

# Acts 27 - Paul's Wild Voyage to Rome; Shipwreck on Malta

III. Outreach to the remote parts of the earth (Acts 13:1—28:31)

(5) Paul's journey to Rome (21:17—28:31)

(C) Paul's voyage to Rome (27:1—28:10)

(a) Voyage to Italy (27:1-44)

The shipwreck narrative in Acts 27 has more words assigned to it by Luke than are found in the entire Genesis account in Scripture. Luke's amazing details include everything from:

- The vessel's nautical headings
- The type of storm
- The ship's direction of drift
- Geographical landmarks on Malta
- Reef configurations
- Even the depths of the seafloor

Every detail, including how every man on board, including Paul, survived, is included. In addition to highlighting Paul's heroic actions, Luke's narrative includes details which yielded the clues which recovered the very anchors which were cast out...

## Acts 27

(C) Paul's voyage to Rome (27:1—28:10)

(a) Voyage to Italy (27:1-44)

**1** Now when it was decided that **we** would sail for Italy, they proceeded to turn Paul and some other prisoners over to a centurion of the Augustan cohort, named Julius.

**1** When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius.

**1** When it was decided that we should sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were transferred to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the emperor's division.

**1** And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

- "...we" - Luke is tagging along! Many scholars believe that Paul had illness and infirmities, and that Luke was his personal physician.

— It is likely that Luke remained with Paul from the time he left Philippi on his third missionary journey (20:5)

2 And we boarded an Adramyttian ship that was about to sail to the regions along *the coast of Asia*, and put out to sea accompanied by **Aristarchus**, a Macedonian of Thessalonica.

2 And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica.

2 After boarding a ship from Adramyttium that was about to sail to the ports on the coast of Asia, we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, went with us.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

- "...Aristarchus" - he may have been Paul's slave. He certainly spent a lot of time with Paul. — He was the one that the mob grabbed (Acts 19). He was also with Paul on his last visit to Jerusalem, and is mentioned in Paul's letter to the Colossians as very dear.

### **Nautical Terms**

The ships were single-masted, they did not have a rudder; instead two paddles on either side, which they used to maneuver. This chapter discusses an enormous amount of technical details about sailing techniques of the period (inferred from the Greek).

3 The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care.

3 The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care.

3 The next day, we arrived at Sidon, and Julius treated Paul kindly allowing him to visit his friends there and to receive any care he needed.

3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

- The centurion found a coastal ship leaving Caesarea, so they embarked and covered the 70 miles from Caesarea to Sidon in one day

- Even though Paul is a prisoner, Julius gives him the freedom in Sidon to visit the believers of the area. Julius trusted that Paul would not flee.

4 From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

4 From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary.

- 4 After putting out from there, we sailed on the sheltered side of Cyprus because the winds were against us.
- 4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.
- The Jewish belief was that you couldn't really navigate those waters after the Feast of Tabernacles: they are running out of time and running into the storm season
  - From Sidon to Myra, the voyage became difficult because of the westerly winds

The model ship below is an exhibit at the Maritime Museum in Malta...



- 5 When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.
- 5 When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.
- 5 We sailed along the sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia and reached Myra in Lycia.
- 5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.
- This was a 14-day journey by ship that spanned 500 miles
- 6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it.
- 6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it.

6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship bound for Italy and put us on it.

6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

- At Myra, Julius, a Roman officer, found a grain ship going to Italy; so he abandoned the slower coastal ship and put Paul and the others on board this large grain ship from Egypt that carried 276 passengers (Cf. v37-38)

- There were no ships at this time devoted exclusively to passenger travel

- According to a contemporary description, these large ships were usually 180 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 44 feet deep from deck to the hold

7 When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off **Cnidus**, since the wind did not permit us *to go* farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone;

7 When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us *to go* farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone;

7 We sailed slowly for a number of days and with difficulty arrived off Cnidus. Then, because the wind was against us, we sailed on the sheltered side of Crete off Cape Salome.

**7** And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;

- "...Cnidus" - southwestern tip of Asia Minor, where the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas meet, 108 miles south of Ephesus

- A northwesterly wind forced the ship southwest to Crete

8 and with difficulty sailing past it, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

8 and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

8 Sailing past it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

- After sailing along Crete's east and southern coast, they finally reached the port of Fair Havens



9 When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even **thefast** was already over, Paul *started* admonishing *them*,

9 When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul *began* to admonish them,

9 Much time had been lost, and because navigation had become dangerous and the day of fasting had already past, Paul began to warn those on the ship,

9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,

- Evidently, the captain waited for a considerable time for the weather to improve in Fair Havens

- "...the fast" - refers to the Day of Atonement, which fell in September/October; every sailor knew that sailing was difficult from mid-September to mid-November, and impossible from mid-November to February.

