



PART 1

PAUL IN CHAINS:

LEADERSHIP

IN ACTION

Chapter One

EARNING TRUST

That is the historical context at the beginning of [Acts 27](#). Paul is in Caesarea. He is to be sent to Rome to stand trial before Nero. His long imprisonment in Caesarea is over, and now a new chapter begins as the Roman procurator makes arrangements for the long passage to Rome.

[Acts 27:1-44 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius.

²And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica.

³The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care.

⁴From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary.

⁵When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.

⁶ here the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it.

⁷When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us *to go* farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone;

⁸ and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

⁹When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul *began* to admonish them,



¹⁰ and said to them, “Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.”

¹¹ But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul.

¹² Because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter *there*.

¹³ When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and *began* sailing along Crete, close *inshore*.

¹⁴ But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo;

¹⁵ and when the ship was caught *in it* and could not face the wind, we gave way *to it* and let ourselves be driven along.

¹⁶ Running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, we were scarcely able to get the *ship's* boat under control.

¹⁷ After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on *the shallows* of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along.

¹⁸ The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo;

¹⁹ and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.

²⁰ Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing *us*, from then on all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.

²¹ When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, “Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss.”

²² “Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but *only* of the ship.”

²³ “For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me,

²⁴ saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’”

²⁵ “Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.”

²⁶ “But we must run aground on a certain island.”

²⁷ But when the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors *began* to surmise that they were approaching some land.

²⁸ They took soundings and found *it to be* twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found *it to be* fifteen fathoms.

²⁹ Fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak.



³⁰ But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the *ship's* boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow,

³¹ Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved."

³² Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the *ship's* boat and let it fall away.

³³ Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing."

³⁴ "Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for not a hair from the head of any of you will perish."

³⁵ Having said this, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat.

³⁶ All of them were encouraged and they themselves also took food.

³⁷ All of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy-six persons.

³⁸ When they had eaten enough, they *began* to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.

³⁹ When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could.

⁴⁰ And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach.

⁴¹ But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern *began* to be broken up by the force of *the waves*.

⁴² The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of *them* would swim away and escape;

⁴³ but the centurion, wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land,

⁴⁴ and the rest *should follow*, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land.

PAUL IN CUSTODY

At this point, the narrative of the book of Acts shifts gears. Luke begins writing in first person, suggesting that he was permitted to go along as Paul's companion on the journey to Rome. So what he writes is his own firsthand testimony—an inspired eyewitness chronicle. And he begins to color in more details. In fact, this chapter of Acts is said by some scholars to contain more information about ancient seafaring than virtually any other first-century source. And, amazingly, there are more words in Scripture devoted to detailing Paul's journey from Caesarea to Rome than all the words about creation in Genesis. So it is an important account.

When the journey to Rome began, Paul was clearly the low man on the totem pole. *He had no* authority. *He had no* responsibility. *He had no* rights. As a prisoner, he was at the bottom, both physically and socially.



I've spent some time ministering in prisons. In fact, I have visited a prison where some well-known men are incarcerated. One of them used to be president of one of the largest life insurance companies in America. Another was a famous building contractor who had earned millions before losing it all in some kind of fraud scandal. There were several formidable people in that prison—people who were accustomed to power, men who knew what it was to wield authority. Mixed in with them was the usual assortment of drug dealers, neo-Nazi members of the Aryan Brotherhood, and various street criminals.

You know what I noticed? No one had a DayTimer. None of them had cell phones, secretaries, pin-striped suits, or silk ties. They had been stripped of all the accoutrements of power. They were told when to get up, when to eat, when to exercise, and when to work in the laundry. No one had any authority.

In fact, I had taken a Bible to give to a certain inmate, but I was told he wasn't allowed to have it. The only way I could get it to him was through the designated prison chaplain, and the chaplain first was required to tear off the book's front and back covers so that no prisoner could use the hard cover boards to make weapons.

Prisoners have no authority. That was Paul's situation. Undoubtedly, the ship he was to sail on was selected for him by Roman officials. He was placed in the company of a man named Julius, whom Luke says was “**a centurion of the Augustan Regiment**” ([Acts 27:1](#))—an imperial cohort.

[Acts 27:1-44 \(NASB\)](#)

¹“**When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius.**”

As a centurion, Julius had a hundred men under his command, and they were specifically assigned to work for Caesar. So as centurions go, he was one of the highest ranking in the entire Roman army, and his men would have been elite soldiers.

By the way, here's an interesting footnote: Every time you encounter a Roman centurion in Scripture, you find a man of **integrity—a respectable, intelligent, virtuous man**. The Romans were not very good at selecting governors, but apparently they had some means of choosing their centurions that weeded out the weak and incompetent. We meet centurions in [Matthew 8](#) and [Luke 7](#), [Mark 15](#), [Acts 10](#), [Acts 22](#), and [Acts 24](#), and all of them are upright men of decency and honor. Julius is no exception to the rule.

Luke wrote, “**So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia**” ([Acts 27:2](#)). The plan was for Julius to ride this ship with Paul toward Adramyttium, and at some major port along the way, they would pick up another ship to Rome.

[Acts 27:2 \(NASB\)](#)

²“**And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica.**”



The verse concludes: “**Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.**” Aristarchus was a friend and companion of Luke and Paul. He is mentioned in [Acts 20:4](#) as one of several members of the Thessalonian church who accompanied Paul home to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey.

[Acts 20:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴“**And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.**”

According to [Acts 19:29](#), Aristarchus was also with Paul in Ephesus when that whole city rioted at the preaching of the gospel.

[Acts 19:29 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁹“**The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia.**”

So he had been a longtime friend and companion of Paul’s—no doubt a believer and a fellow minister. He had apparently stayed with Paul through those years of imprisonment at Caesarea. Now he would accompany Paul and Luke on their trip to Rome.

That sets the scene. Paul is a prisoner. The ship would have a captain and probably a first mate. Under them would be other ranking sailors. Overseeing Paul’s custody was a Roman centurion, and [verses 31–32](#) say he had some of his soldiers with him—crack troops. So there were a lot of people with authority on that ship.

[Acts 27:31-32 \(NASB\)](#)

³¹“**Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, “Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved.”**

³²“**Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship’s boat and let it fall away.**”

Not Paul. He was at the bottom of everything—perhaps even in the literal sense. He would no doubt have been kept in the hold of the ship.

PAUL AT LIBERTY

But Julius seems to have been a noble man, and [Acts 27:3](#) says after just one day’s travel, during the first stop, at Sidon, on the very first day of the trip, some seventy miles north on the Mediterranean coast from Caesarea, he “**treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care.**”

[Acts 27:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³“**The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care.”**

The expression translated “**receive care**” is a medical term. It indicates that the apostle Paul was probably suffering from some kind of ailment. That isn’t any wonder, since he had been a



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Lecture # 3

prisoner for so long. Of course, Luke was a physician ([Colossians 4:14](#)), and one of his duties, no doubt, was to care for Paul.

Colossians 4:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“**Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and *also* Demas.**”