

A Study in Acts

Chapter Twenty-Seven – Paul’s Journey to Rome.

ACTS 27:13-27:

In our previous lesson, we concluded Part 1-2 of the journey. We have learned a great deal about ocean travel to this day and are ready now to continue with the journey. Paul will constantly be working to fulfill the promise made to him by the Lord.

Acts 23:11 *“But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.””*

The trip to Rome is going to follow this outline:

27:1-8 **Part 1** – **Caesarea to Fair Havens.**

27:9-12 **Part 2** – **Paul’s Warning Ignored.**

27:13-38 **Part 3** – **The Gale and Storm.**

27:39-28:10 **Part 4** – **Shipwrecked on Malta.**

28:11-16 **Part 5** – **Arrival at Rome.**



27:13-38 **Part 2** – The Gale.

Text #1

Acts 27:13-20

“When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. ¹⁴ But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon. ¹⁵ So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive. ¹⁶ And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty. ¹⁷ When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven. ¹⁸ And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship. ¹⁹ On the third day we threw the ship’s tackle overboard with our own hands. ²⁰ Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.”

Remember – They could only sail seven degrees into the wind; however, Phoenix was only 34 miles away and could have been easily reached had it not been for the sudden change in the weather.

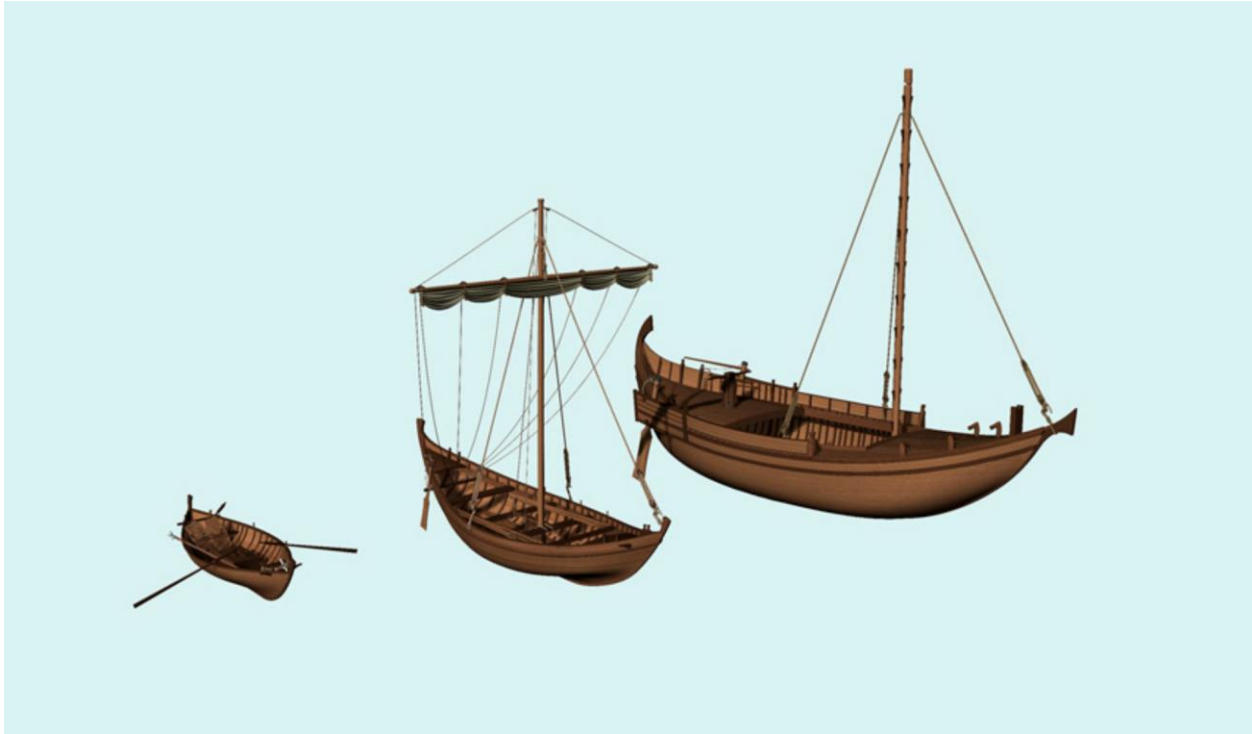
Euroclydon – This word is derived from the Greek, ‘erus’, meaning east and the Latin, ‘aquilo’, meaning north, or as we would call it, a northeaster. This wind roared down on them, made far fiercer by it coming down from the seven-thousand-foot mountains of Crete. This forced them to turn and run with the wind to avoid capsizing. There was no way to anchor and ride it out, the wind was far too powerful. This was something that occurred often in the fall of the year and was well known by Paul, but his warning went unheeded.

