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a ***Grace Notes*** course

## **The Acts of the Apostles**

an expositional study  
by Warren Doud

Lesson 408: **Acts 27:22-44**

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# **ACTS**

## **ACTS408 - Acts 27:22-44**

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**ACTS 27:22-44**

**ACTS 27:22.** *And now I exhort you to be of good cheer,* To take heart and courage, and not be cast down, though things had been thus with them, and they were now in a very melancholy plight and condition.

*For there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship;* the ship will be lost, but not one person in it: there will be a shipwreck, and so every man's life will be in danger, and yet not one will perish; and therefore there was reason to be of good cheer, since this was what they could not, and did not expect, all hope of being saved was gone: wherefore this, if they could but believe it, must be good news to all the company; and in order to engage them to believe it, the apostle adds,

**ACTS 27:23.** *For there stood by me this night the angel of God,* One of the ministering spirits that stand before God, and who was sent by him to the apostle; and appeared to him, either in a vision by a dream, or rather when he was awake, and stood by him, as he was praying for deliverance from the storm; for it is most likely that the apostle should be engaged at such a time as this:

*whose I am, and whom I serve:* meaning not the angel, but God, whose the angel was; and his the apostle was, by electing, redeeming, and calling grace; God the Father had chosen him in his Son unto salvation; and Christ had redeemed him by his blood; and the Holy Spirit had called him by his grace; and he was not only the Lord's in common, as all other saints are, but he was his apostle and minister, and served him in the ministration of the Gospel of Christ, as well as from a principle of grace, obeyed the law of God, and was subject to the ordinances of Christ; in all which he served with great pleasure and cheerfulness, diligence, constancy, and faithfulness; from right principles, and with right views, being constrained by love, and influenced by the consideration of the relation he stood in to God. And all this was not peculiar to the apostle, but common to all the saints, excepting that of his

being an apostle and minister of the Gospel: and the consideration of their relation to God has the same influence upon them it had upon him; they are not their own, nor are they the servants of men, nor do they belong to Satan, nor even to the ministering angels, but they are the Lord's; not merely by creation, as all men are, but in a way of special grace.

They are Jehovah the Father's, to whom he bears a peculiar love and favour, and whom he has chosen in his Son for his peculiar people; and which is made manifest and known by drawing them with loving kindness to himself in the effectual calling; by his Gospel coming in power to them; by the blessings of the covenant of grace being bestowed on them; and by the spirit of adoption witnessing to them, that they are the children of God.

They are Jehovah the Son's, they are his people made willing in the day of his power; they are his portion assigned him by his Father; they are his spouse and bride, whom he has betrothed to himself; they are his children, to whom he stands in the relation of the everlasting Father; and they are his sheep the Father has given him, and he has laid down his life for; all which appears by their having his Spirit, as a Spirit of regeneration and sanctification, without which none are openly and manifestly his: and they are Jehovah the Spirit's.

They are his regenerated and sanctified ones; they are his workmanship, having his good work of grace begun and carrying on in their souls; they are his temples in which he dwells; he has the possession of them, and will not leave them till he has brought them safe to glory: and under all this evidence, and especially through the testimony of the Spirit of God unto them, they call themselves the Lord's, as the apostle here does, and this engages them to serve him.

The natural man has no desire, but an aversion to the service of God; converted men are willing to serve him, and delight to do it; they serve God in the best manner they can, in righteousness and true holiness, in an acceptable manner, with reverence and godly

fear, and heartily and willingly; as appears by the pleasure they take in being called the servants of God, by disclaiming all other lords, by running all risks to serve the Lord, and by lamenting it, that they serve him no better.

**ACTS 27:24. *Saying, fear not, Paul,*** For though the apostle knew and believed he should go to Rome, and appear before Caesar, to whom he had appealed, and where he should bear a testimony for Christ; and though he had previous notice of this storm, and of the loss and damage which should be sustained, and which he expected; yet the flesh was weak, and he might be under some fears and misgivings of heart, for these sometimes attend the best of men.

***Thou must be brought before Caesar;*** as has been declared, and therefore cannot be lost in this storm; it is the will and decree of God, which cannot be frustrated, it must be:

***and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee;*** that is, God had determined to save the whole ship's company for his sake, and in answer to his prayers, which he had been putting up for them; the Lord had heard him, and granted his request, and would save them all on his account: so sometimes God saves a nation, a city, a body of men, even of ungodly men, for the sake of a few that fear his name, who are among them.

