

# BIBLE STUDY.

**Acts 27:1-44;**

**Paul begins his journey to Rome.**



## **Introduction.**

**Paul has survived the murderous plots  
of the Jews in Palestine.**

**Will he escape them just  
to go and be killed in Rome?**

**What will happen to him on the long,  
dangerous sea voyage? When he stands before  
Caesar, what will the emperor's judgment be?**

**Perhaps we won't learn answers to all these  
questions. Let us continue to learn what we can.**

***Around 59 A.D. and 60 A.D., Paul was taken as a prisoner from **Caesarea to Rome**, making several stops along the way. Even as a prisoner, Paul continued to evangelize. This is described in Acts 27 and 28;***



Acts 27:1; “It was decided that we would sail for Italy. An officer named Julius guarded Paul and other prisoners. Julius served in the Emperor's regiment.”

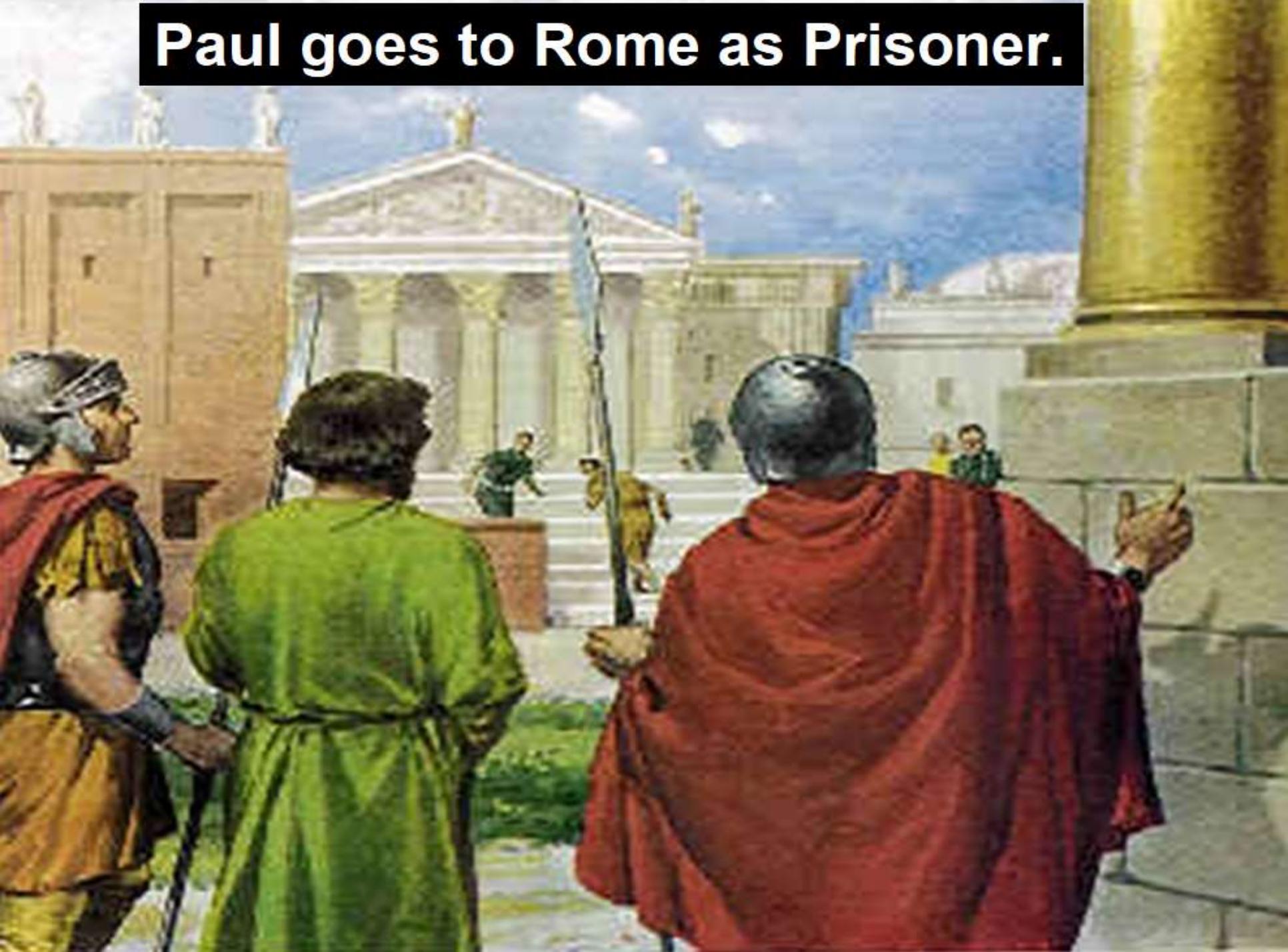
The deciding was done by Festus, in consequence of Paul's appeal to Caesar. Acts 26:32;

When chapter 27 begins, all the plans and arrangements for the voyage to Rome had been completed; and **the time for sailing had been fixed.**

We have no way of knowing how long Paul was a prisoner in **Caesarea** after his appeal, But the time was probably not long.

Paul had long wanted to go to Rome to preach. Jesus had appeared to Paul at night back during Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem and told him he would testify at Rome.

**Paul goes to Rome as Prisoner.**



Acts 27:1; “It was decided that we would sail for Italy. A officer named Julius guarded Paul and other prisoners. Julius served in the Emperor's regiment.”

He is beginning his long anticipated trip to the capital of the empire; though not, perhaps, as he had imagined, some years before, that he would make the trip.

**“we should sail for Italy.”** Here begins the longest **“we”** section in the book of Acts. Paul's arrest at the close of the third missionary journey had kept them somewhat apart through the intervening years, but now they are together again.

Possibly Spring, AD 58.

**In Jerusalem, Paul evangelizes about Jesus. This angers a group of non-believers who retaliate by starting a riot. Paul is arrested. (Acts 21:17-40; Acts 22;) He is taken to Caesarea and questioned. (Acts, chapters 23-26;) It is decided that Paul is to be taken to Rome, as a prisoner. Acts 27:1-2;**



Acts 27:1; “It was decided that we would sail for Italy. A officer named Julius guarded Paul and other prisoners. Julius served in the Emperor's regiment.”

## **The account of Paul's voyage to Rome is like no other story in all the Bible.**

In it the reader's attention is directed, not to spiritual truths and acts of devotion, but rather to such mundane things as ships and seas, winds and waves, islands, towns, and harbours.

Altogether Luke has given a description of first century ships and seamanship surpassing anything else in extant Greek and Roman literature.