Clauda – Clauda, also known historically as Gaudos or modern-day Gavdos, is situated approximately twenty-three miles south of Crete. The island is small, and its mention in the biblical account underscores the navigational difficulties encountered by ancient mariners in the region. The reference to Clauda serves to provide a geographical marker in the narrative of Paul’s journey, illustrating the route taken by the ship as it struggled against adverse weather conditions.



The relief they received from sailing under the protection of Claudia gave them opportunity to perform three important tasks.

1. Secure the Skiff.



These ship-to-shore craft were commonly towed behind the main vessel, but in difficult weather, would have to be brought on board and tied down to avoid becoming part of what would make disaster for the ship.

2. They Undergirded the Ship with Cables.

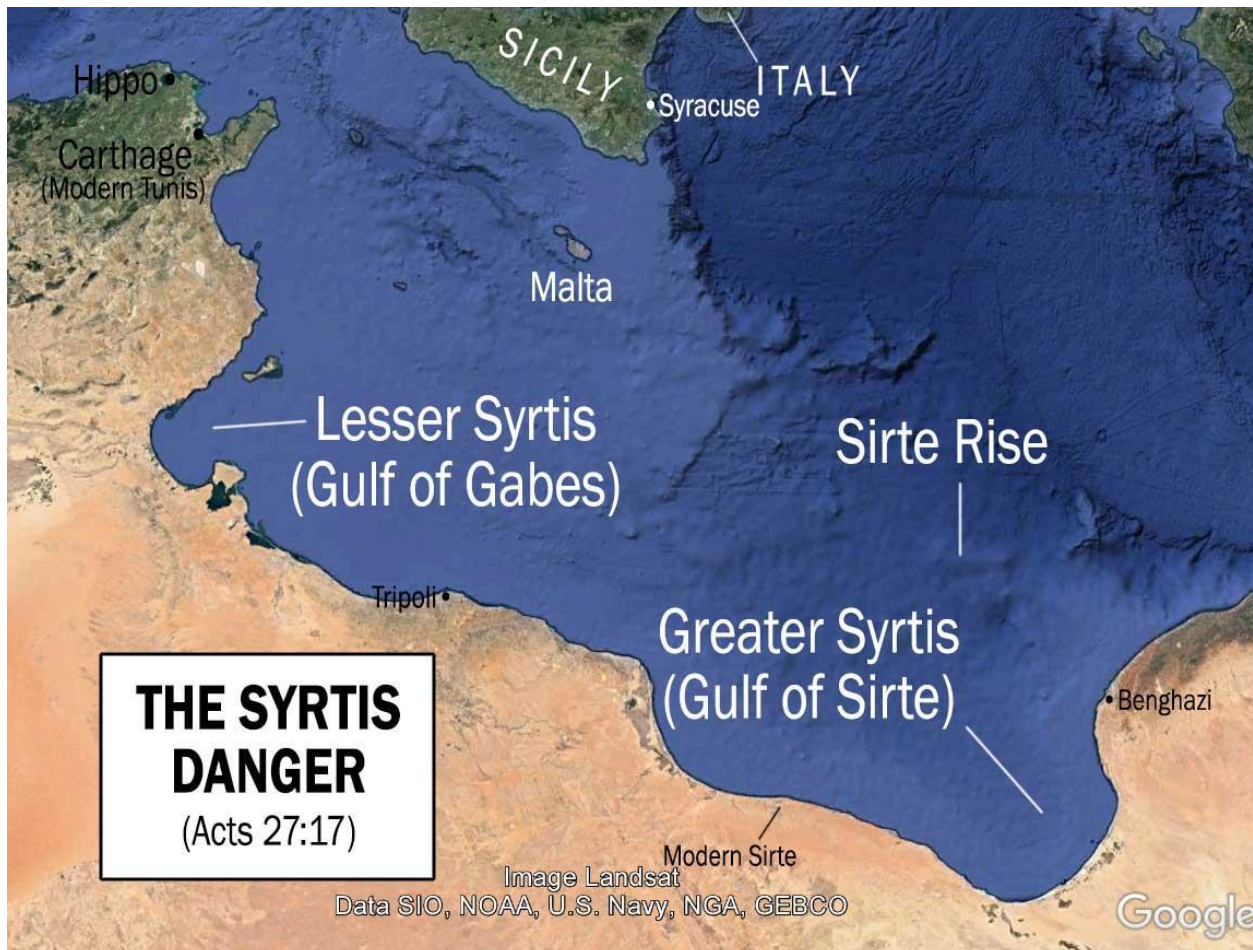
Undergirding a ship refers to the practice of passing cables or strong ropes around a vessel to keep the planks from springing or starting by the action of the sea. This is now called "frapping" a vessel. The operation of "frapping" a vessel involves passing a cable several times under and around a ship and tightening it on deck to prevent the working and parting of the timbers and planks in a gale.

