. This sets up a controversy later in this relationship when it is tested in the storm.
- 3. Well, they press on putting out to sea, they sail under the lee of Cyprus.
  - a. You can see that on your map.
  - b. The lee side, is the sheltered side depending on the wind. There seems to be a south wind as they skirt the northside of the island.
  - c. Already, we get some clues to how this journey might go when Luke tells us there in verse 4 that the wind was against us.
- 4. Eventually, they are in open sea, no longer under the shelter of the island and they land at Myra.
  - a. There, they change ships.
  - b. We see the man in charge, Julius the centurion, finds a ship sailing to Italy and they get on board.
    - i. However, it took them more days than normal and they ended up stopping at Cnidus with great difficulty.
    - ii. More than likely this was not the normal path to Italy.
    - iii. Are you beginning to see where this story is going?
- 5. There in verse 7 we see that the wind did not allow them to go further.
  - a. Take notice of the map. They want to go west but they end up going south.
  - b. It seems the winds have shifted and they sail south and need to shelter under the lee of Crete. They are heading in the wrong direction.
  - c. However, the protection of the island from the northerly wind allowed them to skirt the coast and land in a place called Fair Havens which is on the south side of the island.
- 6. The crew and centurion find themselves in a dilemma. Verse 9 gives us a timestamp on the journey that we haven't known about so far.
  - a. The Fast it is referring to is the Day of Atonement which happened in late September or early October.
    - i. They are well past that day, now.
    - ii. That means the voyage is now dangerous.
      - 1. It's like the hurricane season the coastal states prepare for.
    - iii. Most seafaring journeys were over in November. These ships were not built for such violent seas and weather. Nor did they have the equipment to know the forecast.
- 7. In verse 10 we get a key piece to the story. A warning from Paul.
  - a. He says (Acts 27:10) "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."
    - i. When warnings like this happen in a story, we are supposed to expect trouble is coming.
  - b. But why would anyone onboard listen to Paul?
    - i. Friendly or not, Paul is not in charge here. He's not a sea captain.
    - ii. We see that a debate goes on between the centurion and the captain and its owner.
    - iii. They are able to persuade Julius to move on to a more suitable harbor than Fair Haven.

1. In the other storyline, they need to lose a lot more before they can see the salvation of the Lord.
- iv. They want to reach a harbor on the west coast of Crete called Phoenix and spend the winter there.
8. Part of the persuasion was due to the gentle south wind mentioned there in verse 13.
  - a. Furthermore, it was only about 36 miles to their desired harbor.
  - b. Therefore, they pull up their anchor and set out close to shore.
  - c. But we are told there in verse 14 that a tempestuous wind struck them.
    - i. The word for tempestuous is the word we get our English word typhoon from.
      1. In other words, these are what we might call straight-line winds or tropical storm conditions.
    - ii. They call it the Northeaster which I assume comes from the direction it was coming from.
  - d. They are hugging the southern coast of Crete with a very short trip under the lee of the island.
    - i. But the ship is caught and could not face the wind. Verse 15 tells us they gave way to the wind and were driven along.
9. They cross under the lee of another island called Cauda (Cawda).
  - a. There they were able to secure the life boat.
    - i. This is a small skiff or dinghy.
    - ii. It was small and certainly not for use on the open sea. But it could help them get to shore if caught on a sandbar—maybe.
  - b. Because that was the fear. If they continued south towards the north African coast, they would hit the dreaded and known sandbars out there that were too far from the coast to make it to shore.
    - i. There in verse 17 (Acts 27:17) and fearing that they might run aground on *the shallows* of *Syrtis* (Sir tus), they let down the sea anchor and let themselves be driven along. The sandbars are what they are referring to.
    - ii. Therefore, to prepare the ship to sit lighter in the water, they began to jettison the cargo.
    - iii. If they hit the sandbars, they will all likely die because they would be too far from the coast.
10. More desperate measures continue to show up. V. 19—Three days later, they begin throwing the ship’s tackle overboard with their own hands.
  - a. To make things worse, the only means of knowing what direction they were going went dark.
    - i. I would imagine these seafaring men would not be easily frightened.
    - ii. But when the sun and stars disappeared for many days, something drastically changed about the morale.
      1. Hear this statement from Luke: (Acts 27:20) When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and a violent storm continued to batter us, we finally abandoned all hope of being saved.
- vi. When all hope was lost, then a turn of events occurs.
  1. Beginning there in verse 21, Paul speaks again. He has something to say to these men who have lost all hope.
    - a. Men who are experienced seaman can no longer trust in their experience or the ship. They have nothing. The wind is against them and the anchors are not