**A fascinating story of adventure**, it stands also as a descriptive masterpiece. Its nautical descriptions are authentic to the last detail.

Acts 27:1; "It was decided that we would sail for Italy. A officer named Julius guarded Paul and other prisoners. Julius served in the Emperor's regiment."

**Julius** served in the Praetorian Guard  
(the emperor's special bodyguard)

might have been called the "**Augustan cohort.**"

The "**Augustan cohort**" was a cohort of officer-couriers (Latin, **frumentari?**) ("**pertaining to grain**") came from their original work of administering the grain supply for the empire.

As time passed, their sphere of duties were enlarged. The emperor used them to go to various governors and provincial army leaders with personal messages and instructions.

At some time (perhaps **as early as Octavian's time**, perhaps as late as Hadrian's) these officer-couriers came to be called **Peregrini.**" (See Acts 28:16;)



**Augustus**

Acts 27:1; “It was decided that we would sail for Italy. A officer named Julius guarded Paul and other prisoners. Julius served in the Emperor's regiment.”

We learn later there were **276 people** on board the ship, including an unnumbered group of prisoners, probably also bound for Rome.

All the prisoners were under the charge of **Julius** and his soldiers.

It is possible that **Julius accompanied Festus** as the emperor's personal escort as Festus came into his new province; and since Festus has been installed, **Julius is now returning to Rome.**

Acts 27:2; “We went aboard a ship which was from the city of Adramyttium. It was ready to sail for ports along the coast of Asia. Then we set sail. Aristarchus went with us. He was a man from the city of Thessalonica in Macedonia.”

**Adramyttium** (the modern name is **Edremit**) was a lovely harbour on the coast of Mysia, opposite the island of Lesbos.

It was an **important ship-building centre** in the first century, and probably was the ship's home port.

Very likely this vessel was enroute to her final stop before the long winter ahead set in and made sailing impossible.

This language indicates the ship was **a coasting vessel**, which would stop at various ports along its way back towards **Adramyttium**.

a ship which was from the **city of Adramyttium**  
**Mysia** was a region in the **Roman Province of Asia**.



Acts 27:2; “We went aboard a ship which was from the city of Adramyttium. It was ready to sail for ports along the coast of Asia. Then we set sail. Aristarchus went with us. He was a man from the city of Thessalonica in Macedonia.”

**The ship would be sailing north into the Aegean Sea and not on west to Italy.**

**Julius** likely anticipated that he would find a ship bound for Rome in one of these ports.

**Aristarchus, like Luke**, had journeyed, **with Paul** to Jerusalem, when they brought **the offering** for the **"Jerusalem Christians."** (Acts 20:4;)

**Aristarchus** is travelling home to Thessalonica, and that **he leaves** the party after it reaches **Myra**, crosses the province of Asia until **he can travel the Ignatian Way** to Thessalonica.

**Paul is taken as a Roman prisoner from Caesarea to Sidon, on his way to Rome. In Sidon, Paul is permitted to visit friends who reside there.**  
**Acts 27:3;**



Acts 27:3; "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."

**Sidon was about 70 miles north of Caesarea,** and the voyage could easily be accomplished, under favourable sailing weather, in twenty-four hours.

Probably this coasting vessel put in here to load or unload some cargo. **Sidon was named in connection with Herod Agrippa I** in Acts 12:20;

The word translated "**consideration**" is **philanthropes**, and speaks of "**love for man**"; Paul was treated humanely, kindly. Julius' attitude was "**Can I make you comfortable?**"

Perhaps Julius had received orders from Festus (or Agrippa) to treat Paul courteously. At any rate, it seems that **Paul received favours from Julius that the other prisoners did not receive.**

Acts 27:3; “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.”

**Luke says Paul** went to his friends there ought to be good reasons for having **Joy, Comfort, and Peace** when we meet other **Christians** where ever they are in the world.

There are a number of scriptures that reflect this.

**2 Pet 1:1;** We have a like precious faith.

**Jude 3;** We have a wonderful gift of salvation in common.

**Rom 8:16-17;** We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

Rom 12:5,15; 1 Cor 12:26; We are members of one another in the body of Christ; We have the same care for each other; And we rejoice and mourn with each other.

Acts 27:3; “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.”

**1 Thess 5:11;** We comfort and edify each other.

**Heb 10:24;** We provoke each other unto love and good works.

**Col 2:2;** Our hearts are tied together in love.

**John 13:34-35;** That love is the kind of love that Jesus has for us.

**1 John 3:16;** It ought to be the kind of love that motivates us to lay down our lives for each other!

Acts 27:3; “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.”

**Paul had many more friends than enemies  
wherever he went.**

By the time he has travelled around the eastern half of the Roman Empire, he has had a hand in **establishing many congregations.**

**His fellow workers**, those he trained, are preaching and teaching all over Syria, Phoenicia, Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece.

He knows **many of the Christians in Rome.**

In fact, many of them are his relatives, as we learn from the 16th chapter of Romans.



Acts 27:4-5; "From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary. When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia."

The ship remained at anchor in the **port of Sidon** long enough to transact her business. **The ship headed north** after leaving the harbour at Sidon

At some other time of year, when the prevailing winds blew from a different direction.

They might have **sailed directly from Sidon to Mysia**, leaving Cyprus on the right.

Just as Paul had done on an earlier voyage from Patara to Tyre. Acts 21:1;"

During this time of year (it was getting late in the sailing season. Acts 27:9;" ) the prevailing winds, called Etesian winds, blow from the west and northwest.

Acts 27:4-5; “From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary. When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.”

Once they have passed the **island of Cyprus**, there was a stretch of open sea to be crossed between **Cyprus** and the southern **coast of Cilicia**.

“The **Adramyttian ship** crept from point to point up the coast, taking advantage of every opportunity to make a few miles, and lying at anchor when the westerly wind made progress impossible.”

(Ramsay, St. Paul, p. 317.)

We landed at **Myra in Lycia** — Lycia was a province in the southwestern part of Asia Minor.

**Pamphylia** was on its eastern boundary, and **Caria (Asia)** was on its western side.

**Phrygia and Pisidia** lay to the north.

Acts 27:4-5; “From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary. When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.”

The **city of Myra**, situated on the **river Andriacus**, lay some **two miles inland** from its harbour **Andriaca**.

The city stood on a hill where two valleys met, and its harbour grew in importance once the **Roman grain ships** started sailing across the Mediterranean.

