



PART 1

PAUL IN CHAINS: LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Chapter Two

TAKING THE INITIATIVE

When Paul's long journey to Rome got under way again after that brief stop in Sidon, the ship encountered what would be the bane of the whole trip: contrary winds. Luke wrote:

Acts 27:4-5 (NASB)

⁴“From there we put out to sea [from Sidon], 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.”

THE GOING GETS TOUGH

In order to see how Paul's leadership lifts him even higher among the men on the ship, until

Egypt was a major source of grain for the Roman Empire. Ships would bring grain from Egypt to the granaries of Myra, offload, and return to Egypt. Other ships bound for Rome would collect the grain and carry it to the imperial capital. There happened to be in Myra one of these ships bound for Italy. Luke said,

Acts 27:6 (NASB)

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

This second ship, we discover, was a large one and more seaworthy than the first ship, capable of carrying 276 passengers in addition to its heavy cargo. The ship was registered in Alexandria, which is in Egypt. So it was undoubtedly one of the grain transport vessels. Since it was already late in the year to be crossing the Mediterranean, they apparently wasted no time at Myra. They began the journey to Rome immediately.



Verse 7 says,

Acts 27:7 (NASB)

⁷“When 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.”

The westerly winds were apparently increasing in intensity. It was becoming difficult to *tack* and make progress. From Luke’s description, we can discern the route they took. They followed the inside passage between Rhodes and the mainland of Asia Minor.

This took them farther west and a little bit farther north. Cnidus was a city on a small island at the tip of a long peninsula. It marks the southwestern extremity of Asia Minor, just north of Rhodes. The island was connected to the mainland by an artificial causeway, which gave the city two ports, one north of the causeway and the other south.

Paul’s ship normally would have made port in one of the harbors there. But as they approached Cnidus, their route took them into open sea. There they lost the advantage of the gentle offshore winds. They plunged right into the prevailing wind and the pummeling headwaters. The wind in the open sea turned out to be so powerful that they could not direct the ship into harbor at Cnidus.

At that point, they had no choice but to sail south, toward the island of Crete. The plan was to sail along the southern coast of Crete, where they would be somewhat protected from the powerful winds, and turn into a safe harbor there.

They sailed past Salmone, a promontory, or cape, on the northeastern corner of Crete. Luke implied that the weather was already worsening:

Acts 27:8 (NASB)

⁸“And with difficulty sailing past it [Salmone] we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.”

The brevity of Luke’s words camouflages the degree of difficulty they would have experienced. Crete is approximately 170 miles long and only 35 miles wide at its widest point. From Salmone to Fair Havens was at least 140 miles. So the expression “great difficulty” is surely an understatement.

The name of Fair Havens, however, was an overstatement. It was a small port, consisting of an open bay, sheltered by only two small islands. Luke said,

Acts 27:12 (NASB)

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*.”

The nearby town of Lasea was small, so it may have been that supplies and accommodations were sparse. But perhaps more important, the captain of the ship would have been eager to get to Rome and sell his cargo. To winter in Fair Havens would have meant a four-month delay, and the ship's owner would have to pay the crew's wages and buy their supplies during that time. From an economic point of view, a winter in Fair Havens would have been disastrous.

Apparently, however, the ship was unavoidably delayed in this port—perhaps by the weather, or perhaps by the difficulty of getting supplies. Luke said,

Acts 27:9 (NASB)

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

“**The Fast**” is a reference to the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. That is the tenth day of the seventh month on the Jewish calendar, which would make it close to the beginning of October. Crossing the open sea at that time of year was a very dangerous proposition. It was like gambling with one's life.

But it was a gamble the sailors were prepared to take. They wanted to get their vessel out of Fair Havens, and they thought they could winter better at a port called Phoenix. This was on the west coast of Crete. It had a semicircular harbor with openings on the southwest and northwest, and it was more protected against the harsh winter winds. So their plan was to sail along the coast of Crete until they reached that port.

Paul could see what was coming. He knew it was a risky and foolhardy plan. He had been in at least three shipwrecks before this (cf. **2 Corinthians 11:25**, which was written a few years prior to this episode), and he was obviously not eager to suffer through another one.

2 Corinthians 11:25 (NASB)

²⁵“Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.”

Luke said,

Acts 27:9-10 (NASB)

⁹“When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul began to admonish them, ¹⁰and 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.”

“**Paul admonished or advised them**”? Don't miss the significance of that statement. Who was Paul to advise these sailors? He was a prisoner. What's happening here?

This is a second foundational principle of true leadership: *A leader takes the initiative.*

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE #2

A LEADER TAKES THE INITIATIVE

CH-110 LEADERSHIP 1

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Lecture # 6



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