

Exegetical Notes, Acts 27:27-44

“To Rome: Shipwrecked”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship

101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320

610-384-1375

charleshjensen@aol.com

Acts 27:27-44

(See Exegetical Notes on Acts 21:15-27:26. 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. On the way to Rome, Paul’s ship was caught in a storm.)

Verses 27-29

On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. ²⁸ They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep. ²⁹ Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.

- The ship on which Paul was sailing was caught in a storm and unable to navigate for 14 days. It was driven by the storm where the storm took it (see Acts 27:14-20). The sailors had lost all hope of being saved.
- On the 14th day, the sailors sensed that land was approaching. By taking soundings they discovered that the water was getting shallower and they became afraid that the ship would run aground and be broken apart.
- Four anchors were dropped from the stern of the ship to slow its approach to land.

Verses 30-32

In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow.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 drift away.

- Hoping to escape from the doomed ship, some sailors on board lowered the lifeboat from the bow. Paul, seeing the true intention of the sailors, warned the centurion in command over them that only those who remained on board the ship could be saved from disaster (see Acts 27:22). The soldiers heeded the warning and cut the lifeboat adrift.

Verses 33-38

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.”³⁵ 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.³⁷ Altogether there were 276 of us on board.³⁸ When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

- Paul, who now appears to be in charge, ordered those on board the ship to eat something in preparation for what was about to happen as they had gone for many days without eating.
- He promised the safety of all those on board.
- There were 276 persons on board the ship
- After eating, they threw the grain cargo overboard to lighten the ship.

Verses 39-41

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.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.⁴¹ But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck

fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.

- When light came, it was confirmed that they were near land. No one recognized the beach they could see, but it was sandy and looked like a hopeful place to land the ship.
- They cut the anchors loose, unbound the rudders so they could maneuver, hoisted a sail, and headed for the beach.
- But before reaching the beach, the ship ran aground on a hidden sand bar. The bow stuck firmly but the stern of the ship was beaten by the waves and began to break up.

Verses 42-44

The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping.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.⁴⁴ The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely.

- If the prisoners escaped, the soldiers who guarded them would have been executed for failure to perform their duty. To prevent the escape, the soldiers planned to kill all the prisoners onboard, including Paul.
- But because the centurion in charge felt beholden to Paul, he ordered that none of the prisoners be killed.
- The centurion ordered that everyone abandon ship and make for shore as they could. Everyone reached the beach alive just as Paul had said they would.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *To Rome: Shipwrecked*. 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.)