**ACTS 27:25. *Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer,*** Which he repeats with more fervency and earnestness, there being so much reason for it:

***for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me:*** true faith lays hold and, settles upon the word and promises of God; and the true believer, knowing his power and faithfulness, firmly persuaded that there shall be a performance of what is said by him, with respect to matter, manner, and circumstances. Whatever God has told his people of, or has promised unto them, shall be performed, whether with respect to things temporal; that they shall not want any good thing; that all their afflictions shall be for their good; that they shall

be supported under them, and at last brought out of them: or whether with respect to spiritual things.

Whatever he has said concerning himself, that he will be their God, will continue to love them, will not leave them, nor forsake them, will guide and protect them, will supply all their need, and give them grace here, and glory hereafter; and whatever he has said concerning his Son, that he is their Saviour and Redeemer, that they are justified by his righteousness, pardoned through his blood, and shall be saved in him with an everlasting salvation.

Whatever he has said concerning his Spirit, that he shall enlighten them more and more, carry on his good work in them, and finish it, shall be their comforter and their guide, shall strengthen them in their inward man, and work them up for that selfsame thing, eternal glory: and likewise, whatever he has said concerning the prosperity and happiness of the churches in the latter day; even all those glorious things spoken of the city of God; and which relate both to the spiritual and personal reign of Christ.

Faith takes all this at his word, and firmly believes it shall be as he has said: and it has good grounds and reasons for acting in this manner; from the veracity, faithfulness, and power of God, who has promised; and from the nature of the promises themselves, which are unconditional, immutable, all in Christ, and yea and amen in him, and not one of them has ever failed: and such a believing frame of soul greatly encourages cheerfulness of spirit, and produces it: a believer is cheerful himself, as he has reason to be; he is filled with joy and peace in believing, yea, with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory; and he makes all about him cheerful; he comforts others with the same comforts he has been comforted of God; and however, he exhorts, after his own example, to believe, and be of good cheer; (see 2 Chronicles 20:20).

**ACTS 27:26. *Howbeit, we must be cast upon a certain island.*** This circumstance is foretold, that when the whole affair should come to pass, it might be manifest that it was not a casual

thing, a fortuitous event, a business of chance, but was predetermined by God, made known to the apostle, and predicted by him. This island was Melita; and the fulfillment of this part of the prediction is related in (Acts 28:1).

**ACTS 27:27. *But when the fourteenth night was come,*** From their setting out from the Fair Havens in Crete, or from the beginning of the storm:

***as they were driven up and down in Adria:*** or “in the Adriatic sea”, as the Syriac version renders it: the Adriatic sea is now called by the Turks the gulf of Venice, and the straits of Venice, and sometimes the Venetian sea ; but formerly the Adriatic sea included more than the Venetian gulf; it took in the Ionian and Sicilian seas, and had its name from the city Adria, a colony of the Tuscans .

It is called by Ptolemy Hadria, and reckoned a city of the Picenes. Pliny places it near the river Padus, and calls it Atria, a town of the Tuscans, which had a famous port, from whence the sea was before called Atriatic, which is now Adriatic.

Adria, Justin says, which is near to the Illyrian sea, and gave name to the Adriatic sea, is a Grecian city; and from this place the ancestors of Adrian, the Roman emperor, originally came; and all the sea between Illyricum and Italy is called the Adriatic; and from the beginning of it, which is at the city of Venice, unto Garganus, a mountain in Italy, and Dyrrachium, a city of Macedonia, it is 600 miles in length, and its largest breadth is 200, and the least 150, and the mouth of it 60.

The other part of the sea, which washes Macedonia and Epirus, is called the Ionian sea. Moreover, this whole sea is called the superior sea, with respect to the Tyrrhenian, which dashes the other shore of Italy, and is called the inferior .

In this same sea, Josephus , the historian, was shipwrecked as he was on a voyage to Rome: his account is this; “I came to Rome, having gone through many dangers by sea, for our ship being sunk in the middle of Adria, being in

number about six hundred, we swam all night; and about break of day, by the providence of God, a ship of Cyrene appeared to us, in which I, and some others, in all eighty, getting before the rest, were received into it, and so got safe to Dicearchia, which the Italians call Puteoli;” a place afterwards mentioned, where the apostle also arrived.