The Western text gives **fifteen days** as the time spent in sailing across the open sea **from Cyprus to Myra**, a very reasonable estimate if the ship had to hug the south coast of Asia Minor for a good part of the voyage.

# Roman theater at Myra Rock-cut tombs in back



Acts 27:6; “here the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it.”

**At Myra** the first part of the voyage to Rome has been completed. About **300 years earlier**, **Egypt had become the bread basket of Rome.**

The grain grown in Egypt had to be shipped to Rome.

A whole fleet of ships was devoted to this trade, the fleet being organized under the department of state and thus directly responsible to the Roman government.

The ship that was in port at Myra was on her way to Rome; and once her sailors had offered prayers to the deity that protected their voyage on towards Rome.

They would weigh anchor and sail past **Cnidus**, and if possible take advantage of the shelter of numerous islands in the Aegean sea and **south of Greece** until they could reach **Sicily**, and from thence sail to **Puteoli.**



Acts 27:6; “here the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it.”

The **Alexandrian ships** were very large and were steered by two broad oars, one on each side of the stern, and one large mast with the huge sail fastened to an enormous yard arm. Another sail was often seen in the forepart of the ship.

One consequence of such a **design** is that in storms the strain was concentrated in a relatively small area, and the ships tended to spring leaks rather quickly.

From the descriptions of such ships found in ancient literature, it has been estimated they could **carry between ten and eleven hundred tons.**

***From Myra, Paul and the other prisoners sail for Cnidus, arriving there after several days. Acts 27:7;***



Acts 27:7; “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;”

**The shoreline of Asia Minor from Myra westward tends in a more north westerly direction, and so the sailing was slow.**

**They would have less shelter from the northwest wind than they had from the coastline on their voyage from off the coast of Cilicia to Myra.**

**The "many days" may have been a fortnight or even three weeks.**

**Myra to Cnidus was only 130 miles.**

**Cnidus was a harbour on the Carian peninsula called Triopium. To reach this place they have coasted along Lycia and gone through the straits between Rhodes and the mainland.**

**Acts 27:7; “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;”**

**A look at the map will show that at Cnidus the coast of Asia Minor trends away to the north.**

**Once a ship passed Cnidus it would no longer have the shelter of the land; instead it was exposed to the full force of the Etesian winds.**

**Under such adverse conditions, once they have arrived off Cnidus, they had to choose one of two alternatives.**

**Cnidus had two harbours.**

**The ship could put into one of them and spend the winter. If there was still a few days left in the sailing season.**

**They might wait in one of the harbours for a wind that would allow them to sail through the islands till they arrived off Cythera, an island off the southern end of Greece; and then they could sail on toward Sicily and Rome.**

**Acts 27:7; “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;”**

**Johnson’s notes says that the winds from the Northwest would have been broken up by the highlands of the island.**

**He says that the information about the travel is so accurate and detailed that it must have been written by an eyewitness.**



**Acts 27:7; “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;”**

**The other alternative was to attempt to continue the voyage by sailing in a southerly direction until they came under the shelter of the island of Crete;**

**Then by sailing along the southern shore of that island, they could gain another hundred miles toward Rome.**

**by that time the winds will have changed and blow from a direction that would permit the rest of the voyage to Rome.**

**The second alternative is the choice of the sailors on this voyage.**

Acts 27:7; “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;”

**Salmone** was a cape on the eastern end of Crete.

After rounding this cape,  
they began sailing in a westerly direction.

By this route they have avoided the open sea  
**west of Cnidus**, but even after they have tried  
this tack in hopes the wind would change,  
they find that it doesn't.

***From Cnidus, Paul's ship has a slow and difficult journey to Fair Havens. Acts 27:8;***



Acts 27:8; “and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.”

**Cnidus** was to their northeast and **Salmone**, at the eastern tip of the **Island of Crete**, was to their southwest.

Then, passing along the southern coast of the island, they came to a place called **Fair Havens** near the town of **Lasea**.

**Fair Havens** might have lived up to the promise of its name if the ship’s owner and the centurion had listened to Paul and waited there until the weather was better for sailing.

# Site of ancient Lasea



Acts 27:9; “When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul began to admonish them.”

Sailors on the Mediterranean called the days between September 14 and November 11 as the dangerous season, it was a **"sail-at-your-own-risk"** period.

(They did not sail unless absolutely necessary during the dangerous season. According to **Philo** in his Life of Moses, no prudent man went to sea after the Fast.)

The **"Fast"** was another name for the Jewish **Day of Atonement**. Luke is using Jewish time in his account of what Paul said? Rather than speaking of sailing being dangerous from the Ides of November to the Ides of March.

It is already October as they wait in **the bay of Fair Havens** for a change of wind, i.e., they are right in the middle of the dangerous season for sailing.

Acts 27:10; "Paul 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."

Perhaps Paul speaks as an experienced sailor (2 Cor 11:25;) or perhaps it is indicative of the respect in which he is held.

**"Admonish"** is used in medical writers of the advice that a doctor gives his patient.

Any further sailing will cost them injury inflicted by the elements, and loss of cargo, maybe the ship, and even lives of the men on board. "I perceive" represents the result of experience and observation, not revelation; but the words came very near being fulfilled to the letter.

Now in Acts we are left with the impression that God is turning the direction of Paul, more and more, to **providence**.

In the earlier chapters, Paul was led by the Spirit, and by visions, often. Now, it seems that more and more **Paul is left to exercise his own good judgment.**

Acts 27:10; “Paul 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.”

**Verse 38 tells us the cargo of the ship was wheat. Paul had assurance that he was to preach at Rome (Acts 23:11); but he had not yet, down to this time, been assured of the safety of his fellow-voyagers. So he is concerned about their safety.**

Paul is predicting doom for the ship and its passengers. God was merciful to all of them because Paul was among them.

The harbour they are in may have its drawbacks (see verse 12), but they had **best remain there, is Paul’s advice.**

Acts 27:11; “But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul.”

The **"pilot"** was the **"helmsman"** or **"steersman,"** who occupied a conspicuous place on the stern of ancient ships, and **steered it and gave directions to the crew.**

the other term **"captain"** or **"owner"** on the supposition that the ship was merely leased to the state. The **"owner"** would **not only own the ship, but the cargo also.**

The centurion's conduct was quite natural. Who knows but that he gave thought to what would be said of him in Rome when it was learned that he followed the advice of a prisoner rather than the judgment of the pilot and owner of the vessel.

