ACTS 27:1-44: PAUL SAILS FOR ROME: SHIPWRECK AT MALTA

This narrative is one of the most detailed, instructive accounts of ancient seamanship known to western civilization. It is a principle source on ancient navigation. Luke uses no less than 13 different expressions for "sailing," technical terms that no land-lubber would ever use. He was a very knowledgeable sailor! Though Jewish navigation on the Mediterranean ceased around the end of September, the Gentiles did not shut down until November. This voyage, due to delays and shipwreck, will take from early September (59 AD) until March (60 AD). For an excellent monograph on Paul's voyage including details on ancient navigation, see The Shipwreck of St. Paul by James Smith (originally published in 1880 in London), reprinted by The James Family Christian Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota, no date given.

But this is not just an historical account, in it we will see, 1) the sovereignty and protection of God in the affairs of men, 2) human responsibility to God's sovereignty, 3) the mental/spiritual strength of Paul under crisis, 4) Paul, the captive, emerging as the leader. Before the journey is over, the captain-owner, the helmsman, the Roman centurion, and the crew are taking orders from Paul.

I. v. 1-5   PASSAGE FROM CAESAREA TO SIDON TO MYRA

v. 1   *"we"* = Paul and his traveling companions, Luke and Aristarchus (v. 2)
    "Julius" = a _____ with Augustus' _____.

v. 2   *"a ship of Adramyttium"* – a ship out of the seaport of Mysia (northwest Asia Minor)
    This ship was to sail north, then along west along the coast of Asia Minor. There Julius would book passage for Rome. The direct route was too dangerous this time of year.

v. 3   Stopover in _____ (69 miles north of Caesarea).

    _____ kindly lets Paul go ashore to visit Christians.

v. 4, 5   From Sidon past the east coast of Cyprus, then west to _____ in Lycia.

II. v. 6-13   PASSAGE FROM MYRA TO FAIR HAVEN (CRETE)

v. 6   At Myra, they board a _____ ship, with _____ passengers (v. 37, 38).

    MYRA
- A chief port of the grain fleet that sailed between Egypt and Rome
- Due north of Alexandria, Egypt, the chief granary for Rome
- Rostovtzeff, famous social-economic historian of ancient Rome, says the corporate owners of these ships received special state recognition; they were Rome's grain concessionaires. An actual Department of State cared for this vital trade.

v. 7   Bad winds made sailing difficult; at Cnidus, they are forced to sail southeast toward Salmone, Crete, then around the southern side of the island to Fair Haven.

v. 9   *"the fast"* = the _____ of _____, Tishri 10, was past (i.e., 59 AD, about October 5). Thus the voyage is in a very dangerous time frame (after November 15, all sailing ceased for the winter).

v. 10-13 Paul's Sound Advice Not to Sail & Its Rejection
    Four Reasons Paul's Advice to Sit-tight was Rejected
- v. 11 - The centurion was persuaded by the _____ and the _____.
    The centurion had great authority since the ship was in state service (wheat.)

(OVER)

- v. 12 - Fair Haven was not San Francisco; it was not a good place to winter.
- v. 12 - _____(_____), not far away, was a better winter port.
- v. 13 - A favorable south wind enticed them to sail.

III. **v. 14-44** <u>PASSAGE FROM FAIR HAVEN (CRETE) TO MALTA</u>

v. 14 **The Disastrous Storm Hits:** "A _____ wind called by sailors a _____*"
*A Mediterranean *northeaster* called an *EURAQUILO*.

v. 15,16 As they round the Cape of Matala, the ship is "seized" by typhoon winds and blown off course south by southwest (they wanted to go northwest across the bay of Mesara).

They are blindly driven 23 miles off course and around the south side of the island Clauda (v. 16), (modern Gavdhos), where with great difficulty they haul in the emergency _____.

"<u>We</u> had much work!"_____ includes himself. See him pulling on the ropes trying to get the dinghy aboard! It had probably filled with water.

v. 17-19 OPERATION EMERGENCY PROCEDURES: "All hands on deck!"
- **"haul in the dinghy"** = bring in the emergency lifeboat
- **"undergird the ship"** = reinforce the hull with rope trusses
- **"strike the sail"** = lower the topsail and mainsail" (NASV "let down the anchor")
- **"lighten the ship"** = jettison some of the cargo
- **"cast out the tackling"** = heave over the mainyard and all spare gear

v. 20 _____ dreary nights follow; a hopeless situation with no means of stellar navigation. They are lost, literally.

v. 21-26 GOD'S SOVEREIGN WILL IN THIS CRISIS
Remember: Paul had been on two previous shipwrecks II Cor. 11:25.
v. 21 **"I told you so…"**
v. 22 **"Cheer up"**
v. 23, 24 **"God will deliver all of us… for I must go to Caesar."** Two years previous, the Lord gave Paul this promise, 23:11. <u>PAUL CHOSE TO BELIEVE THE LORD'S PROMISE.</u>
v. 25 **"Cheer up… it will be as God says! Believe it."**

v. 27-44 THE HUMAN STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE

v. 27-30 **The sailors** selfishly seek self-preservation.
v. 31, 32 **The soldiers** listen to Paul and stop the sailors.
v. 33-36 **The Apostle** gives assurance: **"Let's eat."**
v. 37 **The Passengers** on board = _____. Wow! Josephus tells of boarding a ship to Rome in 63 AD that had 600 passengers and it too sunk. (See Josephus, *Autobiography*, ¶3).
v. 38 **The Cargo,** wheat, is cast overboard to lighten the ship.
v. 39-41 **The Ship** is intentionally grounded and desintegrates.

<u>v. 42,43 NOTE:</u> <u>GOD</u> <u>WATCHES</u> <u>OVER</u> <u>PAUL</u>– Again, the Centurion, Julius, saves Paul's life (human volition and God's sovereignty work together).

<u>v. 44 NOTE ALSO</u>: THE SHIP WITH ALL OF ITS CARGO IS LOST; <u>BUT</u> <u>EVERY</u> <u>LIFE</u> <u>IS</u> SAVED JUST AS THE LORD HAD SAID! <u>How would these 279 souls explain this to their friends and relatives</u>?

<u>NEXT</u> <u>WEEK</u>: Ministries at Malta, then on to Rome.