

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 80 | ACTS 27:21-44

ACTS 27:21-44 | JOURNEY TO ROME: THE SHIPWRECK, PART 2

- Verses 21-24 –
 - Paul had a **long abstinence** (from food, as required by the Greek word).
 - The fast was likely more related to the storm a spiritual fast.
 - Could it be that Paul's humanity shows through in that, while surely tired and hungry, he chastises the crew (v. 21) before telling them to **be of good cheer** (v. 22)?
 - The fact that Paul receives a direct word from **the angel of God** tells us that the "age of silence" had not yet begun, even this late in the ministry of Paul. The message was that **thou must be brought before Caesar**, along with the good news that **all them that sail with thee** will be saved from the storm.
 - Clearly Paul's testimony to Caesar was of vital importance. Was it because the kingdom message needed to go **to the uttermost part of the earth** (Acts 1:8) or because the Gospel of grace needed to be spread, or both? Or perhaps another reason? We are not told, though we will see some hints in Acts 28.
- Verses 25-26 –
 - The angel must have told Paul that they **must be cast upon a certain island**. Whether this had significance beyond the means of God to save Paul is unknown.
- Verses 27-29 –
 - On the 14th night (of their journey) they were **in Adria**. Today the Adriatic Sea is between Italy and the Croatia, Bosnia/Herzegovina, etc. In Paul's day the Adriatic included what is today called the Ionian Sea.
 - In ancient sailing, *sounding* had nothing to do with sound. Furthermore, this *sounding* had nothing to do with how far they were from the land, but rather the depth of the sea. A fathom is the length from the fingers of one hand to the fingers of another (5-6 feet - 4/5ths of the height of a man, using the Vetruvian man ratios). The word *fathom* comes from ὀρέγω [orego], which is the word for *desire*, and thus the idea of *reaching as far as possible*.
 - At **fifteen fathoms** (v. 28) (approx. 90 feet) they determined it was unsafe, so they **cast four anchors...and wished for the day**.
- Verses 30-32 –
 - Paul somehow knew that the **shipmen** were making an escape, abandoning ship, **under colour** (pretense) of placing more anchors. Paul demanded of the centurion that they **abide in the ship**, and the **soldiers cut off the ropes of the [life]boat, and let her fall off**.
 - The amount of trust the centurion was now giving to Paul was nothing less than remarkable.

- Verses 33-38 –
 - Paul encouraged them to **take meat** (a general word for any kind of food).
 - Verse 35 is very Jewish.
 - The reciting of a blessing in which you give thanks before eating is strongly Jewish. From the *Jewish Virtual Library*:
 - “Each benediction begins *baruch atah adonai elokeinu melech haolam* (Blessed Are You G-d, our Lord, King of the World). The endings depend specifically on what is to be eaten or drunk”
 - (<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/brachot-blessings-before-eating>).
 - Verse 35 says that **he took bread**, and the blessing is always said with the food *in sight and in hand*. Then it says he **gave thanks** and then **he began to eat**. Jewish teaching is that one should not say anything between the blessing and the first bite of food.
 - Altogether we now learn there are 276 **souls** onboard.
- Verses 39-41 –
 - What looked encouraging ends in what looks to be disastrous, as the ship will surely break apart.
 - Note: the insertion of **themselves** in verse 40 is not necessary.
 - It could be that **they committed the anchors unto the sea**. The KJV translators gave us permission to question this insertion by placing it in italics.
 - Bob Cornuke wrote a book called *The Lost Shipwreck of Paul* in which he claimed to have found the anchors. The finding was disputed by the Maltese government, but possibly because it affected long-held traditions and the tourist dollars generated by those traditions.
- Verses 42-44 –
 - The centurion goes against **the soldiers’ counsel** because killing the prisoners would include Paul. He appears to either have such trust of Paul or to not care about the potential escape so long as he has Paul.
 - All 276 on board made it **safe to land**.