holding and they have no idea where they are or which direction they are heading.

2. From verses 21 to 26, Paul begins by pointing them back to his previous statement. He was right. They should have listened to him and stayed at Fair Haven. No one on that ship would argue with that, now.
  - a. Paul makes clear that this hope he has come from an angel of God.
    - i. He states something like Jonah's word that he belongs to him and worship/serves him.
      1. They do not know Paul's God.
      2. But they are about to see his salvation.
    - ii. The message delivered is that no lives will be lost but only the ship.
      1. How can Paul say that? And why would they believe him?
- vii. Days turn into weeks. After 14 days while being driven across the sea and having no idea where they are, the sailors perceive that land is near.
  1. With it being midnight, you might ask how they knew that. For the experienced and desperate crewmen, they know what it sounds like.
  2. There in verse 28 they begin checking the water depth. After getting a baseline reading of 120 feet, the next reading indicates they are getting shallower.
    - a. This only brings on more fear. Was this the sandbars they know to avoid? They let down four anchors from the stern and pray to their gods for dawn to come.
      - i. When all hope is lost, we begin looking for concrete answers.
    - b. Feeling they were in for it, the sailors sought to escape in the little skiff.
      - i. There in v. 30 we see they were "pretending that they were going to put out anchors from the bow."
        - ii. But Paul somehow noticed this and speaks again. This time the centurion and the soldiers listen to his warning.
          1. (Acts 27:31) "Unless these men stay in the ship, you all cannot be saved."
          2. The soldiers cut the lifeboat loose and it falls into the sea.
          3. The crew had prayed to their gods but no relief was in sight.
          4. We haven't looked at the map because we don't know where they are and neither do, they.
  3. They have watched for any glimpse of land for days without stopping to eat. They are hungry for safety, not food.
    - a. Paul urges them to take some food because it will give them strength.
      - i. They decided that would be a good idea so Paul gives thanks to God in the presence of all and he broke it and they ate until they were satisfied.
      - ii. There were 276 souls onboard.
      - iii. When they had eaten, they were encouraged and began to throw the wheat they were hauling into the sea to lighten the ship.
  - viii. And then it happened, when nothing was left but the ship which they are going to lose, morning comes and they see land.
    1. They do not recognize it but they do see a beach in the bay. This is good news. They think they can run the ship onto the sandy shore and save themselves.
    2. So, they cut the anchors loose and let them fall into the sea.
    3. They also loosen the ropes holding the rudders.
    4. Next they hoist the foresail to the wind and head for the beach.
    5. However, they strike a reef off the shore and the ship is stuck.