10 saying to them, "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."

10 and said to them, "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."

10 "Men, I see that during this voyage there will be hardship and a heavy loss not only of the cargo and ship, but also of our lives."

10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

- Paul admonished them to stay in Fair Havens; they had already encountered adverse winds and it was now the start of the stormy season
- Paul had already experienced shipwreck three times (2 Cor 11:25)
- He knew that a strong northerly or northwesterly wind (v14), which frequently came up unexpectedly during the winter season, could blow a ship far from its destination

11 But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul.

11 But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul.

11 But the centurion was persuaded by the pilot and the owner of the ship and not by what Paul said.

11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

- The centurion now had to decide whether to winter at Fair Havens or set sail and try to reach the port of Phenice on the southern coast of Crete, about 40 miles away.

— Fair Havens was not a comfortable place to settle down because it was too open to the winter storms. Phenice (Phoenix) had a more sheltered harbor.

12 The harbor was not suitable for wintering, so the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter *there*.

12 Because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter *there*.

12 Since the harbor was not a good place to spend the winter, most of the men favored putting out to sea from there on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix and spend the winter there. It is a Cretian harbor that faces southwest and northwest.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.

- Fair Havens was suitable for wintering, but not as desirable as Phenice (Phoenix), 45 miles west along the southern Cretan coastline

**13** When a moderate **southwind** came up, thinking that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and *began* sailing along Crete, closer *to shore*.

**13** When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and *began* sailing along Crete, close *inshore*.

13 When a gentle breeze began to blow from the south, they thought they could make it to Phoenix, so they hoisted anchor and began sailing along the shore of Crete.

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.

- "...south wind" - a favorable wind, contrary to the normal winds there

14 But before very long a violent wind, called **Euraquilo**, rushed down from the land;

14 But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo;

14 But it was not long before a violent wind (called a northeaster) swept down from the island.

14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon.

- "...Euraquilo" - northeastern

— The wind changed from a mild southerly breeze to a violent northeasterly gale, which drove the ship southwest, away from Crete and the harbor at Phenice (Phoenix)

15 and when the ship was caught *in it* and could not head up into the wind, we gave up and let ourselves be driven *by the wind*.

15 and when the ship was caught *in it* and could not face the wind, we gave way *to it* and let ourselves be driven along.

15 The ship was caught so that it couldn't face the wind, and we gave up and were swept along.

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.

- After not adhering to Paul's warning, after setting out, the wind direction changed. They were unable to hold their course and were driven out to sea.

16 Running under the shelter of a small island called **Cauda**, we were able to get the *ship's* boat under control *only* with difficulty.

16 Running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, we were scarcely able to get the *ship's* boat under control.

16 As we drifted to the sheltered side of a small island called Cauda, we barely managed to secure the ship's lifeboat.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

- "...Cauda" - modern Gavdos or Gozzo; 23 miles south of Crete

— There was no adequate harbor there, but the island did provide enough temporary shelter for the sailors to bring the lifeboat on board

Luke describes the different measures taken to try to gain control of the ship, but none of them worked.

17 After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on *the shallows* of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and let themselves be driven along in this way.

17 After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on *the shallows* of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along.

17 The ship's crew pulled it up on deck and used ropes to brace the ship. Fearing that they would hit the large sandbank near Libya, they lowered the sail and drifted along.

17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

- The storm was so violent that cables had to be lashed underneath the ship to keep the planking from pulling apart

18 The next day as we were being violently tossed by the storm, they began to jettison the cargo;

18 The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo;

18 The next day, because we were being tossed so violently by the storm, they began to throw the cargo overboard.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

- The ship began taking on so much water that the captain decided to jettison the wheat and some other cargo, everything but the bare essentials

— He kept some wheat on board, probably for ballast as well as for good (v38)

19 and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle *overboard* with their own hands.

19 and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.

19 On the third day they threw the ship's equipment overboard with their own hands.

19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

- Rigging had to be tossed into the sea, along with the cargo

20 Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was *slowly* abandoned.

20 Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.



