Acts 27:1-26

(See Exegetical Notes on Acts 21:15-26:32. The Jews in Jerusalem had accused Paul of inciting trouble throughout the Roman world and in Jerusalem. They had brought charges against Paul before the Roman governor, Felix. Though none of the charges could be proven, Felix held Paul in jail for two years. When Felix was recalled to Rome, the new governor, Festus, heard the case against Paul, but still wanted to appease the Jews. He suggested that Paul return to Jerusalem to stand trial there. Paul refused, exercising his right to be heard in Rome in the Emperor’s Court. Festus ordered Paul to be taken to Rome for trial. But before his departure for Rome, Festus ordered Paul to make a second defense against the charges before King Agrippa. At last, Paul was put on board a ship headed for Rome.)

Verses 1-6

When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment. We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.

The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs. From there we put out to sea again and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board.

- At last, after several years of delay and a long imprisonment in Caesarea, Paul’s journey to Rome began. He and several other prisoners were given into the custody of a centurion named Julius who was charged to deliver them to Rome. Nothing else is known about Julius or is anything known
about the Imperial Regiment to which he was assigned. They boarded a ship that was bound for ports in the province of Asia, but which was not going to Rome. The intention was to find a ship going to Rome in one of these ports and book transport on it to Rome.

- There was a group of supporters traveling with Paul which included Aristarchus and Luke.
- At Sidon, Paul was given permission from Julius to go ashore with his friends to buy provisions for the journey. Apparently, the government did not supply everything needed for the trip, just the cost of the passage.
- From there, they sailed to the north of the island of Cyprus using the island for protection against the summer wind which blew from the west. The prevailing westerly wind slowed their progress.
- The ship finally landed at Myra where Julius booked passage on an Egyptian ship which was headed for Rome.

Verses 7-11

We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. When the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. 8 We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. 9 Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Day of Atonement. So Paul warned them, 10 “Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also.” 11 But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship.

- The ship was having difficulty and making very slow progress because it was the wrong time of year to be sailing towards Rome from Caesarea.
- Paul spoke prophetically about the voyage to Rome predicting disaster. But as he was a prisoner and not even a sailor, Julius disregarded Paul’s warning and listened to the pilot and the owner of the ship who felt the voyage could be made safely.

Verses 12-13

Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there. This was a harbor in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest. 13 When a gentle south wind began
to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete.

- The harbor at Fair Havens was not considered safe to winter in. The decision was reached to sail north to Phoenix where they would spend the winter. When there appeared to be a favorable change in the weather, they set out for Phoenix.

Verses 14-20

Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island. 15 The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. 16 As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure, 17 so the men hoisted it aboard. Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along. 18 We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. 19 On the third day, they threw the ship’s tackle overboard with their own hands. 20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

- A short time later, the weather turn bad. They encountered a strong storm with hurricane strength winds against which they could not prevail. They pulled the trailing lifeboat aboard the ship because they were afraid of losing it to the storm. They passed ropes under the hull of the ship to help hold it together if they ran aground. They lowered “sea anchors,” anchors which were dragged by the boat to slow it down as it was being blown by the wind. They threw the cargo overboard to make the ship more seaworthy. They tossed the extra rigging overboard for the same reason.
- Caught in the storm for three days, with no sign of escaping from it, the sailors and all on board gave up all hope of being saved.

Verses 21-26

21 After they 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. 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. 23 Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me 24 and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before
Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' 25 So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. 26 Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island.”

- At least four days into the storm, with all their provisions exhausted, Paul addressed the crew and those on board the ship. He first reminded them that he had warned against attempting this voyage but they had ignored him. He then told them not to lose hope or give up because an angel had visited him in a dream and told him that he would stand trial in Rome. The angel also told him that all of them would also be saved from the storm. He told them that he trusted God to deliver them.
- However, he warned them that the ship would be lost, so they must run it aground in shallow waters.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled To Rome: The Sixth Stop – On Board. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)