**Acts 27:12; “Because the harbour was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbour of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.”**

**The anchorage in Fair Havens, while it gave immediate shelter from the northwest gales, was open to all the southern points of the compass. (Smith, op. cit., p. 84.)**

**It would put a strain on Lasea, too, to show hospitality to 276 people through the winter.**

**The risk was admittedly great, the majority were by no means sure they would reach the harbour farther up the coast.**

**The harbour at Phoenix was more sheltered than the one at Fair Havens; the nearby town would be better able to handle such a large number of people through the winter months.**

Acts 27:13; “When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore.”

It was about **five miles** from **Fair Havens** to **Cape Matala**, and about **35 miles** from there to Phoenix. If the south wind lasted just three or four hours, they could sail the distance and **put the ship in the harbour** for the winter.

The tense of the Greek verb **"sailing"** implies that they were in the act of doing this when the storm burst upon them, as related in the next verse.

The adverb **"close inshore"** is a comparative degree adverb, and tells us they were closer to the shore than usual for sailing this stretch of water.

Acts 27:13; “When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore.”



Acts 27:14-15; “But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called **Euraquilo**; 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.”

After they rounded **Cape Matala**, suddenly the wind changed. Such sudden changes of wind seem to be a common occurrence in this area.

A violent wind (the Greek says, "**a typhoon wind**") out of the northeast, sprang up, and blew down upon them from Mount Ida. (Rush down from Mt. Ida" is exactly right, for the mountains of **Crete** are over **7000 feet high**.)

As they were trying to sail in a north westerly direction, this wind would have caught them almost broadside. It was so violent the ship was being blown sideways.

The pilot could not manage to steer the ship in the direction they wanted to go. (The Greek here is very vivid. We were not able to "**look the wind eye to eye**.")

**The ship sails from Fair Havens. A violent storm batters the ship. Paul is told by an angel of God that everyone will survive. After two weeks, the **ship is shattered** against the rocks **near Malta**. Everyone on board makes it to shore, safely. Acts 27:13-44;**



Acts 27:16; “Running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, we were scarcely able to get the {ship's} boat under control.”

This small island (whose modern name is **Gavdho**) is about **23 miles Southwest, of Crete**. The sheltered side from this storm would have been the southwest side of the island.

Once they were in the shelter of the island, they would have had relatively smooth water for ten or fifteen miles, and in this stretch of smooth water they make what "preparations they can for riding out the storm.

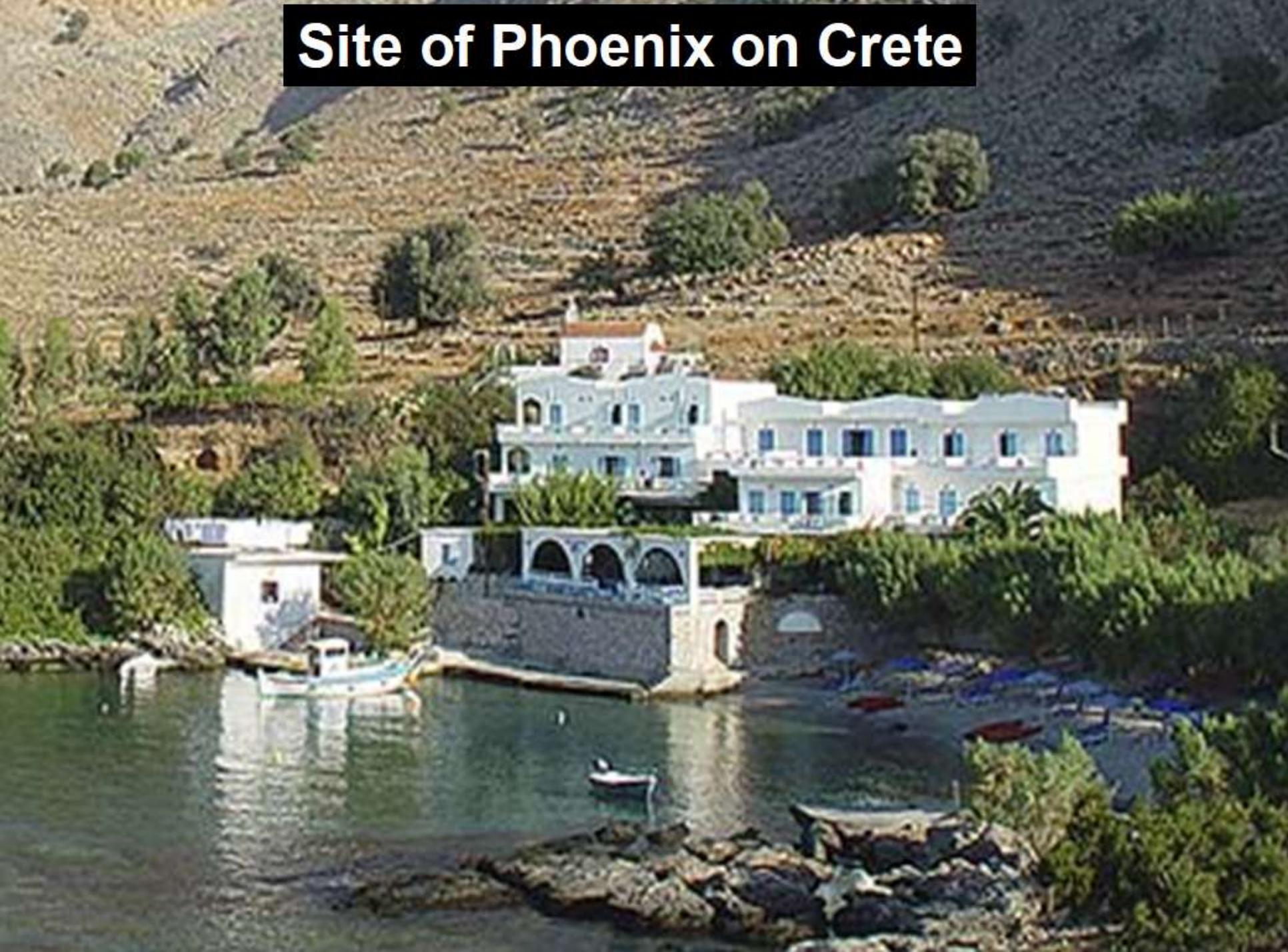
This ship's boat had been towed astern, as was normal practice, during good sailing weather; this storm had come so suddenly that they did not have time to secure the boat.

It has been dragged across twenty or thirty miles of storm-tossed sea, it must have been nearly full of water. so Luke and Paul (and the other prisoners and passengers?) had the task of hauling on the rope attached to the boat until they had dragged it alongside the ship.