And the sea itself is often, by the poets called Adria, as here, and is represented as a very troublesome sea; and here Paul, and the ship’s company, were driven to and fro by the storm,

***when about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country:*** about the middle of the night the mariners thought, by some observations they made, that they were nigh land; or, as it is in the Greek text, “that some country drew near to them”; which well agrees with the language and sense of seafaring persons, to whose sight the land seems to draw near them, or depart from them, when they draw near, or depart from that: the Ethiopic version is, “they thought they should have seen a city”; they had a notion of some city near; and the Arabic version, “they thought to know in what country, or place” they were; and therefore did as follows.

**ACTS 27:28. *And sounded,*** Or let down their plummet, or sounding line; which was a line with a piece of lead at the end of it, which they let down into the water, and by that means found what depth it was, by which they could judge whether they were near land or not.

The sounding line, with the ancients, was called by different names; sometimes bolis, and this is the name it has here, , “they let down the bolis”: and the bolis is, by some, described thus; it is a brazen or leaden vessel, with a chain, which mariners fill with grease, and let down into the sea, to try whether the places are rocky where a ship may stand, or sandy where the ship is in danger of being lost: it is also called “catapirates”, which is thus described by Isidore; “catapirates” is a line with a piece of lead, by which the depth of the sea is tried.

Herodotus makes mention of it under this name, and observes, that when persons are

within a day's voyage of Egypt, if they let down the "catapirates", or sounding line, they will bring up clay, even when in eleven fathom deep. According to modern accounts, there are two kinds of lines, occasionally used in sounding the sea, the sounding line, and the deep sea line: the sounding line is the thickest and shortest, as not exceeding 20 fathoms in length, and is marked at two, three, and four fathoms with a piece of black leather between the strands, and at five with a piece of white leather: the sounding line may be used when the ship is under sail, which the deep sea line cannot.

The plummet is usually in form of a nine pin, and weighs 18 pounds; the end is frequently greased, to try whether the ground be sandy or rocky, etc.

The deep sea line is used in deep water, and both lead and line are larger than the other; at the end of it is a piece of lead, called deep sea lead, has a hole at the bottom, in which is put a piece of "tallow", to bring up the color of the sand at the bottom, to learn the differences of the ground, and know what coasts they are on.

**And found it twenty fathoms;** or "orgyas"; a fathom is a measure which contains six feet, and is the utmost extent of both arms, when stretched into a right line: the fathom, it seems, differs according to the different sorts of vessels; the fathom of a man of war is six feet, that of merchant ships five feet and a half, and that of fly boats and fishing vessels five feet: if the fathom here used was the first of these, the sounding was an hundred and twenty feet; the Ethiopic version renders it, "twenty statues of a man".

**And when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms;** or ninety feet; by which they imagined that they were near the continent, or some island: in some places, as the coasts of Virginia, for instance, by the use of the deep sea line, it is known how far it is from land; for as many fathoms of water as are found, it is reckoned so many leagues from land.

**ACTS 27:29. Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks,** Or rough places, as

shelves, rocks, or sands, as they might well fear, when the water shallowed so fast, from 20 to 15 fathoms:

**they cast four anchors out of the stern;** or hinder part of the ship; the Ethiopic version calls it, "the head of the ship": and adds, "where the governor sat"; that is, at the helm, to steer it. Perhaps the reason of this version is, because it is not usual in modern navigation, and so, when this version was made, to cast out anchors from the stern, but from the prow or head of the ship; but it seems this was done by the ancients.

According to Pliny, the Tyrrhenians first invented the anchor; though Pausanias ascribes the invention of it to Midas, the son of Gordius: the most ancient ones were made of stone, as was the anchor of the Argonauts; afterwards they were made of wood; and it is said, that the Japanese use wooden anchors now; and these were not pointed, but had great weights of lead, or baskets filled with stones at the head of them, to stop the ship with; last of all they were made of iron, but with a barb or tooth on one side only, not on both: the anchor with two teeth or barbs was found out by Eupalamius; or, as others say, by Anacharsis, the Scythian philosopher: it was usual to have more anchors than one in every ship, of which there was one which exceeded the rest, both in size and strength, and was called the "sacred" anchor; and which was only used in case of necessity; and is what is now called "the sheet anchor".