20 For a number of days neither the sun nor the stars were to be seen, and the storm continued to rage until at last all hope of our being saved vanished.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

- They used the sun and the stars for guidance, and when they were blocked, they had no way to know where they were

- These were experienced sailors, used to storms on the sea; they gave up all hope

21 When many had lost their appetites, Paul then stood among them and said, "Men, you should have followed my advice and not have set sail from Crete, and *thereby* spared yourselves this damage and loss.

21 When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, "Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss.

21 After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood among his shipmates and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete. You would have avoided this hardship and damage.

21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

- Paul wasn't issuing a bitter "I told you so" or gloating...he was encouraging his fellow travelers that since he was right earlier, they should believe what he was about to tell them — What he had predicted at Fair Haven came true, and what he was about to predict also would come true

22 And *yet* now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but *only* of the ship.

22 *Yet* now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but *only* of the ship.

22 But now I urge you to have courage, because there will be no loss of life among you, but only loss of the ship.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

- Paul's previous advice was based on his experience as a traveler; this was a word based on revelation from God

- Based on this revelation from God, Paul urged them to be courageous. God's decree was sovereign, according to His purpose, and nothing could thwart the purpose and promise of God.

We should notice that what God revealed to Paul was the final outcome. The outcome was certain, but there were many things which would take place in the meantime.

23 For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong, whom I also serve, came to me,

23 For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me,

23 For just last night an angel of God, to whom I belong and whom I serve, stood by me

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

- God had sent an angel to encourage Paul and remind him of an earlier promise

24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has graciously granted you all those who are sailing with you.'

24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'

24 and said, 'Stop being afraid, Paul! You must stand before the emperor. Indeed, God has given to you the lives of everyone who is sailing with you.'

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

- This was the promise of God: there would be no loss of life. If anyone on that ship would die, it would mean that God's promise had failed.

25 Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.

25 Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.

25 So take courage, men, because I trust God that it will turn out just as he told me.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

- The announcement by the angel that all would survive is remarkable (particularly in light of v20c)...from this point on, no method of escape is acceptable that doesn't include everyone

- Paul's reference to God's promise would spark interest in the other passengers in his Lord, particularly when God later fulfilled this prediction

— This is a perfect example of faith: simply believing that things will be just as God say they will, even when all hope is lost and circumstances are dire

## Paul's Visions

- (1) Paul saw the glorified Christ on the very day he was converted (9:3; 22:6)
- (2) He saw a vision of Ananias coming to minister to him (9:12)
- (3) He had a vision from God when he was called to minister to the Gentiles (22:17)
- (4) He had a vision of God when he was called to Macedonia (Luke?) (16:9)
- (5) When his ministry was difficult in Corinth, God encouraged him by a vision (18:9-10)
- (6) After his arrest in Jerusalem Paul was encouraged by a vision (23:11)
- (7) In the midst of the storm at sea an angel appeared to him and assured him that he and the passengers would be saved (27:33)

Along with these special visions related to his call, spiritual revelations of divine mysteries were also communicated to Paul: the mystery of the church itself (Eph 3:1-6). God also honored Paul by taking him to heaven 14 years earlier (43 AD?), between his departure for Tarsus (9:30) and his visit from Barnabas (11:25-26).

26 But we must run aground on a certain island."

26 But we must run aground on a certain island."

26 However, we will have to run aground on some island."

26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

## The Shipwreck

**27** But when the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors *began* to suspect that they were approaching some land.

**27** But when the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors *began* to surmise that they were approaching some land.

**27** It was the fourteenth night, and we were drifting through the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors suspected that land was near.

**27** But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

- Finally, after 14 nights of hopeless, interminable drifting and driving wind and rain, the men aboard heard the ocean waves crashing on the rocks

— When the sailors heard the waves crashing they knew that they were going into shallow water. The helmsmen commanded that they find out the depth.

First century anchors on an Alexandrian grain freighter would be approximately 12ft long made entirely of wood. The anchor's stock, or the cross bar of the anchor, would have been made of solid lead. The wood would, over the years, decay in the sea and not survive, but the lead crossbar would last indefinitely.

28 And they **took soundings** and found *it to be* twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found *it to be* fifteen fathoms.

28 They took soundings and found *it to be* twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found *it to be* fifteen fathoms.

28 After taking soundings, they found the depth to be twenty fathoms. A little later, they took soundings again and found it was fifteen fathoms.

28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

- "...took soundings" - a sounding device was a bell-shaped lead object affixed to rope. It would be dropped overboard so that the sailors could determine the depth of the water.