*Mediterranean Sea*

# Site of Phoenix on Crete



**Acts 27:17; “After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in under girding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way were driven along.”**

**After the ship's boat was hauled aboard and secured on deck, the next thing to do was to under gird the ship.**

**That one huge mast put a great strain on the hull of those wooden ships, and in a storm like this, the timbers would begin to part and the ship would start leaking badly.**

**The under girding consisted in passing cables around the hull of the vessel, and drawing them tight by the capstan.**

**This precaution would help the hull stand the strain and reduce the danger of leaking so badly they would founder.**

**The desperate haste and straining efforts required for these operations we can only imagine.**

Acts 27:17; “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 were driven along.”

The ship and all aboard are in big trouble now.  
It was hopeless to try to sail toward Italy,  
so they **“batten down the hatches.”**

**Roll up the sails, secure the rudder with ropes,  
tie everything down,**

They strengthened the bottom of the ship  
by **passing ropes under** it to hold it together.

**“throw out the sea anchors”**

A sea anchor is like a large underwater parachute  
that is dragged behind a ship to slow it down.  
just try to ride out the storm.

Crète

Syrtis

CYRENE

Africa



Acts 27:17; “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 were driven along.”

There were **two celebrated syrtes** along the Mediterranean shores of North Africa called the greater and lesser; the former lay **just to the west of Cyrene** and the latter was further west, near Carthage.

They were vast beds of sand driven up by the sea, and constantly shifting their position so that it could not be known with certainty: where the sandbars were under the surface of the shallow water.

“These constantly changing sands were the terror of all Mediterranean sailors.” ( Josephus, Wars, II. 16. 4)

With storm sail set, and with the steering paddles set at eight points (the strongest rudder possible, when trying to turn the ship toward the wind and keep it off **the shallows of Syrtis**), they were **carried along by the storm**.



Acts 27:18-19; “We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.”

The ship was still **taking too much punishment** from the storm. Some more precautions were going to have to be taken if they were going to weather the storm. Through the night and into the next day the violent wind kept blowing, the rain pelted down, and the huge waves continued to batter the ship.

The efforts to lighten the ship noted in this verse and the next imply that, in spite of the efforts at under girding, the ship was leaking and getting heavier with water, And in danger of going down.

It would appear that the **"tackling"** would be the furniture and the yard arm and the huge wet canvas sails, all the things that would be useless in a storm.

Acts 27:20; “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.”

**Eleven days and nights of wind,** and rain, and waves threatening their lives, followed.

Because of the low, dark clouds they could not see the sun by day nor the stars by night.

In those days before the invention of the compass, sighting the sun or the stars was the only way the sailors had of determining their position. After so many days without a reckoning the sailors had no idea where they were.

**It was a great storm.** From verse 15, it might appear that the only problem was high wind. But from this verse we learn that the skies were leaden, and it was pouring rain. **And the storm continued day and night without letting up.**

When a ship is beginning to founder, the usual course of action is to head for the nearest land, run the ship aground, and make for shore. **Slowly they lost hope.**

Acts 27:21; "After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss."

**"Without food"** is the common medical term for **"loss of appetite."** The storm had deprived them of the means, time, and the inclination to prepare or to eat any regular meals.

About the time the last man on board has lost hope, Paul stands up one morning with a message of encouragement for his companions in distress.

The following narrative implies that, while others may have burst into wailing cries of despair and calling, we may believe, like the sailors of Jonah 1:5, **"every man unto his god."**

**Paul** opens this word of encouragement and counsel with a firm warning **not to dismiss his advice again** like they had back at Fair Havens, when at the ship's council he had again and again urged them not to try to sail on **toward Phoenix.**

Acts 27:21; “After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: “Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss.”

**This opening comment is more than "I told you so!"** It is calculated to remind them that his advice was good; and this time his advice was based not just on personal experience and observation, but on a message directly from God.

**The pilot and captain of the ship, and the centurion Julius,** we suppose, by this time have formed a much **more respected opinion of Paul;** and they are prepared to listen to his suggestions this time.

Acts 27:22; *“But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed.”*

**The morale** of the whole company of people on the ship was at a dangerously low level. Paul had news designed to lift their morale and to restore their hope of living through the storm, rather than being lost at sea.

**His calm assurance** as he spoke must have been as cheering as the news he had to share with those who had given up all hope.

**In the next verse he explains the source of his predicted information.** This is one of the places in the New Testament **where the miraculous is woven right into the warp and woof of the historical events.**

There is no way to remove the appearance of the angel from the account, and leave an account whose elements are still coherent and fully explainable.



Acts 27:23; *“For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me.”*

It was **the twelfth or thirteenth night** they had been at sea in the storm. Paul here gives the authority behind his specific prediction about no loss of life but loss of the ship.

**“The God to whom I belong to,” said Paul.**

Paul had to identify the source of his message, or the sailors might have thought a messenger like Mercury was intended.

Not so! **Paul identifies the source of his revelation as Yahweh**, the One Creator worshipped by Paul and the other Christians.

**Paul's life of devotion and service** would explain why the angel appeared to him and not to others on the ship. The word **"serve"** is similar to Romans 1:9, and suggests that some on board have seen Paul at regular devotions.

Acts 27:24; “saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'”

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

The angel repeats the **substance of the promise** formerly given to Paul by Jesus. (Acts 23:11;)

**“Stand”** is the proper word for **standing before a judge.**

Since Paul is promised that he will be tried before **Caesar**, it must be that he will not perish at sea.

Not only would **Paul himself live through this peril** on the sea to stand before Caesar, but the lives of all those on board the ship were to be spared for his sake.

*Acts 27:24; “saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'*

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

The world has no idea how much it owes,  
in the mercy of God,  
to **the presence of righteous men** in its midst.

For ten righteous men, **Sodom** would  
have been spared. (Genesis 18:23-32;)

Now, **for the sake of an apostle** needed  
to bear his testimony before Caesar, **276 soldiers,**  
**sailors, and passengers** were to be spared.

*Acts 27:24; "saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'*

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

**"keep up your courage, men"**

**Note how the messenger of God has exactly the needed message of light and hope, and that too when things seemed darkest."**

**( Psalm 112:4, 7; 46:1-3.)**

**Having received a revelation from God through the angel, Paul was completely assured that it would happen just as he had been told.**

**He had complete confidence that God could do what He promised He would do. Paul had long ago learned that when God makes a prophecy, it is matched by its fulfillment.**

Acts 27:26; *"But we must run aground on a certain island."* 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."*

**"Must"** because that's the way God has appointed it to be.

**"Run aground"** is the same word used in verse 17.

This statement clearly was part of the message the angel had spoken to Paul, though in Paul's report it is separated from the other things the angel said by Paul's affirmation of belief that **God would do as he promised.**

The ship would go down, the angel had said, but the men would be saved, washed ashore on some island or another.