The modern anchor is a large strong piece of iron, crooked at one end, and formed into two barbs, resembling a hook, fastened at the other end by a cable.

The parts of an anchor are, **(1)** the ring into which the cable is fastened; **(2)** the beam, or shank, which is the longest part of the anchor; **(3)** the arm, which is that which runs down into the ground; at the end of which is, **(4)** the flouke or fluke, by some called the palm, being that broad and picked part with its barbs like an arrowhead, which fastens into the ground; **(5)** the stock, a piece of wood, fastened to the beam near the ring, serving to guide the fluke, so that it may fall right, and fix in the ground.

There are three kinds of anchors commonly used, the kedger, the grapnel, and the stream anchor ; yea, I find that there are four kinds of anchors, the sheet anchor, best bower, small bower, and stream anchor: it seems the grapnel is chiefly for the long boat: here were four anchors, but very likely all of a sort, or, however, not diversified in the manner the modern ones are.

These they cast out to stop the ship, and keep it steady, and that it might proceed no further, till they could learn whereabouts they were:

*and wished for the day*; that by the light of it they might see whether they were near land, or in danger of rocks and shelves, as they imagined.

**ACTS 27:30. *And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship,*** To save their lives, concluding that it was in the utmost danger, and that it would quickly, notwithstanding the anchors cast out, break away, and fall upon the rocks, and split to pieces:

*when they had let down the boat into the sea;* which before they had taken up into the ship, (Acts 27:16,17) and now they let it down, in order to get into it, and make their escape:

*under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship*; the foremost part of the ship, the prow of it; their pretence in attempting to get out of the ship, and into the boat, was, that whereas there were anchors cast out of the stern, or hinder part of the ship, so they would cast out others, from the fore part of it; and “stretch” them “out”, as the word signifies, or carry them further out into the sea, for the security of the ship; and to do which, it was necessary to use the boat.

**ACTS 27:31. *Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers,*** He did not direct his speech to the governor and owner of the ship, who very likely, being sensible of the danger, were in the scheme with the mariners, and at the head of them; but to Julius the centurion, and the soldiers under him, who having no knowledge of maritime affairs, were not apprised of the danger, nor aware of the design of the shipmen;

and besides, had now great dependence upon the assurance the apostle had given, that no life should be lost: to these he said,

*except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved*; pointing to the mariners who were about to let down the boat, in order to make their escape: the apostle had before declared, that there should be no loss of any man’s life, and yet now affirms, that unless the mariners continued in the ship, the rest of the company could not be saved: this does not show that the decree concerning the salvation of them was a conditional one, and that the condition was, that the mariners should stay in the ship; but that their stay in the ship, who had skill to guide and direct it, as also the company when shipwrecked, were a means absolutely fixed in the decree, and therefore was absolutely necessary.

God had determined to save the whole ship’s crew, and that in the same way and manner; they were all to be shipwrecked; some were not to leave the ship before hand, and save themselves in the boat, but they were all to be exposed to equal danger, and then be saved; and till that time came, the proper and prudent means were to be made use of, who were the shipmen, who best knew how to manage the ship in this extremity: this teaches us that the end and means, in the decrees of God, are not to be separated; nor is any end to be expected without the use of means; and means are as peremptorily fixed, and are as absolutely necessary, and must as certainly be accomplished, as the end.

Thus spiritual and eternal salvation is a certain thing; it is the appointment of God, which is absolute and unconditional, immutable and unfrustrable; there is a sure connection between the decree of God and salvation; it is a scheme drawn by Jehovah in the council of peace, who is God only wise, saw everything before hand that would come to pass, and has power to execute his scheme; it is an affair secured in the covenant of grace, which is sure and immovable; God is faithful who has made it with his Son; and Christ, the surety and

Mediator of it, is equal to that part which he has in it.

Salvation is a finished work, full satisfaction is made for sin, and pardon procured, an everlasting righteousness is brought in, all enemies are conquered and destroyed, and Christ's people are saved from them: and the interest which he has in them shows the certainty of their salvation; for they are given to him, and are in his hands; they are his portion, his treasure and his jewels; they are the purchase of his blood, and the travail of his soul; they are united to him, and are built upon him; they are interested in his preparations and prayers, and are in some sense saved already; and yet there are some things which God has fixed as means, and made absolutely necessary, and without which none can be saved: as for instance.