— The first recorded depth was 120ft or 20 fathoms (a "fathom" = 6 feet)

— A second sounding was made and the depth was 90 feet (15 fathoms)

29 Fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and prayed for daybreak.

29 Fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak.

29 Fearing that we might run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and began praying for daylight to come.

29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

- The captain of the ship knew that they were approaching land and, fearing that they were going to run aground against the rocks, gave the order to drop four anchors from the stern

— They wanted to point the bow toward the shore and then try to beach the ship the next day

From the details in this narrative, the anchors have been recovered and now rest in the Maritime Museum on Malta (see photo, below)



30 But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the *ship's* boat into the sea, on the pretense that they were going to lay out anchors from the bow,

30 But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the *ship's* boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow,

30 Meanwhile, the sailors had begun trying to escape from the ship. They lowered the lifeboat into the sea and pretended that they were going to lay out the anchors from the bow.

30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

- The ship's crew ("the sailors") were about to abandon ship and make for land in the lifeboat, leaving the passengers, Paul, the captain, the soldiers, and the prisoners to fend for themselves

— They pretended to be letting down anchors from the bow, but instead were lowering the lifeboat. They were going to jump ship and save themselves.

31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men remain on the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved."

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved."

31 Paul told the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men remain onboard, you cannot be saved."

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

- The sailors would only be valuable on board the ship, and were needed to help beach the ship safely. They were the experts at maneuvering it.

### **God's Sovereignty vs Human Responsibility**

God had said that no one would be lost (v22-24). But Paul said that if these sailors left the ship, then all on board would be lost. How can we reconcile these two things? How do man's actions, the things we do by our own free choices, affect God's determined promise and plan?

It is clear as early as Acts 19:21 that Paul had a desire to go to Rome. He says the same thing in Rom 1:15. Rome was the capital of the world, and it had always been the desire of the great missionary to the Gentiles to preach the gospel there.

This was also God's purpose. In Acts 23:11 when Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem, the Lord stood at his side and said Paul would witness in Rome. Paul was told clearly by God that he was going to preach the gospel in Rome. Now God often does things in a way that we do not expect. When Paul thought about going to Rome, he never thought about going there as a prisoner. And when he thought about preaching in Rome, he always thought about preaching in the forum, not in prison. And when he thought about traveling to Rome, he never dreamed it would involve a terrific storm and shipwreck as described in Acts 27. In v31, Paul warned the Centurion that if these men jumped ship, no one on the boat would be saved. What he was saying is that these members of the ship's crew were the only ones who knew how to run the ship. If all of the skilled sailors left the ship, the rest who remained on board would not be able to get the ship safely to shore.

(1) It is important to notice that Paul did not have a fatalistic attitude. The end has been decreed and determined by God. "There will be no loss of life among you" (v22). Therefore, it really does not matter what anyone does. That is the conclusion of the fatalist; it was not the conclusion of the apostle.

(2) God's promises still involve ordinary human means. God is omnipotent. He can do anything. He could have stilled the storm here on the Mediterranean instantly just as the Lord Jesus did on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:30-41). He could have caused a channel of dry land to pass through the sea right up to the boat, as at the time of the Exodus when the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea. Everyone could have walked safely to shore. He could have lifted the boat out of the sea, carried it through the air, and set it safely on the ground. God could have done any of those things. But the fact is that He normally works through ordinary human means. Here it was the work of the sailors that was going to be involved in getting the people safely to the shore.

(3) In fact we can even say that here the means were necessary for the accomplishment of the end. "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves

cannot be saved" (v31). How could Paul say that? God had promised, "There will be no loss of life among you" (v22). But Paul said, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved." The end was certain because God had promised and decreed it. That is v22. But that end was contingent on an intermediate step which involved the free choices of men. What if those sailors had left the ship? Does the "unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved" cast a shadow of uncertainty over the promise of God?

There is a very important principle of Scripture. The God who ordains the end also ordains the means. God does not just decide the outcome and then let things happen however they will. He is the sovereign God who not only determines the final result, He is the sovereign God who is active at every step of the process making sure that all means necessary are used to assure that His end is accomplished.

