

CHAPTER 27:1-13 | PAUL THE PRISONER BOARDS SHIP TO ROME

Verse 1—

After at least two years in Caesarea Paul boarded a ship to Rome, **Italy** to stand trial before Caesar to whom Paul had appealed his case (25:11,12). This is the culmination of two years imprisonment and the prophecy Paul received from Jesus in 23:11 “So must thou bear witness also at Rome.” **Paul and certain other prisoners** were assigned to a Roman **centurion named Julius**. Perhaps because of movies or repeating what others have told us we may have an impression that all Roman soldiers were the bad guys. In fact, there were many “good” centurions recorded in the Bible (Luke 7:2; 23:47; Acts 10:1). **Julius** will be remembered as a fair and just soldier as we will see in verse 3. The identification of the **Augustus band** is unclear, but it may have been an elite unit of soldiers since the Greek word for **Augustus** is *sebastos* which can mean valor or honor. We should also note that Luke uses the pronoun **we** indicating he too was on board the ship with **Paul**.

Verse 2—

Among the members of the **we** group is **Aristarchus the Thessalonian**. We remember him from Acts 19:29 and the riot in Ephesus where Aristarchus and Gaius were dragged into the theatre in front of an angry mob merely because they had been seen with Paul. Aristarchus is mentioned as being with Paul in Colossians 2:10; Philemon 24 (two of the prison epistles of Paul). It may be that Luke and Aristarchus were allowed to travel with Paul as potential witnesses for his defense. Paul probably had a higher status than the other prisoners (Acts 24:23). **A ship of Adramyttium** means the ship’s home port was Adramyttium, not that they boarded there. Caesarea was said to have one of the best ports in the region. The historian, Josephus described three great *colossi* guarding the north entrance of the harbor (See Josephus *Wars*, 1.413). The harbor can be seen today on Google Maps.

Verse 3—

No doubt the ship unloaded cargo in **Sidon** (The historian and geographer *Strabo* wrote: *Sidon is situated upon a fine naturally-formed harbour on the mainland.*¹). Cargo unloading takes a considerable amount of time. **Julius courteously...gave Paul liberty to go** ashore and meet with **friends to refresh himself**. Paul had earned great trust while being held in Caesarea for two years. He also seemed to be the object of affection in his travels. He was trusted and people wept at times when he departed (Acts 20:37-38). And while we should admire the centurion for his benevolence, we should also remember Paul is being guided by

the hand of God and what we are reading about is God’s providential hand. There was a purpose and a plan.

Verses 4,5,6—

Sailed under Cyprus because the winds were contrary. Today, contrary winds can be avoided simply by *sailing* under power around a storm. But in ancient days, **contrary winds** often delayed sailing for weeks. Therefore, they sailed to the leeward side of Cyprus or **under the protection of Cyprus** to **Myria** where they boarded another ship from **Alexandria sailing to Italy**. This may have been a planned change of ships since the Adramyttian ship might have been headed to its home port to the north.

Verses 7,8—

Sailed slowly, probably tacked back and forth through the wind toward the south. **Many days**, at least three. **Sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; hardly passing it**, that is passing it with difficulty, and arriving in **The fair havens** whose harbor was the best available shelter from storms. As a side note: Cretans, according to their own prophets, were known for their laziness and depravity (Titus 1:12) I think Paul quotes a 6th century B.C. poet, Epimenides, as an example of what some people really thought about Titus. Later Paul wrote to Titus to appoint elders for the churches on that island (Titus 1:5).

Verse 9, 10—

Much time was spent probably refers to the slow sailing from Myra. **Sailing was now dangerous**. Luke tells us why it was dangerous to sail by giving us the time of year, **the fast was now already past**. The **fast** here is probably the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) which is referenced in Leviticus 23:27,29 as the *tenth day of the seventh month* and because it varies by year it falls sometime in September or October. Sea travel was considered not impossible, but risky at this time. Paul spoke as a prophet and **admonished them...the voyage will be with hurt (or injury) ...of the ship...and our lives**.

Verses 11, 12, 13—

There must have been a discussion on board ship between Paul, the captain, and Julius. Paul warning them not to sail, and the captain asserting it would be fine. **Julius sided with the master and owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul**. After all, The fair **haven** was not a place to winter over. The city of Lasea was five miles away. Instead, **the more part advised to depart** and try and reach the more suitable harbor of Phenice.

A beautiful south wind began to blow and that was the captain’s signal to depart. That south wind would blow them nicely toward Phenice. And so, disregarding Paul’s admonishment and **loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete**. We will pick up next with verse 14, **“But...”**

¹ Strabo. *The Geography of Strabo. Literally Translated, with Notes, in Three Volumes*. Ed. H. C. Hamilton. Medford, MA: George Bell & Sons, 1903. Print.