None can be saved without regeneration; without this there is no meetness for heaven; nor does it appear without it that any have a right unto it; nor can an unregenerate man have any true hope of it; wherefore such as are chosen and redeemed, are regenerated by the Spirit of God: so likewise without holiness no man shall see the Lord; this is fixed in the decree of God, and is necessary to the enjoyment of him, and to fellowship with angels and glorified saints; wherefore the Lord sanctifies all he saves.

None without faith in Christ will ever be saved; nor is this inconsistent with salvation being by grace, seeing it is not considered as a cause of salvation, but is itself a gift of grace; it lies in receiving things at the hand of God, it admits of no glorying in men, and gives all the glory of salvation to God and Christ, and free grace; and this is necessary because God has appointed it, and therefore he bestows it on all he means to save: to which may be added, that without perseverance in faith and holiness, there is no salvation; wherefore the Lord puts his grace into the hearts of his people to cause them to persevere; he encompasses them with his power, upholds them with the right hand of his

righteousness, and preserves them from Satan, and from a final and total falling away.

**ACTS 27:32. *Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat,*** With which it had been fastened to the sides of the ship, and by which the mariners were letting it down, in order to get into it, and go off:

***and let her fall off;*** from the sides of the ship into the sea, and so prevented the shipmen quitting the ship; for now they gave more credit to Paul than to them.

**ACTS 27:33. *And while the day was coming on,*** Between midnight and break of day: Paul besought them all to take meat; to sit down and eat a meal together:

***saying, this day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried;*** or have been waiting for, or expecting; that is, as the Arabic version expresses it, a shipwreck; for fourteen days past, ever since the storm begun, they had expected nothing but shipwreck and death:

***and continued fasting, having taken nothing:*** not that they had neither ate nor drank all that while, for without a miracle they could never have lived so long without eating something; but the meaning is, they had not eaten anyone regular meal all that while, had only caught up a bit now and then, and ate it, and that but very little.

**ACTS 27:34. *Wherefore I pray you to take some meat,*** To sit down composedly, and eat meat cheerfully and freely:

***for this is for your health;*** the Alexandrian copy reads, "for our health"; it was for the health of them all, that they might be better able to bear the shock and fatigue of the shipwreck, and be in better spirits, and in a better capacity to help themselves, and one another:

***for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you;*** a proverbial phrase, expressing the utmost safety of their lives, and therefore might cheerfully eat their food, and rest themselves, and be satisfied.

To dream of shaving the hair portended shipwreck to sailors; nor was it lawful for any

to pare his nails, or cut off his hair, but in a storm; to which custom, some think, the apostle here alludes ; (see 1 Samuel 14:45, 2 Samuel 14:11).

**ACTS 27:35. *And when he had thus spoken he took bread,*** A piece of bread, of common bread, into his hands; for this could never be the Eucharist, or Lord's supper, which the apostle now celebrated, as some have suggested, but such sort of bread that seafaring men commonly eat:

Mention is before made of "meat" or "food", which the apostle entreated them to take, which includes every sort of sea provisions they had with them; and which, with the ancients, were usually the following: it is certain they used to carry bread corn along with them, either crude, or ground, or baked; the former when they went long voyages, the last when shorter ones; and it is plain that they had wheat in this ship, which after they had eaten they cast out, (Acts 27:38) and corn ground, or meal, they had used to eat moistened with water, and sometimes with oil, and sometimes with oil and wine.

They had a sort of food they called "maza" which was made of meat and milk; likewise they used to carry onions and garlic, which the rowers usually ate, and were thought to be good against change of places and water; and they were wont to make a sort of soup of cheese, onions and eggs, which the Greeks call "muttootos", and the Latin's "mosetum"; and they had also bread which was of a red color, being hard baked and scorched in the oven, yea it was "biscoctus", twice baked ; as our modern sea biscuit is, and which has its name from hence, and which for long voyages is four times baked, and prepared six months before the voyage is entered on; and such sort of red bread or biscuit very probably was this, which the apostle now took into his hands, and did with it as follows:

***and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all:*** and for them all, as Christ did at ordinary meals, (Matthew 14:19, 15:36).