There are a number of ways we can see this principle illustrated and applied in the rest of this passage:

- (1) The soldiers cut the ropes of the boat so that the crew had to stay on the ship (v32).
- (2) Paul then encouraged everyone to eat. It had been 14 days since anyone had eaten anything (v33). But he says in v34 that the need to eat was "for your preservation." "Not a hair from the head of any of you will perish" (v34). That is the end which God had predestined. But the means of accomplishing that was by the passengers swimming for shore. After 14 days without food they needed the strength to accomplish that task. The food was the means for physical strength, and the physical strength was the means for the physical exertion, and both were the means God used to accomplish His purpose that no one would be lost.
- (3) When the sailors attempted to run the ship aground, it got stuck in the inlet (v41). The prow was stuck and the stern began to be broken up by the waves. Some of the soldiers realized that if they lost any of the prisoners, they would be held accountable. Their plan was to kill all of the prisoners so that none might swim away and escape. But the centurion who was in charge liked Paul and he vetoed that suggestion. Even here we should not leave God out of the picture. He was involved in making that centurion like Paul. That was the means He used to prevent another human plan which would thwart His will.
- (4) Those who could swim were told to jump overboard and swim to land (v43). Their ability to swim was the means God used to get them safely to land. Other passengers who could not swim hung on to things that would float from the ship which was breaking up in the sea and that wreckage was the means that God used to get them to land.

(5) There were 276 people on that ship (v37), and every one of them was brought safely to land (v44). In the midst of a raging sea, a sea that tore the ship to pieces, when it would be difficult even for those who could swim to get to shore, and when there were many who could not swim at all, "they all were brought safely to land." Why? Because God was in control. He had promised it, and He accomplished it. But He used ordinary means to accomplish His purpose. The means are not out of His control.

32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the *ship's* boat and let it fall away.

32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the *ship's* boat and let it fall away.

32 Then the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and set it adrift.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

- Probably "the soldiers" let the dinghy drift free ("cut off the ropes of the boat") so the sailors would not try another escape

— This small boat would have been useful later, however, when the passengers had to swim to land

**33** Until the day was about to dawn, Paul kept encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken in nothing.

**33** Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing.

**33** Right up to daybreak Paul kept urging all of them to eat something. He said, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been waiting and going without food, not eating anything.

**33** And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

34 Therefore, I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your survival, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish."

34 Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish."

34 So I urge you to eat something, for it will help you survive, since none of you will lose so much as a hair from his head."

34 Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

- Paul urged all on board to eat in order to gain strength, because he knew of the work needed to get ashore that laid ahead



35 Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all, and he broke it and began to eat.

35 Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat.

35 After he said this, he took some bread, thanked God in front of everyone, broke it, and began to eat.

35 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.

- Paul gave thanks to God publicly for the food, which would have helped everyone connect their deliverance with God

36 All of them were encouraged and they themselves also took food.

36 All of them were encouraged and they themselves also took food.

36 Everyone was encouraged and had something to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.

37 We were 276 people on the ship in all.

37 All of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy-six persons.

37 There were 276 of us on the ship.

37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

38 When they had eaten enough, they *began* lightening the ship by throwing the wheat out into the sea.

38 When they had eaten enough, they *began* to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.

38 After they had eaten all they wanted, they began to lighten the ship by dumping its cargo of wheat into the sea.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

- They ate what they could and threw the rest overboard to lighten the ship, so it would ride high in shallow waters when the sailors beached it

**39** Now when day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did notice a bay with a beach, and they resolved to run the ship onto it if they could.

**39** When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could.

**39** When day came, they didn't recognize the land, but they could see a bay with a beach on which they planned to run the ship ashore, if possible.

**39** And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

- Luke describes the location of Paul's shipwreck as being in front of a bay with a sandy beach

- Since most of Malta's coastline is cliff area, the vast majority of the search area can be quickly eliminated

40 And **casting off** the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and they hoisted the foresail to the wind and were heading for the beach.

40 And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach.

40 So they cut the anchors free and left them in the sea. At the same time they untied the ropes that held the steering oars, raised the foresail to the wind, and headed for the beach.

40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

- "...casting off" - or cut, the anchors: they left them in the sea (Cf. v25)

- The details in this narrative enabled the Greek maritime authorities, using the latest navigational computer software, to assist in locating these very anchors which were cut loose!

- Evidently the steering oars, which had been tied up during the storm, were loosed and used to help steer onto the beach

41 But they struck a reef where two seas met and ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck firmly and remained immovable, while the stern *started to* break up due to the force *of the waves*.

