

Paul Sails for Rome

Key Verses: *“The centurion, . . . commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.”*
—Acts 27:43,44

Selected Scripture:
Acts 27:1,2,33-44

FOLLOWING HIS HEARING before Agrippa, Paul was placed in the custody of an officer named Julius. Along with other prisoners, he then began a voyage by ship to Rome, where eventually he would have an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Their first day at sea was rather uneventful, and Paul was allowed to visit the brethren at the port of Sidon. After departing from Sidon, the captain changed the course of their intended journey because of the contrary nature of the winds. Then, at Myra, the prisoners bound for Rome were transferred to a larger

ship from Alexandria that was bound for Italy. For many days, travel was slow because of the heavy winds and because winter was approaching. Paul warned the crew they should tarry at a location called “The fair havens” until the weather became more favorable, lest the ship be destroyed and the lives of the passengers be placed in jeopardy. Although Paul had much experience with shipwrecks (II Cor. 11:25), his advice was ignored, and the decision was made to proceed onward to the larger port city of Phenice and spend the winter there.—Acts 27:3-12

Not long after their departure from “The fair havens,” a fierce storm arose with such a powerful wind that the sailors were unable to steer the ship. It was feared that the vessel would be broken to pieces. The men aboard the ship were terrified for their lives as the storm continued for many days. Paul, however, gave assurance that no lives would be lost of any on the ship, only that the ship itself would not survive, but be destroyed.—vss. 14-26

Several days later, the sailors sensed that they were drifting toward land and, in order to prevent the ship from running aground, they dropped anchors into the sea. Some of them were plotting to get to the shore in a small boat, but Paul reported this matter to the centurion and warned that unless they stayed on the ship the rest would not be saved. The centurion instructed the soldiers aboard the vessel to cut the ropes that were attached to the boat so it could not be lowered into the water, and everyone was forced to remain on the ship. Shortly before dawn, Paul encouraged everyone to eat some food to strengthen themselves. He offered a prayer of thanks to God and the two hundred and seventy-six people aboard ship partook and became more cheerful. Eventually the ship ran aground, and it began to break apart.—vss. 27-41

It was only then that the centurion gave the instruction that all were to leave the ship, in accordance with Paul’s instructions. Our Key Verses indicate that, either by swimming or using the wreckage from the vessel, everyone escaped and ultimately reached land safely.

The narrative of this lesson should provide comfort to devoted Christians who submit to God’s overruling providence in their lives, as was the case with Paul. May we experience the confidence of the Father’s presence to sustain us through life’s adversities, whatever they may be. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”—Isa. 26:3 ■