



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

LESSON 20 - STUDY QUESTIONS ACTS 27:1-44

DAY ONE

1. Was there an idea in Father McBride's commentary regarding Acts Chapter 26 (Lesson 19) that you wanted to think more about? Record your thoughts.

Read Acts 27:1-11

2a. At the end of chapter 26, Agrippa and Festus agreed that Paul could have been set free if he had not demanded an Imperial trial. As today's lesson begins, it was decided that Paul was to be transported to Rome. Who do you think the author means by "we" and into whose custody were the prisoners transferred in verse 1?

NOTE: The reference to "Augustan Cohort" would indicate a band of soldiers smaller than a regiment.

b. According to verse 2, they embarked on a ship from the nearby city of Adramyttium, which was about to set sail to ports along the coast of Asia. Who accompanied Paul and what have we read about him earlier in Acts?

3a. In verse 3, Luke says that the ship reached Sidon the next day. How was Paul treated by the Centurion and what was he allowed to do?

b. Jesus also traveled the seaside around Sidon and Caesarea. Choose one of the following passages from the Gospel of Matthew and record briefly what Jesus did in that region:

Matthew 15:21- 40

Matthew 16:13-20

4a. Many port towns are mentioned in verses 4 to 8. List them and see which ones you can locate on the map below. If you can, name the modern countries they would be in today.

Paul's Journey to Rome as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.



b. Read verses 7 to 9. How would you describe the trip as they headed toward Italy?

5a. In verse 9, the “Fast” refers to the Day of Atonement (now referred to as Yom Kippur by those of the Jewish faith) which takes place between the middle of September and the middle of October. It also marked the time after which sailing was deemed unsafe because winter navigation was difficult owing to fog and storms. In your own words, what did Paul say to the centurion, according to verse 10?

b. How did the centurion react in verse 11?

6. CONNECTION: In this passage we follow Paul and his companions as their ship traveled from port to port, facing high winds and dangerous waters. Rome still lay far ahead of them, and winter storms were coming. Paul was being transported as a prisoner to a foreign land, yet God gave him consolation during this time of trouble. Not only was he accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus, his custodian allowed him to visit his friends in Sidon. Paul could pray with his friends. Describe a time when you found yourself in a frightening or uncomfortable circumstance over which you had little or no control, but your friends were there to pray with you. How did sharing prayer help you to get through that experience?

Read and record Matthew 18:20 and begin your prayer today thankful for the gift of shared prayer.

DAY TWO
Read Acts 27:12-20

7. As today’s passage opens, the ship Paul is aboard is anchored at Fair Havens harbor on the isle of Crete (10 on the map on page 156). Why were most of the people on the ship in favor of sailing on, and what did they hope would happen (verse 12, sentence 1)?

8a. Phoenix was about 100 miles west of Fair Havens on the south coast of Crete, “a good place to winter” according to the end of verse 12. According to verse 13, a moderate south

wind came up - just what was needed to sail from Fair Havens to Phoenix. Things didn't go as planned. In your own words describe what happened in verses 14 and 15.

b. Looking at the map on page 156 (North would be at the top), consider the Nor'easter blowing the wooden ship out to sea - the ship is driven before the wind. To be driven before the wind is a harrowing experience. The ship is out of control and could be blown anywhere or swamped at any time. God's power is often described in the Bible through wind and sea. Read the following verses and record your favorite:

Jeremiah 10:13

Jonah 1:4

Mark 4:37-39

9. In verse 16, we learn that to gain some protection from the storm the crew sailed the ship close along the shore of a small island called Cauda (see "Clauda" (12) on the map on page 156), which is about 23 miles due south of Phoenix. The winds were so violent that the ship's boat (lifeboat), which ran alongside the ship or behind it, was making the ship impossible to control. To save the lifeboat and the ship, what actions were taken according to verses 16 and 17?

NOTE: The Syrtis is a stretch of sand banks and quick sands off the coast of Africa (now Libya). Although Paul's ship was still far away from the Syrtis, a violent storm could have driven the ship a long distance. The "sea anchor" is a piece of cloth dragged behind a ship to slow it down.

10. According to verses 18 and 19, what further measures did they take to help the ship ride out the storm and how would this help the situation?

11. The concluding verse of this passage tells us that the horrendous storm continued. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest raged, what does Luke say was the reaction of the passengers and crew?

12. CONNECTION: There was no National Weather Service to predict weather for the sailors as they left the port of Fair Havens (which means "safe harbor"), but we know that by sailing on they had disobeyed Paul's advice. In the midst of a raging tempest, all seemed lost

for Paul's ship. Like those on board Paul's ship, none of us know what unexpected storms we may encounter in life. When life is tumultuous, or when we have veered off the course God has set for us, we can turn to Him for hope and comfort. As Christians, we have a "Safe Harbor" in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Think of a time when you knew that your prayer for "safe harbor" was answered. Share some details with your small group.

Read and record Numbers 6:24-26 and offer this prayer today for your family, your friends, and each member of your Cornerstone small group (Good memory verse).

DAY THREE
Read Acts 27:21-26

13a. As today's lesson begins, we read in the beginning of verse 21 about another aspect of the desperate situation on board the ship. What added to the hopelessness of the people on board?

b. What did Paul do and say, according to verse 21?

14. In verse 22, Paul spoke with authority and knowledge from God. What did he tell his shipmates?

15a. According to verse 23, what gave Paul the power and certainty to speak those words to them?

b. In verse 24, we learn that the angel assured Paul that this was not his time to die, and the angel told him not to be afraid because he and the other passengers were to be saved. What reason was given?

16a. In verse 25, Paul again told the men to keep up their courage (as he did in verse 22). Record the reason he gave for this encouragement (end of verse 25), and the warning he gave them in verse 26.

b. The angel of the Lord had assured Paul of God's plan for him, and drowning was not to be Paul's fate. Rome lay ahead of him. Read and record the following Old Testament verse assuring us of God's care and providence:

Deuteronomy 31:6

17. CONNECTION: Paul and the others on the ship were in a desperate place. They were tired, hungry, and ready to give up. They knew that something had to change or they would surely be doomed. Paul stood up and told the others that an angel of the Lord "to whom he belonged and whom he worshipped" appeared in his dream, and assured them of their eventual safety. Many of us have had "angel" experiences in which we, too, can say that we have faith that it will be "exactly as it has been told." Share a special experience of faith and comfort with your small group.

Read and record Luke 1:45 and let these thoughts lead you into prayer.

DAY FOUR

Read Acts 27:27-32

18. As today's passage begins, it was the 14th night of their journey, and the ship had drifted across the Sea of Adria. What happened around midnight that gave the sailors a glimmer of hope, according to verse 27?

19. Soundings are mentioned in verse 28. These were done by dropping marked, weighted ropes into the sea, then pulling them up and noting the depth mark of the water on the rope. What are we told about the two soundings that were taken and what would that have meant to the sailors?

20a. Verse 29 tells us that the sailors let down four anchors from the stern to try to avoid running on to the rocks. What did they do after that?

b. In verse 30, we read that the sailors tried to escape from the boat by lowering the lifeboat under the pretense of rowing to the front of the ship and lowering the front anchors. What thwarted their plan (verse 31)?

21a. According to verse 32, what action did the soldiers take?

b. Why would this be considered a drastic measure?

22. CONNECTION: It was pitch black in the middle of the night, and the men prayed for day to come. At any moment, their ship could have crashed on the rocks and sunk. One group of men has just attempted to desert, and all are frightened, hungry, and exhausted. Like them, we all feel better in the morning light. Recall a dark night when you desperately prayed for the dawn to come. How did the light of your faith help you to persevere until morning?

Read and record Psalm 30:4-5 and give thanks today for the light of faith.

DAY FIVE

Read Acts 27:33-38

23. As today's passage opens, we see that when daybreak came, Paul was "in charge." What did Paul urge his shipmates to do, and what did he say to them?

24. In verse 34, Paul gave them the reason why eating was so important. What did he say, and what promise did he make to them?

25a. Verse 35 contains these familiar words: "After he had said this, he took bread; and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat." Read and record the following passage which contains the words used in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

1 Corinthians 11:23-24:

b. What were the reactions of the people to Paul's words (verse 36)?

26. In verse 37, Luke notes an interesting fact. What is it and what does it tell you about the size of the ship?

27a. After they had eaten, what did all of those people do according to verse 38?

NOTE: The mention of wheat and the size of the ship indicate that this was a large, commercial vessel.

b. Throwing their cargo (the wheat) overboard would have been a desperate move. What were they trying to accomplish?

28. CONNECTION: In today's lesson, we see that people on board were trying to save themselves and the ship. In order to make the ship ride higher in the water and avoid the deadly rocks, they dumped overboard everything that was unnecessary. First it was only the cargo, then they went so far as to "strip down" the ship and even dumped the tackle. In our voyage through life, we add more and more cargo. On calm days our ships are fine, but when we face a storm or treacherous waters, we sometimes realize that we are overburdened with things that aren't really important. How do you decide what is really important and how do you go about jettisoning that extra cargo?

Read and record 1 John 2:15-17 and let thoughts from these verses lead you into prayer.

DAY SIX
Read Acts 27:39-44

29. As today's lesson begins, the night has passed, and in the morning the people on the ship saw land that they did not recognize, including a bay with a beach. What plan did they devise (verse 39)?

30. According to verse 40, they did several things to allow the ship to move. List all the things they did.

31. Their plan failed! Verse 41 lists the details of this disaster. Record them briefly here.

32a. This is at least the 4th time that Paul has been shipwrecked on his apostolic ministry. Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 and briefly note a few of the many hardships Paul suffered.

b. Though Paul was constantly in danger or suffering, he knew the value of suffering for Christ. Read and record 2 Corinthians 1:5 and note what this verse means to you.

33a. In verse 42, we learn that the soldiers planned to kill the prisoners. Why?

b. Recall from a previous lesson the penalty for allowing a prisoner to escape (refer to Acts 12:18-19). How might knowledge of that penalty cause the soldier's to want to kill the prisoners? Briefly explain.

34a. Julius, the centurion, intervened. What reason is given (verse 43)?

b. What might you infer about Julius's relationship with Paul from what you have learned earlier in this chapter?

35a. Julius was the highest ranking officer on the ship. What orders did he give, according to verses 43 and 44?

b. In the last sentence of the passage, we learn the outcome of these commands. Record it here.

36. CONNECTION: Throughout this ordeal Paul tried to help Julius, in whose care he had been placed. Ultimately, Julius saved Paul's life. We have the expression, "What goes around comes around." Perhaps that partially explains the dynamics between Paul and Julius, or perhaps Julius heard and began to accept the Word of God through Paul. We cannot always know how our words and actions affect others, but sometimes it "comes home" to us that the Holy Spirit has used us to spread the Word of God. Can you share an example of how your Christian life (or that of someone you know) has positively affected another?

Read and record 2 Corinthians 2:14 and write a prayer today asking God to use you to spread His Word.

After completing this lesson, read Chapter 27 (refer to pages 142-144 in the edition copyrighted in 1992 by Our Sunday Visitor or pages 185-189 in the edition reprinted in 2013 by Saint Benedict Press) in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.