

A Study of the Acts of the Apostles  
Week Thirty-Three  
Acts 27:13-44

**Day One**

13 When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they had obtained what they wanted; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. 14 Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the "northeaster," swept down from the island. 15 The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. 16 As we passed to the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure.

v. 13 – The crew thought they had favorable circumstances so they proceeded along a course that eventually cost them the ship and almost cost their lives. How often I have taken my cues from the circumstances, saying “maybe” God wants me to do this or “perhaps” I should do that. I have taken my signs from a chance phone call or a casual comment someone made. But there is usually only one indicator for any course of action and that indicator is not external but internal, and that indicator is the peace of God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:7).

**Do you have peace about a decision even though it doesn't make sense? Then walk in that peace and trust that the Spirit's witness is more reliable than any outward confirmation.**

v. 14 – Having just witnessed the power of two hurricanes here in the United States, I have an idea of what Paul and his companions encountered. You would think that Paul would have had “smooth sailing.” After all, he was proceeding to Rome to do God's will. But that path was always fraught with opposition. I hear from people regularly who are perplexed at the amount of opposition they encounter as they attempt to do what they believe is God's will. **Are you surprised by the level of opposition you are receiving? The more intense it is, the more that is confirmation that you are on the right path. That is the only way you learn and grow to rely on God's help. Plus you grow not according to the success that you encounter but the opposition you must overcome.**

vs. 15&16 – Eventually, they had no choice but to abandon their efforts and go with the flow of the wind. In other words, they had to trust the Lord. But even in a storm, you can have the peace of God, just like Jesus did:

As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples (Luke 8:23-25).

**Does it seem like Jesus is asleep and your storm-tossed boat is about to go down? Then do what the disciples did: call on Him! Or do what they failed to do: Have faith in God!**

### Day Two

17 When the men had hoisted it aboard, they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together. Fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along. 18 We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. 19 On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. 20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

v. 17 – I have read that Luke gave accurate reports of what the crew would do in this situation. If he gave reliable information here, we can be assured that he did in his other accounts. The word of God is true, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The holy books of other religions are poorly written, don't read well and certainly don't impact the lives of their readers like the Bible does. It is a remarkably cohesive book for being written over so long of a period of time.

v. 18 – Sometimes the storms can get so bad in your life that you begin to examine everything that you do and “carry,” and start to jettison those things that aren't critical—attitudes, activities and relationships. Are you going through a storm? If you aren't, you will at some point. When you do or if you are, keep a good journal, cry out to God and listen carefully. Write down whatever you even think you are hearing from God. And then trust Him to bring you to a safe harbor:

Others went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep. For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end. Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders (Psalm 107:23-32).

vs. 19&20 – Notice that everyone had given up hope, including Paul, Luke and Aristarchus. It must have been pretty ugly for Paul, the seasoned traveler, to give up hope. But he did and the darkness loomed for many days. How bad can it get in your life and walk? I have found it can get much worse than I ever imagined it could get. Yet as I've stated earlier, these have been the greatest times of growth in my life:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging (Psalm 46:1-3).

I read, quote and even sing words like Psalm 46, but when they actually happen, I can panic and lose heart. As I write, there has been a massive earthquake in Asia. Recently there were winds and floods in the United States. The mountains fell and waters foamed and many lost heart. I have had the same happen figuratively in my own life and I panicked too. **So what's the answer? Keep your expectations in God, trust Him and don't lose your focus on His goodness and care.** There are some who want to believe that no harm will come near them when they trust in the Lord. When I was in Afghanistan a few years ago, we began every morning reciting Psalm 91. We claimed God's protection and care every day. That didn't mean that the conditions weren't fearful and challenging—they were. But God did protect us and brought us through safely. You may want to read Psalm 91 for yourself and apply it to your life.

### Day Three

21 After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. 22 But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed.

v. 21 – Paul was a leader no matter where he was—in Jerusalem, before the Roman kings, or even on this ship. When you are a leader, you naturally lead. And Paul was that kind of man. I find myself in the same situation. I have to work not to lead when I am in certain situations. It is also interesting that Paul told them, "I told you so," but in a gracious and not arrogant way. He was trying to prepare them for what he had to say next so they would heed him. When you speak for God or have a "word" from Him, people are free to accept or reject that word. You must not take it personally.

When Israel wanted a king, they did not listen to Samuel, instead choosing to be like the other nations. But they weren't rejecting Samuel, they were rejecting God as their King.

But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king" (1 Samuel 8:6-8).

It is hard not to be bitter or feel rejected when your advice is ignored, especially if it turns out to be correct. But you are representing God and not yourself, so the issue is really between those who rejected the advice and God Himself.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17-18).