**No easy escape was promised.** This element of the prediction must have been part of the angel's message, for there was no way the men had any idea of where they were.

The last, they knew, they were headed toward the mainland of Africa. The island will be Malta. (Acts 28:1;)

Acts 27:26; "But we must run aground on a certain island." 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."

"the **fourteenth night** had come." The time is **reckoned from their leaving Fair Havens** (verses 18, 19;)



The "**Adriatic Sea**" here spoken of is the central Mediterranean. This is learned from several sources in extant ancient literature. **Ptolemy speaks of the Adria** as washing the south coast of the Peloponnesus (Greece) and the east coast of Sicily. (Ptolemy, Geographical Outline, III. 4, 14, 15, 16.)

*Acts 27:26; "But we must run aground on a certain island." 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."*

The ears of the sailors were alive to the sound of the breakers before the passengers were aware of them. (If they threw out a **sea anchor** as they left **Clauda** (27:17;) it may have struck bottom, which would have given the sailors a warning they were nearing land.)

After they headed the ship toward the north-northwest in an effort to keep from being driven from Crete onto the Syrtis, they were driven across that stretch of open sea by the northeast winds in 14 days.



**Sounding Line**

Acts 27:28; *"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."*  
Still caught in the storm, but now being blown northwest toward Italy, the sailors sensed the approach of land.

To take a **"sounding"** they made use of a line with a lead weight on the end of it. They would have heaved the **leaded end of the rope** into the depths to learn how much water was underneath them.

Usually, there were knots on the rope, each a fathom apart. They learned there was **120 feet of water** where they were. The Greek noun rendered **"fathoms"** (**orguias**) literally means the distance from fingertip to fingertip when the arms are outstretched, including the chest, or **about six feet**.

The leadsman would measure the line as he took it in by grasping it and pulling it to arms' length, grasping again and pulling another arms' length of rope up from the depths, and so on, until the whole length was retrieved.



*Acts 27:29; " Fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak.."*

The soundings were proof that a shore was near, and the sound of the breakers indicated the area was rocky.

There was danger they would go aground, perhaps on some hidden reef of rock.

**They feared**, if they permitted the ship to drift any farther, so when they knew they were in 90 fathoms they dropped the anchors to keep them in this depth of water until daylight came and they could better ascertain their situation.

Ancient ships were usually anchored from the bow, but occasion often demanded they be anchored as well from the stern so that ships were actually built with **"hawse-holes aft to fit them for anchoring from the stern."**

**They are near land.**

They can hear the waves crashing onto the rocks.

**They are afraid they will be driven onto the rocks.**

*Acts 27:30; "But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the ship's boat into the sea, on the pretence of intending to lay out anchors from the bow."*

**Their fears roused by the breakers and the leaky condition of the ship aroused their instincts for self-preservation. The sailors (perhaps even the pilot and captain included) have figured out a way to save themselves, perhaps at the expense of the other people on the ship.**

**They are all going to get into the ship's boat and row toward the sound of the breakers.**

**That way they will avoid drowning in the deeper water.**

**They were already lowering the boat (the one they had earlier hoisted aboard, verse 16), and were preparing to board it, when Paul stopped them.**

**The boat, they could argue, was necessary to their purpose, as they intended to run the anchors out to the end of their cables before they dropped them into the sea.**



Acts 27:31; *"Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers,  
"Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved."*

*32 So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it fall away."*

If the ship's officers were themselves involved in the plan to escape, **they too were blocked**, for **Paul went to the centurion Julius**, the highest ranking authority on the ship, and warned him that if the sailors were successful in their plan to escape, then **Paul's promise of safety to all would no longer be true.**

Landsmen like the soldiers and prisoners **would be quite unequal** to the task of handling so large a ship under such critical conditions. Here is another time in Paul's life when he refuses to be presumptuous.

**"By this time the centurion** has learned that it was unwise to disregard **Paul's advice**, though it is not certain that his advice was correctly interpreted when the soldiers cut the hawsers and let the dinghy fall into the water, to drift away." (Bruce, op. cit., p. 516.)



**Ship's biscuit or hard tack**

Acts 27:33-34; *"Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven't eaten anything. 34 Now I urge you to take some food.*

*You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head."*

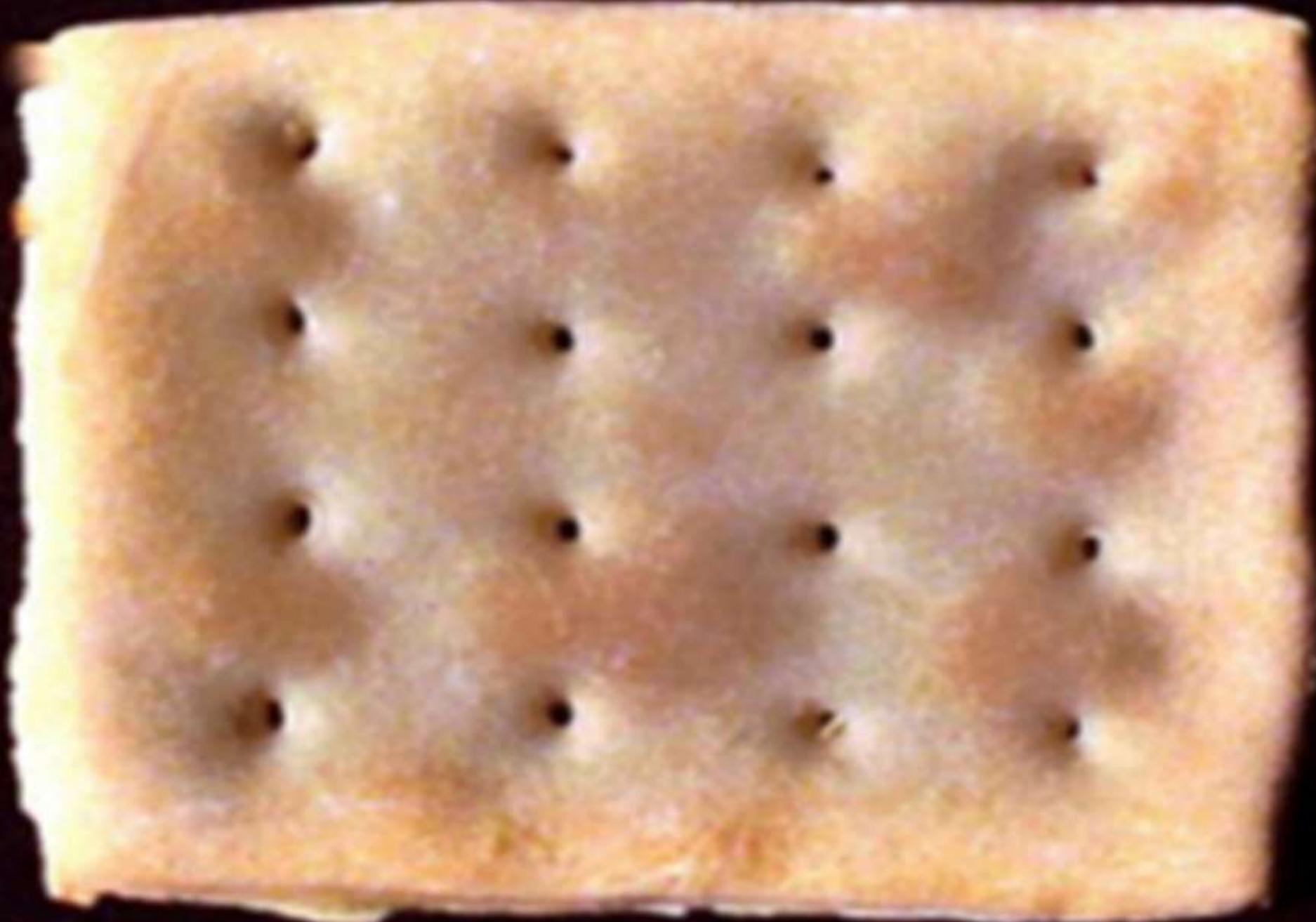
**One way to break the tension was the means Paul used.**