41 But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern *began* to be broken up by the force *of the waves*.

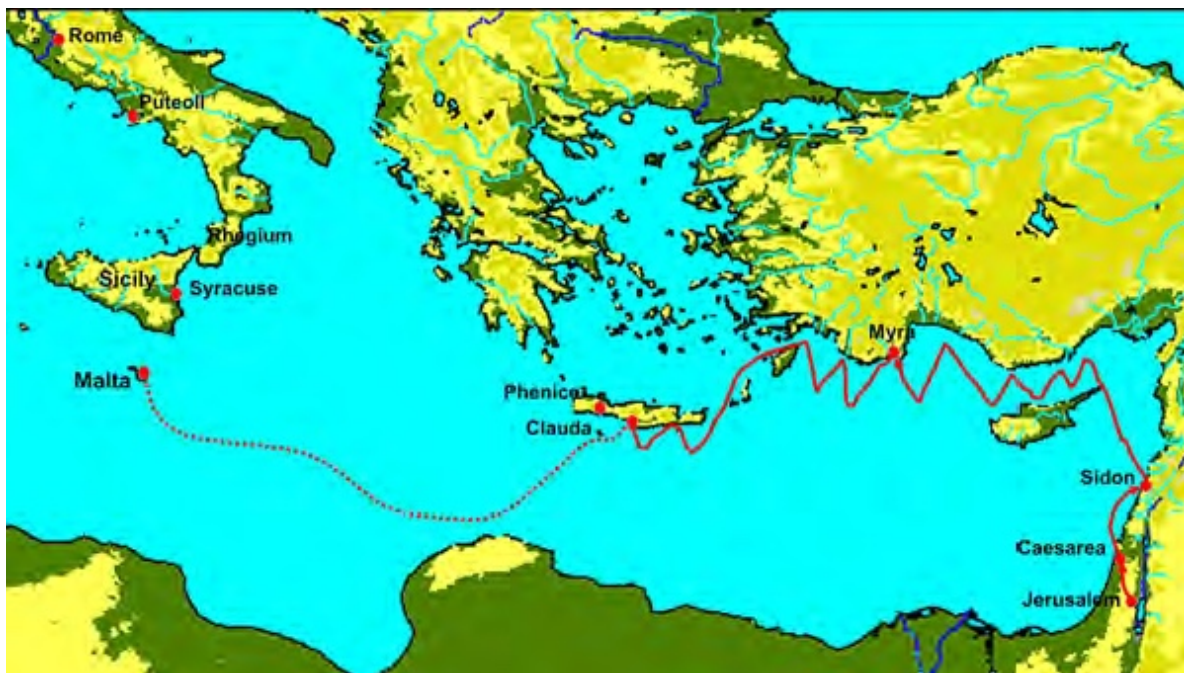
41 But they struck a sandbar and ran the ship aground. The bow stuck and couldn't be moved, while the stern was broken to pieces by the force of the waves.

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

## Authentication

The surviving anchor stocks, currently on display at the Maritime Museum on Malta, have been inspected by Professor Bonanno, who is considered to be the foremost expert in Malta on Roman antiquities. Dr. Bonanno earned a Ph.D. from the prestigious University of London Institute of Archaeology and has taught at the University of Malta since 1971. Dr. Bonanno has concluded that these anchor stocks are appropriate to the era of St. Paul's shipwreck in Malta.

As with most Biblical events, there is a traditional site on Malta where people believe the shipwreck to have occurred. This site, known as Saint Paul's Bay, is on the northern coast of Malta. This traditional site does not fit the drift scenario that Scripture offers and was proposed as the shipwreck site approximately 1,200 years after Paul's arrival on the island of Malta. (Since most of the tourist accommodations have been built on the north side, locals have not been enthusiastic about these relatively recent discoveries...)



42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none *of them* would swim away and escape;

42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none *of them* would swim away and escape;

42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners to keep them from swimming ashore and escaping,

**42** And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.

43 but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from *accomplishing* their intention, and commanded that those who could swim were to jump overboard first and get to land,

43 but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land,

43 but the centurion wanted to save Paul, so he prevented them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land.

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land:

- The soldiers would have had to pay with their lives if their prisoners escaped

- The centurion was willing to take responsibility for the prisoners' safe-keeping in order to spare Paul's life

44 and the rest *were to follow*, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land.

44 and the rest *should follow*, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land.

44 The rest were to follow, some on planks and others on various pieces of the ship. In this way everyone got to shore safely.

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

- Why did the shipwreck occur? Was Paul in God's will or was it Satanic opposition?

- God's strengthening is made perfect in man's weakness (we find from 2 Cor 11:25 that Paul was in *three* shipwrecks!)