

# 13

## VOYAGE TO ROME

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### ACTS 27-28



The Jews were not a seafaring race. They left that to the Egyptians to the south and the Phoenicians to the north, not to mention the Greeks. For the Jews, the sea was a monster. Yes, the one God had made it just as he made everything else, and it was his, and did his bidding. But, all the same, the sea was viewed as a dark force, a power in its own right and a place from which dark powers might emerge. Paul was a seasoned traveler. He would have been under no illusions about what might await him on the long voyage to Rome from one of its farthest outposts. He had lived much of the last few years in that in-between stage, knowing that the sea was still potentially a great enemy while believing that all enemies had been defeated by Jesus, the Messiah.

### TO LIVE IS CHRIST (27:1-44)

1. Read Acts 27. Consider Paul's behavior throughout this eventful part of the voyage<sup>1</sup> to Rome. What do his actions and words tell you about his attitudes toward the others on the ship, toward his own destiny, and toward the Lord?
2. If you feel as though you've heard this story before, you have to some degree. Like Paul, the prophet Jonah was given a mission from God. And like Paul, Jonah was given a message from God. Compare and contrast Paul's approach to his mission with that of Jonah (Note: Both Paul and Jonah have curiously similar interactions with their shipmates. What are the differences?)

<sup>1</sup>Historians suggest the Fast—the day of atonement—mentioned in 27:9 was in early October, AD59. Sailing started to get dangerous in the eastern Mediterranean in mid-September and normally stopped altogether by mid-November. Ships would have been making for land and planning for a long stay before it's safe to set sail again.

3. Some Christians have been taught that once they have faith, everything ought to flow smoothly. What would Acts have to tell us about that? How has God sustained and encouraged you through troubled times?

## TO DIE IS GAIN (28:1-31)

The sea and the snake have done their worst and are overcome. New creation is happening, and the powers of evil cannot stop it. Paul may arrive in Rome a more bedraggled figure than he would have liked, but the gospel which he brings is flourishing, and nobody can stop it.

4. Read Acts 28. Besides saving the lives of Paul and the rest of the people on board, what opportunities does the shipwreck on Malta provide for Paul?
5. You could say everything Paul had done in his life was a preparation for the moment he was to stand before Caesar. We want to know what happens when Paul arrives in Rome! Instead we read in verses 17-28 that Paul invites local Jewish leaders to come to his lodgings. Why does Paul do this?
6. The book of Acts has one of the strangest endings of any biblical book. There are many possible explanations for the book's seemingly unfinished nature. Perhaps it is an unfinished story that puts the question to Theophilus, "What will you do about what you've now heard?" How do you react to the way the book actually ends?