Soldiers and sailors needed something that would draw them together after what they had just gone through.

The food will not only serve as source of energy for the task of the next morning, but it would get their minds on something besides **the treachery of the sailors.**

**"constantly suspense."** suggest that most of the nights were sleepless, as they all anxiously awaited the dawn to see what the new day might bring. **"Without eating, having taken nothing"** seems to suggest **they have missed their regular meals.**

**There was hard work ahead** when daylight came; and if they were all to come through safely to land, **they would need all the energy, enthusiasm and cooperation** they could muster.



**Hard tack in another form**

*Acts 27:35-36; "After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat.*

*36 They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves."*

We picture **Paul himself** going to the galley and getting some food to distribute to those who refuse to follow his suggestion to get some for themselves

Before he passed it out, he paused to offer thanks to God for the food. Paul himself will teach in another place that prayers of thanksgiving are to be offered at meal time. (1 Timothy 4:5-6;)

**Paul** asked the soldiers and sailors to listen to the prayer of thanks for food to strengthen their bodies.

**Paul's** hearty cheerfulness, his encouragement, his own example has begun to communicate itself to the others on board the ship.



**Hard tack – also called “common crackers.”**

*Acts 27:37; "All of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy six persons."*

We presume that **Luke** has helped distribute the food that **Paul** has offered thanks over.

We also presume that it had to be rationed out to make sure everyone on board would get a fair share.

That is probably why **Luke** has the number of people on board at this point rather than at the close where he says "**we all got safely to land.**"  
(See Acts 27:44;)

**Josephus** tells us there were **600 people** on board the ship on which he set sail for Italy, and which, too, **went down in the sea of Adria.** (in the year 63 A.D.) (Josephus, Life, III.)

*Acts 27:38; "When they had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea."*

**As long as there was hope of saving the ship, they had tried to save a portion of the cargo, too.**

**But as is done in all cases where it becomes necessary to choose between saving the people on board, or saving the ship,**

**they now are preparing to run the ship aground in order to save the people.**

**That required getting it as light as possible, so that it drew as little water as possible.**

**It was **no easy task** to raise the sacks of grain from the hold of the ship (were many of them waterlogged?) And dump them overboard, for the storm is still raging, and the ship must have been pitching and tossing.**

Acts 27:39; " *When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could.*"

**St. Paul's Bay** (the traditional site of the shipwreck) was about 10 miles west of the main harbour of Valetta, the bay itself has no marked features by which even a native coming can recognize it.

A little bay, with a level, sandy beach. The word translated "**beach**" means a level or pebbly or sandy beach, (Matthew 12:2; Acts 21:5, 40;) as opposed to a "**high rugged coast.**"

**"to run the ship aground."** Their object was no longer to save the ship from being destroyed, but **to save the crew from drowning.**

*Acts 27:40; "Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders.*

*Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach."*

The anchors were of no further value; and even if they could have been recovered in spite of the continuing storm, they would only have added weight, the very thing they have spent the early morning hours getting rid of as they emptied the grain into the sea.

When they had put out the anchors, the two big paddle-rudders had been hoisted up and lashed fast, lest they should foul the anchor lines at the stern.

Now when **their use was absolutely necessary to steer the ship** toward the beach, the lashings by which they had been held up out of the water were loosened, and **the paddles fell back into the water.**

