**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Life’s Reefs

***Acts 27***

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June 6th In the Year of Our Lord

(Anno Domini A.D.) 2021

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted.)

**Key Characters:**

**Paul:** Apostle of God, and religious prisoner of the Jewish Temple Priest, to witness in Rome.

**Julius the Centurion:** Roman soldier in charge of the cohort transporting Paul and other prisoners to Rome for trial. Treated Paul with consideration. Remember, according to king Agrippa, Paul would have been set free, if it were not for his appeal to Caesar. So, the Centurion seemed to know that Paul was not like the other prisoners and gave him more freedom to have friends travel with him and some mobility moving around the ship.

**Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, and Luke:** Friends and traveling companions of Paul. Luke (writer of the book of Acts) is believed to be another traveling companion of Paul. In Acts 27:1, “we” is used to indicate the writer of the account is with Paul and an “eyewitness” to these events. Knowing Luke is the writer of Acts, we receive great detail of Paul’s journey. Every port city is noted; events and conversations are recorded to be passed to us today.

**Key Subjects**:

**Augustan Cohort**: Group of soldiers assigned under the Emperor and thus so named. This makes sense due to the prisoners being transported had made and appealed to Caesar; Paul being one of them.

**Adramyttian Ship**: (Acts 27:2) Referring its origin being from the ancient port city of Mysia in Asia. The city was located at the head of the Gulf of Adramyttium facing the island of Lesbos. Sailed on this occasion from Caesarea to Myra in Lycia.

**Alexandrian Ship:** Referring to a ship’s origin. In this case, a ship’s original port city from Alexandria, Egypt (Acts 27:6). The ship transported numerous prisoners who had appealed to the Emperor. Acts 27:37 tells us that 226 persons were on this ship, indicating the size of the ship. The ship was also big enough to have a “ship’s boat” (Acts 27:16,30). Sailed from Myra in Lycia.

**Euraquilo:** violent wind - Greek word (euros) meaning E. wind, and a Latin word (aquilo) meaning N.E. wind. This is exactly the kind of wind which frequently arises in Cretan waters at the present day, swooping down from the mountains in strong gusts and squalls.

(Hastings Bible Dictionary).

**Fantom Soundings**: 1 Fantom is about 6 feet

**Key Geography**: See Map

Asia, Italy, Caesarea, Sidon, Cyprus, Cilicia, Pamphylia, Myra in Lycia,

Cnidus, Crete - off Salmone, Fair Havens - near which was the city of Lasea, Phoenix - a harbor of Crete, island called Clauda, shallows of Syrtis, Adriatic Sea

**Biblical Text**

**Acts 26:32** And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

**Sail from Caesarea to Rome, Italy**

**Luke is with Paul**

**Roman Centurion, Julius, Treats Paul with Consideration**

**Acts 27:1** When it was decided that **we (Luke)** would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius.

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.

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.

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

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

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

7 When **we** had sailed slowly for a good many day, 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.

**Paul’s Life Warning**

9 When 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."**

**Lost World Ignores God’s Servant**

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.

**Storm Intensifies – All but Essentials are Expendable**

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.**

**God’s Voice Through Paul – “All Will Be Lost, Except Lives”**

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."

**Looking for a Safe Landing**

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.

**Sailors (Rats) Abandon Ship and Passengers**

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.

**Lord’s Servant-Prisoner Paul Directing During Peril**

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.**

***When the “chips are down” . . .***

. . . .is a gambling expression used when a gambler has made his decision and put his chips down on the table to let his bet ride on the game that is being played. There is not any turning back. He is determined to stand by his bet.

The sailors and crew threw everything they could overboard to lighten the ship in order to keep it afloat as they pointed the ship to the shore hoping the wind and waves would drive it into the sand. They played their hand and placed their bet. Their *chips were down*. However, it did not work. Their boat hit the reef.

**Now Food Expendable**

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

The sailors decided the weight of the food was too much to keep on board and that they would die from sinking in the storm before they would starve to death. They believed land was near. In their minds, their only hope to survive was the reach the land.

39 When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did.

**Anchors Abandoned – Lives Adrift into Deadly Reef**

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.

Casting-off the anchors is another desperate move to save their lives in the midst of the storm. They perceived that the anchors dragging in the sea (v. 29) would impede their progress to land on the shore. All of these measures where quickly thought-out by experienced seamen to increase their chance of survival.

It is an easy leap to parallel these decisions made by the sailors to save their temporal lives to another person who must make life-changing decisions. Many people carry with them too much life-baggage. They are weighed down with the anchors of unforgiveness and bitterness. They need to realize they do not need that baggage to live. God says to throw unforgiveness and bitterness overboard.

Right now, I know a few people who have overburdened themselves with too much life-baggage. Those of us who know them can see the storm that is of their own making.

Remember, Paul warned the Roman leader, Julius, not to sail (v.10, 21). If we have a spiritual ear to the Lord, we can hear His warnings. We need to listen to God by reading His Word and surrounding ourselves with Believers who also have an ear to God. Perhaps the best practice in life is not to place ourselves in harms way. So many times, we make the decision to swim in the ocean and enter the shark food-chain and then blame the shark when it targets humans for food.