***and when he had broken it he began to eat:*** which was all agreeably to the custom and manner of the Jews, who first gave thanks, and then said "Amen", at giving of thanks; when he that gave thanks broke and ate first: for he that broke the bread might not break it until the "Amen" was finished by all that answered by it, at giving of thanks; and no one might eat anything until he that broke, first tasted and ate

**ACTS 27:36. *Then were they all of good cheer,*** Encouraged by the apostle's words and example:

***and they all took some meat;*** and made a comfortable meal, which they had not done for fourteen days past.

**ACTS 27:37. *And we were in all in the ship,*** Reckoning the master and owner of the ship, and the centurion and the soldiers, and the apostle and his company, with whatsoever passengers there might be:

***two hundred and threescore and sixteen souls;*** the Alexandrian copy reads, "two hundred seventy and five"; and the Ethiopic version, "two hundred and six".

This account of the number is given to show, that the historian, who was one of them, had an exact knowledge of all in the ship; and this being recorded before the account of the shipwreck, may serve to make the truth of the relation the more to be believed that none of them perished, since their number was so precisely known; and makes it the more marvelous, that such a number of men should be saved, and in a shipwreck; and shows, that there must be a wonderful interposition of divine power to bring them all safe to land.

**ACTS 27:38. *And when they had eaten enough,*** Were satisfied, having eaten a full meal:

***they lightened the ship;*** of its burden, that it might the better carry them to the shore, and that by the following method:

***and cast out the wheat into the sea;*** which seems to have been part of the ship's provision; or one part of their lading, which they brought

from Egypt, and were carrying to Italy: they had cast out some of the goods of the ship before, and also the tackling of the ship, and now, last of all, the wheat; for what was eatable they reserved till last, not knowing to what extremity they might be reduced.

**ACTS 27:39. *And when it was day they knew not the land,*** What place it was, or the name of it:

***but they discovered a certain creek with a shore;*** a gulf or bay, with a shore near it; the Ethiopic version explains it,

***an arm of the sea,*** where was a port, where they thought they could secure themselves, or get ashore:

***into which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship;*** whither they had a mind, and consulted to run the ship, if it could be done by any means, believing it was the most likely method of saving themselves, and that; for notwithstanding the assurance they had that no man's life should be lost, they made use of all proper means for their safety and security.

**ACTS 27:40. *And when they had taken up the anchors,*** The four anchors they cast out of the stern, (Acts 27:29) or "when they had cut the anchors", as the Syriac and Arabic versions render it; that is, had cut the cables to which the anchors were fastened:

***they committed themselves unto the sea;*** or left them, the anchors, in the sea; or committed the ship to the sea, and themselves in it, endeavoring to steer its course to the place they had in view:

***and loosed the rudder bands;*** by which the rudder was fastened to the ship.

The rudder, in navigation, is a piece of timber turning on hinges in the stern of a ship, and which opposing sometimes one side to the water, and sometimes another, turns or directs the vessel this way or that.

The rudder of a ship is a piece of timber hung on the stern posts, by four or five iron hooks, called "pintles", serving as it were for the bridle

of a ship, to turn her about at the pleasure of the steersman.

The rudder being perpendicular, and without side the ship, another piece of timber is fitted into it at right angles, which comes into the ship, by which the rudder is managed and directed: this latter is properly called the "helm" or "tiller", and sometimes, though improperly, the rudder itself.

A narrow rudder is best for a ship's sailing, provided she can feel it; that is, be guided and turned by it, for a broad rudder will hold much water when the helm is put over to any side; yet if a ship has a fat quarter, so that the water cannot come quick and strong to her rudder, she will require a broad rudder.

The aft most part of the rudder is called the "rake" of the rudder. This is the account of a rudder with the moderns: with the ancients, the parts of the rudder were these, the "clavus" or "helm", by which the rudder was governed; the pole of it; the wings or the two breadths of it, which were as wings, and the handle: some ships had but one rudder, most had two, and some three, and some four; those that had but one, seemed to have it in the middle of the stern; and those that had two had them on the sides, not far from the middle; and there were some ships which had them not only in the stern, but also in the prow or head of the ship: that the ancients had sometimes more rudders than one in a ship, has been abundantly proved by Bochartus and Scheherus; take only an instance or two.

The Carthaginians, as Aelianus reports, decreed two governors to every ship saying it was absurd that it should have, "two rudders", and that he who was most useful to the sailors, and had the government of the ship, should be alone, and without successor and companion; and so Apuleius says, the ship in which we were carried was shook by various storms and tempests, "utroque regimine amisso", and having lost both its rudders, sunk at the precipice.