3. Struck Sail.

This is the act of trimming the sails to run in a specific direction in the storm. This would allow them to drift sideways westward and eight degrees north. They feared an area in the south Mediterranean Sea known as the Syrtis Sand banks, so they did everything possible not to go south.

Syrtis Sands - Why were the sailors afraid of the Syrtis Sands? The Syrtis is two bodies of water in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of North Africa. Even with 'good luck', the sailors on the

Alexandrian grain ship carrying the Apostle Paul and Luke were terrified because they knew they would be doomed if they hit the Syrtis Sands. The grain ships were the largest ships plying the Mediterranean Sea at that time, with a deep draft, and they would easily have gotten grounded on a sandbar in the middle of no-where and many miles from any shoreline! The ship fixed in a single spot in an agitated sea would have been battered to bits. In addition, if they somehow survived the battering of the sea, the old sailor's axiom would hold true: 'Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink!' They would have had plenty of grain to eat on the ship, but not a drop of water to go with it. They were afraid of a slow and painful death by dehydration.



The Next Day – Note that Luke does the best job he can of giving a sense of time to this perilous journey. In **Vs. 18, Vs. 19, Vs. 20,** and **Vs. 27** (which gives some insight into the many days of **Vs. 20**) these are notes of time value for us.

Also consider, that the average drift for a vessel of this size was approximately 1 and ½ miles per hour, this means that in 13 days they would cover about 476.6 miles into the current.

Lightened the Ship – As concern grew that they would be swamped by the ragging sea, they began to lighten the ship to keep the waves from coming over the gunnels. This would encompass everything but personnel and cargo (tools, ropes, extra spars, etc.).

Text #2

Acts 27:21-27

“But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. ²² And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³ For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, ²⁴ saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ ²⁵ Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. ²⁶ However, we must run aground on a certain island.”

²⁷ Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land.”

I Told You So – Paul shares that his experience in sailing the Mediterranean Sea for many years should have been taken more seriously; however, we know that greed was much more involved in the decision making of those in charge.

Comfort to Paul – This marks the third time that Paul is going to receive a direct message of comfort in his work and service to the Lord. The first was in **Chap. 18:9-10**, while in Corinth, the second time in **Chap. 23:1**, while in Jerusalem and the theme of our journey, and here during the gale. The angel shares that Paul will see Rome and that none of those who are on the ship will perish, which is a powerful statement considering where they are and what is happening.

I Believe God – Many believe in God, but it altogether different to **Believe God!**

Romans 4:3, 20-21; Hebrews 11:8-10, 17-19 – examples.

However, during the comfort given, there is the ominous prediction that the ship will be grounded on an island. This will continue to put the ships’ leadership at odds with Paul as they would see this as a financial disaster.

Adriatic Sea – Today this is the area between Italy and the Balkans; however, in Paul’s day it would be as far south as Sicily and Crete.



Sensed Land – It is not known how or why they sensed land, and we could speculate. However, Luke shares that whatever experience they have garnered, they are concerned about the possibility of land and shallow depth. Remember that this grain ship is among the largest to sail in the Mediterranean Sea. Her draft would have been a considerable draft and would easily become stuck in shallow water.