**The little foresail would give enough movement through the water so that the rudders could steer the ship.**

***Acts 27:41; "But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf."***



*Acts 27:41; "But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf."*

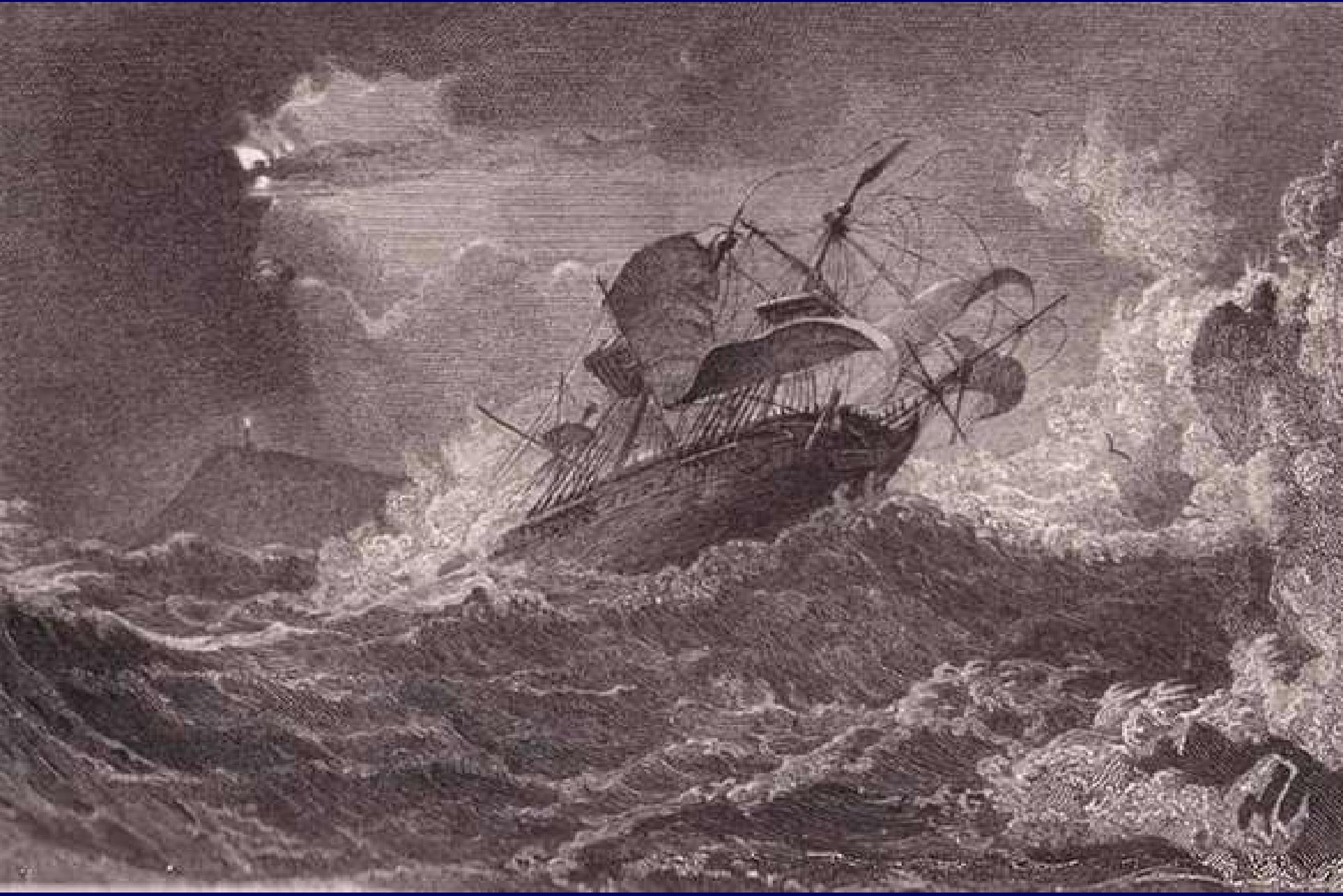
From the mouth of the bay, the little island looks to be a part of the **island of Malta**, but actually it is separated by a narrow channel about 100 yards in width.

The waters coming through this narrow channel meet the waters flowing into St. Paul's Bay from the mouth of the bay, and **where these "two seas" meet**, there is an underwater sandbar. (mudbank).

The front part of the ship was stuck in the mud bank, while the stern was still afloat in deeper water and exposed to the force of the currents and the waves rolled up by the storm.

As the ship began to break apart, the entire crew and passengers would have crowded to the forepart.

***Acts 27:41; "But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf."***



*Acts 27:42; "The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping."*

**We have seen that according to traditional Roman discipline, the soldiers would have to pay the same penalty their prisoners would receive if the prisoners escaped. ( Acts 12:18-19; 16:27;)**

**In putting the prisoners to death, the soldiers saw what looked to them like the only opportunity of escaping death themselves.**

**It seems unbelievable that the soldiers could plan to kill Paul along with the others after he had been instrumental in saving their lives.**

**But human lives were cheap,  
and men can be ruthless and cruel  
when they have power over others.**

**Acts 27:43; "But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life  
and kept them from carrying out their plan.**

**He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land."**



*Acts 27:43; "But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan.*

*He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land."*

**He felt too grateful to Paul** to expose him to such a fate. Again we see that for the sake of one righteous man, the lives of all the prisoners were spared.

**The centurion has a plan** which will prevent any of the prisoners from swimming away and escaping. He orders any of the soldiers who can swim to dive in and make for shore.

Once they are ashore, they can stand watch and round up the prisoners as they in turn made for shore.

Once the prisoners made shore, they could be clamped back into custody.

They would have to swim from one-fourth to one-half mile from the sand bar to shore.



Acts 27:44; *"The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship.  
In this way everyone reached land in safety."*

**The ship was breaking up**, and floating planks and other large timbers offered a means of getting ashore for those who could not swim.

This was exactly what Paul had promised (verses 22-24;) Ship and cargo were lost, but **every person on board lived through the shipwreck.**

**The soldiers** would have **perished** if **the sailors** had gotten away with their selfishness;

**The prisoners** would have **died** if **the soldiers** had not been stopped in their plan.

**Acts 27:44; "The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship.  
In this way everyone reached land in safety."**



*Acts 27:44; "The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship.  
In this way everyone reached land in safety."*

**The centurion believed Paul**  
and refused to allow any harm to come to him.

**So God saved all the passengers and crew  
because Paul was among them.**

This has been a long, eventful voyage.  
And Paul still has not made it to Rome.

**God has taken care of Paul** and given him the lives  
of all those on board the ship from Alexandra.

# Hope, the Anchor of the Soul. by Ellis Jones



**Heb 6:19; (NAS)**

**“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul,  
a hope both sure and steadfast  
and one which enters within the veil.”**

**Hope as an anchor of the soul,  
Ties me to heaven's shore.  
Stormy seas may o'er me roll;  
The winds may beat and roar.**



**On rough waters I can walk,  
For He will hold my hand.  
Because I listen to His talk  
And follow each command.**



**The anchor line may twist and stretch,  
My strength be almost gone.  
But because He saved this wretch.  
He helps me to hold on.**



**If my ship of life goes down;  
Earth's treasures will be gone,  
But I'll receive a golden crown.  
He helps me to hang on.**



**To His harbour safe He brings  
Where I shall drift no more.  
Praise to Him my glad heart sings.  
I'll reach the heavenly shore.**



**Acts 27:1-44;  
Paul begins his journey to Rome.**

**Prepared by  
Graeme Morrison**

**[graemestudy@gmail.com](mailto:graemestudy@gmail.com)**

**<https://ww.graemebibleresources.com>**

**Next in the series:-  
Acts 28:1-31; From Malta to Rome.**