

**This week:** AN INDIRECT PATH ACTS 27:39–28:6  
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**Additional background** Acts 27:1-38, Acts 28:7-16.

**Question 1** How can God accomplish his purposes through my life?

**Question 2** Paul is going to Rome. Why? (Acts 25:2-5,9-12; Acts 26:32)

## Book 1 ACTS

### 27 Paul Sails for Rome

And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. ...

<sup>7</sup>We sailed slowly for a number of days and ... <sup>8</sup> we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

<sup>9</sup>Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast<sup>a</sup> was already over, Paul advised them, <sup>10</sup>saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." <sup>11</sup>But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. <sup>12</sup>And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

**Remark 1** Boats at this time did not have a daggerboard or keel that would let them steer against the wind. They were forced to sail with the wind or to row against it.

### The Storm at Sea

<sup>13</sup>Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. <sup>14</sup>But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. <sup>15</sup>And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. <sup>16</sup>Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda,<sup>b</sup> we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat. <sup>17</sup>After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear,<sup>c</sup> and thus they were driven along. <sup>18</sup>Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo. <sup>19</sup>And on the third day they threw

<sup>a</sup>That is, the Day of Atonement

<sup>b</sup>Some manuscripts Claudia

<sup>c</sup>That is, the sea-anchor (or possibly the mainsail)

the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. <sup>20</sup>When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

<sup>21</sup>Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. <sup>22</sup>Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. <sup>23</sup>For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, <sup>24</sup>and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' <sup>25</sup>So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. <sup>26</sup>But we must run aground on some island." ...

**Remark 2** "An angel said ..." How do we know? Consider the slave girl in Acts 16:16-18. Then look at Gal 1:8-9 and Is 8:19-20. So, think about how we know if an idea comes from God or not.

<sup>33</sup>As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing. <sup>34</sup>Therefore I urge you to take some food. It will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." <sup>35</sup>And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. <sup>36</sup>Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. <sup>37</sup>(We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) <sup>38</sup>And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

**Remark 3** If a prisoner escaped then the soldiers would be executed as punishment. For another example of the consequences of this practice, see Acts 16:25-28.

### The Shipwreck

<sup>39</sup>Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. <sup>40</sup>So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. <sup>41</sup>But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. <sup>42</sup>The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. <sup>43</sup>But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, <sup>44</sup>and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

## 28 Paul on Malta

After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. <sup>2</sup>The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. <sup>3</sup>When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. <sup>4</sup>When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live.” <sup>5</sup>He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. <sup>6</sup>They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

**Remark 4** See Mark 16:15-20, Ps 91:9-16.

**Question 3** Some people use the above passages to justify “snake handling;” that is, they pass poisonous snakes around church together to demonstrate their faith in God. Is this practice justified? What do you think? (Mt 4:5-7)

<sup>7</sup>Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. <sup>8</sup>It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. <sup>9</sup>And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. <sup>10</sup>They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.

**Remark 5** From the dictionary: dysentery is an infection of the intestines resulting in severe diarrhea with the presence of blood and mucus in the feces. Bacterial dysentery is caused by bacteria of the genus *Shigella* and can also spread by contact (see amebic dysentery, *shigella*). They had no antibiotics, no penicillin, so this disease could be very serious.

**Question 4** Compare the story above to the great commission we read in Mark 16:15-20; also to the version in Matthew 28:18-20. What do you think about this?

**Remark 6** Notice that Paul does these miracles while he is a shipwrecked prisoner whose boat was just destroyed in a terrible winter storm. In spite of hardship, he doesn't complain about what he doesn't have, he just continues to serve God.

**Question 5** What do you think God wants to do in your life? Is there anything hindering you from doing it?

**Question 6** What do you get out of today's passage: is there anything you have learned or seen that can make a difference in how you live out your own faith?

### Next week

Every opportunity: Acts 28:23–31. (Then we go to 'Fuge!)

### Note

My web log address is <http://homepage.mac.com/hodelas/tar>. All of my Sunday School lessons are there in pdf files. The scripture citations are hyperlinked so that you can read them on your computer.

Take time to talk with your family about the questions in these lessons.