I have often said my father raised me with two pieces of advice:

1. “If you are not there - it cannot happen to you”.

2. “Whatever you do – do not let it cost you the rest of your life”.

Living with these two pieces of advice has served me well. However, life’s reefs are seemingly unavoidable due to the fallen world in which we live. It is how we proceed with God, when we do find ourselves on a reef.

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.

**Observation to Real Life**

God can work through our worst decisions despite our failings. God has *equipped us with body and mind* to overcome most situations where we find ourselves. Primarily, God has equipped us to read and hear the warning signs. They are often posted right in front of us.

Years ago, I was vacationing in Hawaii on the island of Kauai. Here is an online description:

The island’s nicknamed "the Garden Isle" thanks to the tropical rainforest covering much of its surface. The dramatic cliffs and pinnacles of its Na Pali Coast have served as a backdrop for major Hollywood films, while 10-mile-long Waimea Canyon and the Nounou Trails traversing the Sleeping Giant mountain ridge are hiking destinations.

No doubt a beautiful place. Vacationer’s scuba dive and surf the shoreline waves. Snorkeling is also a favorite tourist activity. I was snorkeling with some friends, enjoying the tropical fish and sea-life in crystal clear water just inside the reef on the northeast side of the island. I found that I was very buoyant in sea water. You see. . . the more robust a person is built, the better you float in seawater. In my case, I can float all-day snorkeling. I had a camera that would work underwater, so I was captivated by the fish. Then all-of-a-sudden the light-colored sand twenty feet below me reflecting the sunlight disappeared. I was looking down into a blue abyss.

Of note, Hawaii is the world’s tallest mountain from its seafloor base. The tallest island is about 33,264 feet from the Pacific Ocean sea floor, with 13,803 ft above sea level. Therefore, when you get outside the shoreline reefs, the topography drops dramatically.

At the same time, I was looking into the blue abyss, the tidal current became accelerated, and I was being taken through the open end of the reefed lagoon out to sea. I had snorkeled (head down) to the bottle-neck opening of the lagoon area that opened to the sea. I was not worried of sinking, remember I float well in saltwater, but about being swept out to sea. At that point, your mind goes into warp drive as you assess your options. The tidal current was too strong to swim against. However, a few yards to my right side, I did see the waves crashing against the reef that was barely protruding from the water on the seaward side away from the direction of the shore. I swam to the reef. I was able to hold onto the reef, but the waves were pounding me. I could not stay there long. I could see the volcanic boulder-lined shoreline about one-hundred feet away. However, I was going to have to swim across, not against, the tidal current to get there before the tide swept me past the shoreline boulders that I would reach out to and grabbed.

I took my only option. I pushed away from the reef and swam with all my might. For once in my life, I swam like Johnny Weissmuller (Tarzan). Hey, adrenalin really works.

By the way. . . my friends that were with me had to make the same decision. I reached the boulders on the shore first and called to them that they, too, could make it. We all lived that day. Now let’s look at why we ended up in that situation that almost turned a vacation into a *staycation* at the bottom of the Pacific.

We should have been more aware of our surroundings. Were there warning signs on the beach not to snorkel past a certain point in the reefed lagoon? Yes, there were. We were so enthralled by our tropical island paradise surroundings that we became blind to see the warning signs. We had become intoxicated with entertainment to the point of blind indifference to the surrounding threats to our lives and the posted warning signs.

Back to Paul and the Roman leader, Julius, who did not respect Paul’s warning. Julius’ worldview was that of a Roman commander representing the mightiest military power in the world. He did not have to respect any warnings. He was intoxicated on his power and Roman mission. He was blinded by his self-imposed vail.

**2 Corinthians 4:4** in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

As Believer’s, our daily task is to be sensitive to God’s warning signs and direction. We have God’s Word, our Believing friends and the common-sense God created in us on which to rely. We should take advantage of all of these. The # 1 impediment that gets in our way is Pride, followed by lack of focus on our surroundings. God plans for us to pay attention. That is why He created us with five physical senses. I also see that we have spiritual senses, if we avail ourselves to God in using them. We need to remember that we live in a fallen world ruled by sin and death (John 12:31, 16:11). The ruler of this fallen world is the prince of darkness, Satan himself, who roams (Job 1:7) about the earth seeking to destroy the life God created.

**John 14:30** "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me;

**Ephesians 2:2** in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

**God Works Through Murderous Plans**

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.

God’s plans for Paul were to advance forward despite the bad decisions made by the Roman commander to sail in the face of a weather warning. Here God does intervene in order to get Paul to Rome to fulfill the mission of delivering the Gospel message. We do not all survive our bad decisions we make or that others make for us. But we do eternally survive with God, and rejoice like Paul, by carrying-out the mission with which He charges us. We are successful in that we are living our lives on a daily basis pursuing God’s calling in our lives. No doubt, Paul’s letter to the Philippians highlights the awesome events through which Paul lives on mission for God. We, too, as a saved person, will experience fear and trembling in the service of God. And as Paul experiences, it is the eternal, miraculous, awe-inspiring and everlasting God at work in us despite human failings. We should have reverent fear and trembling to know that the eternal Lord is at work in us.

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. **Philippians 2:12-13** AMEN