

DIGGING DEEPER

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Acts 27:1-44

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Acts 27 is the account of Paul's journey as a prisoner heading towards Rome. It is important to keep in mind Paul knew not only where he was going but the reality that he was going to get there. Turn back to the book of Acts and read Acts 23:11. Jesus himself told Paul he was going to testify about Jesus in Rome. Paul undoubtedly trusted implicitly that this instruction was a guarantee of his Roman appearance. Quite simply, Jesus said it, Paul believed it! As you read Acts 27 we will look at five insights discovered in the story.

Day One – Some decisions are better than others Acts 27:9-12)

Read Acts 27:1-13. The urgency to continue the journey is past as the fast for the Day of Atonement is over. While Paul is intent on getting to Rome, he is advising the pilot of the ship not to put out to sea due to the impending danger. The centurion who oversaw the prisoners aboard the ship controls the decision. Paul's advice is to wait lest there be loss of cargo, ship, and perhaps even lives. The ship's owners and the pilot of the ship felt the harbor they were in was not suitable for the winter. We are not told why, and it appears the decision is put to a vote and the majority said, "Let's sail." They did and they were about to face a devastating storm.

What can we learn? Majority decisions are not necessarily good decisions. Granted, we have the luxury of knowing fully the whole story (beginning to end) and we see the wisdom of Paul's advice. In our lives we continually are in the process of making decisions. How do we go about making wise decisions? Relying on majority opinions or even experts (think ship pilot and owner) may seem wise but real wisdom comes from God. "With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel and understanding." (Job 12:13) "For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;"

(Proverbs 2:4)" Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.

(Proverbs 19:20) "This also comes from the LORD of hosts; he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom." (Isaiah 28:29)

One word answers the question: *wisdom*. In Proverbs, the words *wise* and *wisdom* are used at least 125 times, because the aim of the book is to help us *acquire* and *apply* God's wisdom to the decisions and activities of daily life. Warren W. Wiersbe in *Be Skillful*.

God truly wants us to seek him for wisdom as we make decisions. You will make countless decisions today. Many of them God has already given you insight and understanding, at the same time there are those decisions you should take to God. It can make a difference in your life and the lives of others.

Day Two – All hope abandoned Acts 27:20

Perhaps the most frightening verse in this chapter is Acts 27:20, "all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned." What a tragic circumstance to find yourself in – no hope! Regardless of how you got to that point in your life, you don't have to stay there. In our passage these prisoners had no hope. The sailors had no hope. The guards had no hope. Bad decisions brought them to this place.

But let's think about this for a moment. There are times in the life of many of us where the decisions we have made bring us to a place where hope is not only diminished but lost completely. That is a desperate place to be. We do not need to stay in hopeless places. Christ has come to bring hope in hopeless places, joy in desperate places, life in dead places.

John Calvin wrote, "The word "hope" I take for faith; and indeed hope is nothing else but the constancy of faith." There is the secret. It is not hope that is lost, but faith. We need to be doing those things that enlarge our faith on a daily basis. Spend time with God. Spend time reading God's Word seeking His direction for your life. Look for God's hand working in your life and in the lives of those around you.

A.W. Tozer said, "Hope is a word which has taken on a new and deeper meaning for us because the Savior took it into His mouth. Loving Him and obeying Him, we suddenly discover that hope is really the direction taken by the whole Bible. Hope is the music of the whole Bible, the heartbeat, the pulse, and the atmosphere of the whole Bible."

Listen to the music of the Word and you will find not only the joy of the Lord, but you will find the hope of Christ!

Day Three – Hope restored Acts 27:21-26

Read Acts 27:21-26 as you begin today. Don't you just hate it when someone says, "I told you so."? Paul is doing that but not with a haughty spirit. He is reminding the seamen of his previous warning. He is probably doing this to reinforce his words to the crew. He has a message of miraculous hope. He is about to inject purpose back into their lives to go with this newfound hope.

The crew hadn't eaten in days and Paul tells them they should. Why? Because God had sent an angel to reinforce in Paul's life the message he had received long before. (See Acts 23:11) Paul says, "an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship," told him again "you must stand before Caesar."

While there was loss of cargo, and there will be a loss of the ship, not a single life would be lost. Paul's word is "Take heart...I have faith in God...it will be exactly as I have been told." Paul is offering faith to all who would listen to his word.

For fourteen days they are driven by the tempestuous waves and winds. For all these days there was no land near for them to ground their ship for safety. Fourteen days of reminding themselves that Paul had told them no lives would be lost. Fourteen days' worth of faith. Is it enough?

Day Four – Reverting to old ways Acts 27:27-32

Read Acts 27:27-32. The ship appeared to be nearing land and there were sailors who made a decision to revert to their own ways. The sailors had decided to abandon their ship with the soldiers and the prisoners left behind. Paul had said they would all be saved (see Acts 27:22) and for fourteen days the ship continued through the storm with no loss of life. Apparently, the faith of the sailors in Paul's words was only a fourteen day faith!

While Paul was not a sailor, he apparently understood enough to detect the plot of the sailors who felt they could surreptitiously put out boats from the bow of the boat pretending to set more anchors while intending to escape the ship. Paul immediately reported to the centurion and the soldiers the sailors' plan, and they acted. Salvation of all on board relied on all staying on board. The confidence the

centurion and soldiers had in Paul and his testimony was immediately recognized. The lines to the boats on the bow were cut. Sailors who wanted to be saved had taken matters into their own hands rather than trusting Paul and his God. Fortunately for the sailors the soldiers' actions proved to be their salvation.

Here's a question for you. How long will your faith hold? Sailors had a fourteen-day faith. This might serve as a warning to all of us. We need to feed our faith! We must be intentional about building up our faith. D. L. Moody gave us insight on how to build our faith: "I prayed for faith and thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." I had up to this time closed my Bible and prayed for faith. I now opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since."

How will you build your faith?

Day Five – Encouragement and Deliverance Acts 27:33-44

Read Acts 27:33-44. For fourteen days sailors, soldiers and prisoners had been in suspense for their lives facing a storm that seemed to have no end. Paul, who was a prisoner on the ship, had already told them there would be no loss of life, nonetheless fear of the storm had gripped all. No one had eaten for days until finally Paul encouraged them to eat some food which they will need to for strength. Again, Paul promises "not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." (see Acts 27:24 for Paul's first promise of safety).

To demonstrate Paul's confidence in God he takes bread, breaks it, and begins to eat. It is not unusual for Paul to do such a thing. Breaking bread is often used by God miraculously. He fed thousands by breaking bread (Matthew 14:19 and 15:36). Jesus broke bread and gave it to the disciples in the first communion (Luke 22:19 and 24:30). Breaking of bread was also the pattern of the earliest believers as they grew in their faith and their community.

Luke, the writer of Acts, tells us 276 people were on the ship and all of them were saved. Again, God interceded as the soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners, but the centurion prevented it as he wanted to save Paul. The unnamed centurion was part of God's provision for the prisoners. Paul's influence enabled the prisoners to swim to shore. All survived just as Paul promised.

Paul's example and influence shines through this entire event. Let's ask ourselves a simple question, does our example and influence make a difference in the lives of others? Who and how many might we have a part in saving both physically and spiritually?