The word for submissive in the verse above is translated “willing to yield” in the margin of the New American Standard Bible. The wisdom of God does not push itself on people, but rather “cries out” as we see in Proverbs. Yet the passers by are free to heed or ignore wisdom’s call. **Are you offended or hurt because your wisdom was rejected? Paul could have stayed quiet or rebuked the crew for their lack of foresight. Yet he stayed involved and became their source of safety, as we shall see. Forgive those who ignored you, realizing that you have done the same thing in your own life on many occasions. And if you have the chance, be a source of blessing to those who ignored and even laughed at you when you had the wisdom that they needed on previous occasions. That is part of being God’s representative to stick-necked and stubborn people, of which we all are part from time to time.**

v. 22 – Paul urged the men to eat for Paul had received word from heaven that the ship would be lost but they would be safe. Conditions must have been bad for these seasoned veterans of the sea not to even eat. But Paul became the spiritual leader and pastor of this crew and began to direct them according to his insight.

Sometimes we can be intimidated because God gives us input into situations where we have no natural talent, experience or inclination. But God’s words and ways apply anywhere that He directs us to give them. **Are you in a situation now that is intimidating due to your lack of experience or credibility? Fear not, speak out and provide what those around you need to hear.**

#### Day Four

23 Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me 24 and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' 25 So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. 26 Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island."

vs. 23&24 – If you remember, Paul had predicted in 27:10 that there would be great loss to cargo and life if the ship proceeded. They did proceed and now Paul spoke up for the first time since his dire prediction. But an angel had appeared to Paul and gave him three pieces of information:

1. “Don’t be afraid.” This tells us that Paul was indeed afraid. I take great comfort in knowing that the great apostle was afraid. The angel had also told Paul in 18:9 not to be afraid when he was in Corinth. Paul did great things in spite of being afraid and God did not pass him over due to his fear. Instead God comforted, then directed him.
2. “You must stand trial.” It was God’s will for Paul to stand trial. Therefore all the circumstances leading up to the angel coming must have been God’s will as well. God is in control of our lives. God wanted Paul to stand trial and bear witness to Caesar and not even a hurricane could stop that from happening.

3. “God has given you all the lives of those who sail with you.” This is an interesting concept. It seems God so honored Paul (and wanted the crew to know it) that He spared all the lives on board. These men who had lost hope would certainly know that it was the Lord who had intervened and saved them. What standing God had in heaven! What prestige he had with God himself.

How often I have worked for the prestige that comes from man and his systems. How much more I should work for the prestige that comes from doing God’s will. Even Jesus said to those around him:

How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God? (John 5:44).

### **What efforts are you making to obtain praise that comes only from God?**

vs. 25&26 – Paul put his reputation on the line that God had spoken to him. He reported what he had heard, urged the men to have courage and gave them the full report. The crew was so desperate that I’m sure they were willing recipients of the word of the Lord. I have found that people must often be desperate before they will receive God’s word. If you are the carrier of God’s word for them, that means you will often have to be in the midst of their trouble to deliver the word. Paul couldn’t send a letter telling the crew what he had heard; Paul had to be there in the midst of the storm with them. **That means that God will have you join people in crisis in order to help deliver people in crisis. In some sense, they will put their trust in you as you put your trust in God. That is what’s called leadership. Are you willing to put yourself on the line like that, trusting that God is leading you as you speak and help others?**

### **Day Five**

27 On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. 28 They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep. 29 Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. 30 In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. 31 Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." 32 So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it fall away.

v. 27-32 – So who was in charge of the ship? In a sense, Paul was. When some of the sailors tried to escape, Paul knew what they were trying to do. How did he know and not the captain or the centurion? Then Paul gave a simple piece of advice to the military men onboard: if the men were successful in lowering the lifeboat and escaping, the others would die! At this point, Paul had earned their trust and was credible, so they cut away the lifeboat.

Even though these soldiers were not believers, they had seen enough to know that they needed to heed Paul's advice. How did Paul get this kind of respect?

1. He shared what he knew, even though it was ignored and rejected.
2. He was on the ship with the men, sharing in the danger and uncertainty.
3. He continued to speak, even though his first advice was ignored.
4. He did not take his rejection personally, but became a source of strength and, in some ways, salvation for those onboard.
5. He was listening for what God would say, and God sent an angel to advise him.
6. He was vigilant, even though as hungry and distressed as everyone else.
7. He was a confident man of purpose and knew he had to arrive in Rome to do God's will.

If you want to have influence on your job, in your church or in your family, I would advise that you do what Paul did, as listed above. People should seek you out for advice. You are connected to God and should hear what He says and report the same to the people around you. That is why I am such a passionate writer. I want to record what I think God is showing me and make it available for others to read, heed, ignore or disagree.

**Who is listening to what you have to say? Do you have anything to say? Are you involved with people, living where they live, feeling what they feel? This is symbolic of Jesus, who took on human flesh in His divinity so that He could identify in every way (except sin) with his "target audience."**

### Day Six

33 Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food — you haven't eaten anything. 34 Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head." 35 After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. 36 They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. 37 Altogether there were 276 of us on board. 38 When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

vs. 33&34 – Paul became the ship's leader and counselor, as I have pointed out. The crew had not eaten in 14 days—that's two weeks of suspense and danger! Paul comforted them by telling them that not one hair from their head would be lost in the midst of this danger and peril. What a comfort to have someone who was in touch with heaven and not with the circumstances. That is so hard to do, however, unless we have an adequate assessment of who we are and where we sit:

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:5-8).

**Are you seated above looking down on your situation or are you under or in the midst of your circumstances? It is so important that you stay on top of your world and see it as God sees it. Otherwise the unavoidable difficulties will overwhelm you:**

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

**If God can number the hairs on your head, which we know He can, then He can even rule in the midst of storms and danger. Do you believe that? Do you act like you believe that?**

v. 35 – Paul gave thanks for his food and I'm sure he meant it. I sometimes feel like people are performing a ritual when they pray over their food. But we pray to acknowledge that God has provided for us and we ask Him to bless the food so that we may have strength to serve Him. It isn't a ritual but a conscious act to say that we are aware of our source, which is God. Do you pray for your food out of habit and ritual, or conscious that God has provided it for you, thankful for His provision?

v. 36 – Paul led the way and others joined him in eating. Anxiety is a powerful force. Here is prevented the men from eating for 14 days. **Is anxiety taking a toll on your life in any way? What are you anxious about? What can you do today to remove the anxiety, especially if the circumstances you are anxious over don't change today?**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:5-7).

v. 37 – 276 people onboard! That's a lot of lives and God "gave" them all to Paul. God honored Paul and gave testimony that Paul was His servant by saving all 276 people onboard. That is how much God loved Paul and honored what his servant had done. I am still meditating on the verse we looked at in day four this week:

How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God? (John 5:44).

When God spared the lives of those onboard due to Paul's presence, I see that as Paul obtaining praise from God. It is ironic that God's so-called servants among the Jews wanted to kill Paul, but God not only spared Paul but anyone who was carrying Paul where God wanted him to go! I have been upset this week by some situations that have not worked out for me. They have all included people who have not rewarded my efforts on their behalf. But it doesn't really matter what those people think about my efforts; it only matters what God thinks, and I know He is pleased. **But still, I struggle when I**

**don't receive the "praise" or acknowledgment from others that I think I deserve. Do you?**

v. 38 – Once they had eaten, they tried to lighten the ship by throwing overboard the grain they were carrying. They had transported this grain for a fee, so throwing it overboard meant that they abandoned all hope of getting any financial return for the trip. This was probably the last thing they let go of as this ill-fated voyage came to an end.

**Is there anything you need to throw overboard at this time?** As I write, we have sold our home and we are going through a serious "downsizing." We are selling furniture and going through all our stuff, throwing out or giving away as much as possible. We don't know where we will live yet, just as the crew didn't know where the ship would run aground. But we are trusting the Lord and throwing things overboard, so to speak. And you know what? I've found it to be hard to let go of some of my stuff. But the storms that my wife and I have been through the last few years make it necessary to do this at this point in our lives. But above all, we know that God is in control and we are excited as we take these steps of faith. And we know that this season isn't about the storm, it's about God getting us to where He wants us to be—just like He did for Paul in this situation.

### **Day Seven**

39 When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. 40 Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. 41 But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf. 42 The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. 43 But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. 44 The rest were to get there on planks or on pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety.

vs. 39-41 – I am not sure why Luke, led by the Spirit, went into so much detail concerning how they saved the ship. Perhaps the Spirit didn't want anyone doubting whether the wreck actually happened. After all, if people misrepresented Jesus' resurrection to discredit the evidence, they could do the same for Paul's wreck. They could have accused him of escaping or bribing his way out.

Or maybe the Spirit wanted us to see that, even though God helped and saved all 276 onboard, they still had to do their part. They couldn't just sit back and trust the Lord. They had to work and trust the Lord. I watch many people sit back and wait for the Lord to do what they should be doing and also trying to do what only the Lord can do. I have been guilty of this myself on many occasions. **Can you think of any other reason why Luke would share this much detail?**

vs. 42&43 – The soldiers were charged with delivery of the prisoners. If they failed, they would have to forfeit their own lives (see Acts 12:18-19). But by this time, the centurion trusted the Lord's word, or at least Paul's advice. So he wanted to spare Paul. Of course, this was God's favor and protection, for God had work for Paul to do in Rome. Jesus encountered the same dynamic, for there were times when the leaders wanted to seize Him, but His time was not yet at hand:

At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come (John 7:30).

You can trust the Lord that your life is in His hands and He will not abandon or neglect you. But given that truth, Paul still had to go through this horrible ordeal to get to Rome. **Could the storm have been demonic opposition trying to prevent Paul from fulfilling his purpose? It's possible, I think.**

vs. 44&45 – God's word proved true and all reached shore safely, although they had to use whatever means was at hand to accomplish that task. God's promises are true. He will never break His word, no matter what the circumstances look like. **Are you trusting Him or wavering in unbelief? Learn from Paul and from Abraham as we close this week's study:**

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead — since he was about a hundred years old — and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (Romans 4:18-25).