- a. The waves began breaking the ship apart.
- 6. The soldiers, in fear of their lives, plan to kill all the prisoners.
  - a. Roman law stated that if a soldier lost a prisoner, they had to pay for it with their lives.
  - b. The centurion wishing to save Paul, forbid the soldiers from doing this.
- 7. He then orders everyone who could swim to jump overboard and make for land.
  - a. Those who could not swim can go next and they can hold on to planks from the broken ship to get to shore.
- 8. And so the story ends, they all, 276, were brought safely to land.
- b. What a wild story! But how are we to understand it? Again, back to the title, was this just a fun adventure to read or was this another missionary journey? Let's attempt to Understand the other storyline—what are they supposed to see?
  - i. This story displays the hopelessness of saving ourselves and the many losses that come. It also displays their only hope in the one, true and living God who created the earth and sea.
    - 1. You have a captain and his crew who trust in their experience and training and their equipment and maybe their gods.
    - 2. Warnings come. Don't trust in yourselves nor your idols.
    - 3. They dismiss Paul's warning at Fair Haven (which literally means Good Harbor). This is not surprising.
    - 4. They leave Fair Haven and we all expect trouble and it comes.
    - 5. The typhoon-like wind strikes them. The language of the wind and the ship seems personified.
      - a. It literally says, the ship could not look the wind in the eye.
      - b. In other words, God is against them to reveal who he is.
        - i. This is similar to the plagues in Egypt where many Egyptians came to know YHWH.
    - 6. The losses come. Cargo gets tossed. These people are in great danger.
    - 7. And the most troubling statement comes—all hope of being saved was at last taken away.
      - a. This word "saved" is the word we normally use when we talk about salvation. In fact, it's used 5 times in this story.
      - b. You might say, well that means physical salvation. Yes, but through this salvation they were to see the salvation of the Lord and turn to him.
    - 8. At this point, Paul delivers the message from his God. And the message says that God has granted Paul the salvation of all those who sail with him.
      - a. This part of the story seems to allude to the Jonah story. When Paul says, "The God to whom I belong and whom I worship/serve" sounds a lot like Jonah's statement.
        - i. But what's different is that Jonah is running away from Nineveh but Paul is running to Nineveh (Rome).
        - ii. The sailors are in danger because of Jonah. Here, the sailors are granted salvation because of Paul.
        - iii. The sailors in both stories encounter the Lord. Will they trust him? Those in the Jonah story did.
    - 9. As we saw, it went from bad to worse. They have thrown much of their equipment into the sea. Worthless equipment that cannot save them.
      - a. One last possible salvation remains. The little lifeboat.

- b. But Paul makes this unbelievable statement—Unless these men stay in the ship, you all cannot be saved.
      - i. The final means of saving themselves is cut loose and disappears in the darkness.
- 10. Then we have this incredible scene that sounds like Jesus feeding the 5,000.
  - a. To remind us of that story, they find themselves in the desert and we know neither food nor water is found there, like the ending of Psalm 107.
  - b. But Jesus turns the desert into a fruitful place because he’s the Son of God—the Bread of Life.
  - c. And there they eat until they are satisfied.
  - d. So too here. Paul says, “Take some food. For it will be your salvation, for not a hair of your head will perish.”
    - i. Our translations change salvation to strength. I want you to see what it literally says.
- 11. You cannot be thoroughly saved until you have thoroughly lost everything.
  - a. Their anchors did not hold. There’s only one anchor for the soul, namely, Jesus Christ.
  - b. Repentance is a turning from all of those temporary lifeboats and trusting in Jesus.
  - c. Whatever you are going through, the difficulties of this life are constant reminders that everything the world offers to save us leads to the lose of all hope.
  - d. Trust Jesus. He will bring you safely home.
  - e. Look back at the map. Can you explain to me how that ship sailed west and landed on the island of Malta? The wind was furious and blowing out of the northeast heading for the dangerous sandbars off the coast of north Africa. But with no sail hoisted and merely dragging anchors and no way to know which direction they were headed; they land headed in the right direction and landed safely on the land.
  - f. Are you standing On Jordan's stormy banks, And casting a wishful eye, To Canaan's fair and happy land, Where your possessions lie?
  - g. Did they see the salvation of the Lord? Did you see the salvation of the Lord?

V. Response

- a. The possible lose of Kimberly and Joshua story.

Benediction: (Heb. 6:17-20) <sup>17</sup> So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, <sup>18</sup> so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. <sup>19</sup> We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, <sup>20</sup> where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf