

Acts 27 - John Karmelich

Let me start with a movie reference that fits well here: As I studied this text, I thought of a scene from one of the Jurassic Park movies. It's from one of the later ones, that summarizes all of them well. One of the recurring characters says in effect, "It always starts off peaceful. Then comes a panic, screaming, and terror!" (The character of Ian, played by Jeff Goldblum.) That's a good summary of the action of each of those movies and well, it summarizes well what happens in this chapter.

In this chapter Paul is taken prisoner and travels by ships from Israel to Rome. The voyage begins well but near the end of the chapter, there is a violent storm, people almost died and their shipwrecked! Yes, in effect it's a similar pace to the Jurassic Park movies and this story would make a great movie! What I pondered of course is why is this in the bible and why does God want us to know the details of a ship wreck? A couple of thoughts came to mind: First it shows that despite the storms of life, His promises do come to pass! God promised Paul would make it to Rome, and he'd preach to their leader! Keep in mind Luke, (the author) was on that ship. He could have just said, even though we survived through a horrible ordeal, God made it possible for us to get to Rome! Instead we get two chapters on the journey of Paul getting there. I'm guessing it made a strong impact on Luke's life. It all boils down to the fact God got those he wanted to the place He wanted them to go! If we can trust God with these facts, why do we doubt at times the fact He exists let alone our own eternal salvation?

I'm sure all of this was important to Luke, and Paul was obviously happy he survived! Still why should we care about all of this ancient history? For starters this chapter teaches about good leadership. What I also see is a reminder that God's still guiding us, even during the toughest moments of our lives. Let's be honest it's easy to be afraid of the unknown. This story reminds us we can survive through our own horrible storms of life! None of us know what'll happen next. All we can do is do our best to make the best decisions we can in such times. We trust He's guiding us for His glory in spite of our mistakes and decisions. The great lesson here is about having faith that God will guide us during the worst times of our lives as well as the good times.

With that said, let me tell the story of this chapter: The last chapter ended with Paul on trial in Israel. It ends with Paul appealing his case to the Roman Emperor which was his right as a citizen. At the Israel trial the Roman governor knew Paul was innocent so a command was given to "be easy on him" as he's innocent of the charges. Realize that along with Paul other prisoners were being transported as well. It is logical that many of the other prisoners were sentenced to death (via the "games" in Rome), so those were the traveling companions on this trip besides the soldiers in charge of guarding them!

So Chapter 27 opens with Paul (Luke the author and at least one other Christian) traveling with Paul on a ship up the coast from Israel. As opposed to a straight line to Rome ships followed the coast line as it was a safer way to travel. The ship traveled along the northeastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. I've found a visual helps with this chapter. I tried inserting one, but I couldn't get it to work. If you Google Paul's trip to Rome, you'll find a bunch of maps that show the route/

Short version is they traveled north then west. It involved going around the island of Cyprus so as to minimize rough weather. Besides Paul and his traveling companions the ship had prisoners who most likely had a death sentence. The ship had the crew plus the Roman soldiers in charge.

Another thing to keep in mind is it was the fall of AD59. The Mediterranean gets rough that time of the year and no ships traveled in the winter. Paul even warned everyone on board, "Let's hang out here for

the winter for safety", but the ship captain and the Romans wanted to push on for a better place to hang out for the winter. That's when the weather got really bad. It was then a 14 day journey through what I would consider a hurricane. The ship went off course and everyone was seasick. Obviously everyone's doing what they can to survive including throwing unnecessary things for survival off the ship. I forgot to mention they changed ships here being on a grain ship from Egypt heading to Italy. In the middle of all of this an angel appears to Paul and says in effect, "God said you'd preach in Rome, so don't let this storm bother you. Everyone on the ship will survive because I want you (Paul) to complete what I have called you to do! "

It was 14 days from the Fair Havens port to where the ship wrecked off a tiny island called Malta. Let's just say everyone survived the horrid ordeal despite the fact no one ate for 14 days (seasickness). Paul encouraged everyone when the ship finally crashed just off this small island. All of the people on board made their way to the land either by swimming or riding on boards stripped from the broken ship! The trip involved Paul encouraging the passengers, a prevented mutiny as well the Roman captain stopping the soldiers from killing the prisoners fearing they would escape. As I said, it reminds me of a Jurassic Park movie script as it goes from a peaceful trip to a survival story. What happens after they land is the subject of the next chapter.

All of that leads me back to the question, why is all of these details in the chapter? Grant it, Luke, who wrote this book was among the survivors and maybe he just wanted to share all of this. My view is it's a reminder that God does and will guide us through life's storms. We don't know how we'll get through such storms. Again, all we can do is trust that God is working our lives for His glory (Romans 8:28) as we make the best decisions we can through such times. I'm convinced God wanted this story to be here to remind us that He's still guiding us through our own storms and we can trust that He's working it out for His glory.

With that said, on the same page where you downloaded this summary is a more detailed lesson on this chapter. That one is on a verse-by-verse basis. To read that, click on one of the other two links on this chapter. If you want, you are always welcome to e-mail me and I hope you like this. Thanks, John