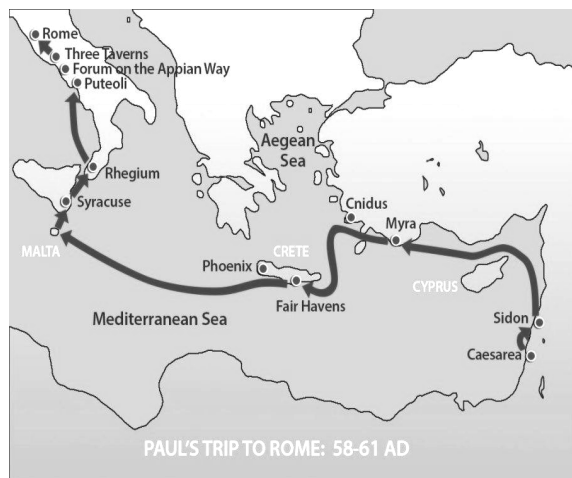


As God's people, we want to be guided by His Word and empowered by His Spirit to look more like Jesus. This Scripture Guide is based on this morning's passage to further equip you with what God's Word says.

Scripture Guide

Acts 27

This story follows Paul on his voyage to Rome and details the narrow escape that follows him and his shipmates.



27:1-12 Following his appeal to Caesar, Paul is put on a ship by a centurion, Julius, and embarks on a journey with other Roman prisoners (v.1). Julius shows Paul kindness by treating him well and allowing him to go to his friends for food and care (v.3).¹ The group sets out to Myra traveling from Sidon and from Myra to Fair Havens (vv.4-8). After arriving on the island of Crete, Paul becomes worried about the state of the voyage as “the Fast”² had ended, meaning that the fall weather was about to bring dangerous weather into the Mediterranean (vv.9-10). However, the centurion ignores Paul’s advice in favor of the captain and the owner and decides to speed to Phoenix, where they will spend the winter (vv.11-13).

27:13-20 However, on their way to Phoenix, a “massive tempestuous wind”³ suddenly blows from the mainland, and the ship cannot continue its course (vv.13-15). The shipmates do their best to stabilize and regain course, but the ship remains fully set in action by the wind. Fearing running aground in Syrtis, Africa, the shipmates lower the anchor (vv.16-17). The shipmates begin jettisoning the cargo,⁴ followed by the ship’s tackle (vv.18-19). Finishing the stage, Luke records that the sun and the stars failed to appear in the skies due to the density of the tempest, and all hope of salvation was laid to rest (v.20). At this point, Luke has created a scene reminiscent of some significant scenes in the Bible.⁵ Paul is well-versed in the Old Testament and knows that God has delivered His people before and has sovereignty over the storm and the waters. He will now offer them hope.

¹ Centurions that join the movement or act with compassion and faith are a common theme in Luke’s writings. These fighting men of the Roman Empire were to be feared for their ruthlessness, but in the biblical story, they often act with humility and compassion. This shows the upside-down kingdom of God. See Luke 7:1-10, Acts 10, 16:25-40.

² This Fast is the fasting that occurs during the Day of Atonement, or Passover. Paul is more worried about the actual volatility of the sea and not any fear of angering God by sailing during a holy time.

³ The actual word is εὐρακύλων (Euraquilo), a word that is a combination of Greek and Latin used by sailors. NET Bible. “Acts 27.” 2nd Edition. Bible.org. 2022.

⁴ The jettisoning of the cargo also happens in Jonah 1:5. The context of these stories are opposite. While Jonah is running away from Nineveh, denying them repentance, Paul is willingly going to Rome to preach salvation to the Romans. This creates a track of God’s people learning from their mistakes.

⁵ A chaotic and windy sea without lights in the sky is the description of pre-creation, where it is written that God created the heavens “without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep (Gen. 1:1-2).” God will then set order in creation by creating lights in the sky and separating the water to allow a space for humans to live. This pattern is reiterated during the Exodus, during the parting of the Red Sea. God sends a “strong east wind” that divides the waters and creates a space for the Israelites to cross (Exod. 14:21). The light of the morning then comes and drowns the Egyptian forces in the Red Sea (Exod. 14:22-25).

As God's people, we want to be guided by His Word and empowered by His Spirit to look more like Jesus. This Scripture Guide is based on this morning's passage to further equip you with what God's Word says.

27:21-38 Paul stands before the men on the ship and gives a short but authoritative speech. He establishes that he was correct about storms being dangerous this time of year and tells them about his vision. In his vision, he was told by an angel that Paul “must stand before Caesar”⁶ and that God has granted everyone on the ship safety. He encourages them because of his faith that God will deliver them from the storm. However, they must sacrifice the ship (vv.22-26). On the fourteenth day, the sailors become worried they are about to crash into the land (vv.27-29). Some sailors do not listen to Paul and attempt to prepare the side boat to escape, but Paul tells the captain that all must remain on the ship for everyone to escape safely (vv.30-31). The centurion now listens to Paul and cuts the ropes, showing that he has gained authority since leaving Crete. At dawn, Paul now encourages them to eat, as fear had kept the men from eating up until now (vv.33-34).⁷ They then have one of the strangest dinners recorded in the Bible, with soldiers and prisoners all eating in unity in the middle of a typhoon.

27:39-44 When the sun rises, they can see a bay that is perfect for running into (v.39). However, they strike a reef and are suspended in place while the surf tears the ship apart (vv.40-41). Panic ensues as the soldiers are afraid of the prisoners escaping and costing the soldiers their lives (v.42). The centurion rejects this to save Paul and orders all prisoners to abandon the ship and swim to shore (vv.43-44). This crucial decision allows all prisoners to keep their lives and arrive on the beach. Like in the jail of Phillippi, the prisoners do not attempt to escape but remain under custody despite the chance of freedom. These prisoners continue with Luke's theme of Christians respecting the law while worshiping Jesus. By the hand of God, all people on the ship make it to the land.

Conclusion

This story is not included to create an entertaining, dramatic situation but to accomplish two things. The first is that the Christian life will not be easy but will constantly be difficult as the message of Jesus is spread. God did not prepare an easy voyage for Paul despite saying he would stand before kings. Paul's journey was perilous, but God could still deliver Paul from death. Additionally, Luke is putting the trip in a perspective that the Jewish Christians would be able to understand.⁸ A God-fearing man being saved from waters and darkness at first light is a repeated motif in the Bible.⁹ In this case, Paul can save Roman prisoners and usurp a centurion's authority through his faith. A Jewish Christian would not expect to be on a ship in a storm but would view their experience of persecution as dark, chaotic waters. These stories of salvation are cast under this one, casting Paul's journey to Rome as a grand encapsulation of the biblical story so far. God was with Paul, and God will be with the Christians.

⁶ This continues Paul's journey described in Acts 9:15.

⁷ Paul specifically uses a phrase used extensively in the Old Testament, “not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.” See 1 Sam 14:45, 2 Sam 14:11, and 1 Kgs. 1:52. This shows how steeped in Scripture Paul is and how confident he is that they will be saved. This also tends to be used by kings or in the presence of kings which shows how Paul views his authority from Jesus.

⁸ This could also appeal to Greeks by sounding like the *Odyssey*. The story of the Greek hero Odysseus making his way back to Ithaca and facing challenges on his ship. Odysseus is also shipwrecked, but he is the only one to make it home.

⁹ See Gen. 1-2 and 7-8, Exod. 14:22-25, Josh. 3:14-17 and 10:12-15, Psalms 18, 69, 107, and Jonah 1:1-2:10. Jesus shows his dominance over the waters in Matt. 14:22-33 and Luke 8:22-25.