Some of the Indian ships have three rudders; that of Philopator's had four rudders: how

many this ship had, in which the apostle was, cannot be said: but this is certain, that it had more than one; for the words are, “and loosed the bands of the rudders”; and since it is a clear case, that the ships of the ancients had more rudders than one to each, there is no need to suppose a figure in the text, and that the plural number is used for the singular, as Beza thinks. “The bands” of them were those by which they were fastened; and they were “loosed”, as Schefferus conjectures, because when the anchors were cast out, they fastened the rudders higher, that they might not be broken by the dashing of the waves, especially as they were in a storm; but now having taken up the anchors, they loosed these bands: and certain it is, that not only oars but rudders were fastened with cords or ropes to the ship : according to the notion of modern navigation, the rudder band might be thought to be the rope which is turned round the tiller, and made fast to the ship’s side, and as the tiller is moved, “surges” round the end of the tiller; and very likely might be made fast, when the ship was at anchor, on one side, to keep the ship from breaking her sheer; but now being loosed, and the helm “amidships”, and the mainsail hoisted, the ship ran to the shore before the wind.

**And hoisted up the main sail to the wind:** which they had before struck or let down, (Acts 27:17). The main sail is that which is upon the main mast.

The Ethiopic version renders it, “the great sail”. The great sail was that which is called “acatus”, which is another word than is here used: so Isidore says “acatus” is the greatest sail, and is placed in the middle of the ship; “epidromos” is the next in size, and is placed at the stern; and “dolon” is the least sail, and is fixed at the head: and both the Syriac and Arabic versions here render it, “the little sail”; and which sailors put up when they are afraid to use large sails, which would carry too much wind; but the word here used is “artemo”, which the above writer says is commended rather for the sake of directing the ship, than for swiftness.

And this seems to be the use that was now made of it, namely, to guide the ship into the creek or bay.

**And made toward the shore;** which was in the creek, or to the haven in it.

**ACTS 27:41. And falling into a place where two seas met,** An “isthmus”, on each side of which the sea ran; and which the inhabitants of Malta, as Beza says, show to this day, and call it, “la Cala de San Paulo”, or the Descent of Saint Paul.

The meeting of these two seas might occasion a great rippling in the sea like to a large eddy, or counter tide; and here might be a sand on which

**they ran the ship aground;** for this place where the two seas met, as the same annotator observes, could not be the shore itself; for otherwise, to what purpose should they cast themselves into the sea, as they afterwards did, if the head of the ship struck upon the shore, and stuck fast there? but must rather mean a shelf of sand, opposite, or near the entrance into the bay, and where the shipwreck was.

**And the fore part stuck fast, and remained unmovable;** so that there was no getting her off:

**but the hinder part was broken by the violence of the waves;** that is, the stern; by which means there were boards and broken pieces for the company to get ashore upon.

**ACTS 27:42. And the soldiers’ counsel was to kill the prisoners,** Paul, and the rest: this they had not only an inclination to, but they declared it, and gave it as their opinion, and what they thought advisable to be done directly:

**lest any of them should swim out and escape;** and they should be accountable for them: but this was dreadful wickedness in them to seek to take away the lives of others, when they themselves were in so much danger; and monstrous ingratitude to the Apostle Paul, who had been so much concerned for their lives, and careful of them, and had been the means of saving them, and for whose sake they were

saved: the devil must have had a great hand in this.

**ACTS 27:43. *But the centurion, willing to save Paul,*** Not only because he was a Roman citizen, but because he perceived he was some extraordinary person; and chiefly because he was moved there unto by a superior influence, that Satan might not have his end; and that the will of God might be fulfilled, that he should go to Rome, and there bear a testimony of Christ.

***Kept them from their purpose;*** would not suffer them to execute their design, restrained them from it, and laid his commands upon them to the contrary.

***And commanded that they which could swim, should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land;*** which some restrain to the Roman soldiers, as if the centurion's speech was only directed to them; though it seems rather to have respect to the whole company, the mariners, who generally can swim, and the soldiers, as many of them as could, and the rest of the prisoners or passengers; though it may be, he might chiefly regard the soldiers, who were usually learned to swim, that they might the more readily pass rivers, in their marches, where they could find no bridges, that so he might be the sooner rid of them, and break their purpose.

**ACTS 27:44. *And the rest, some on boards, Doors, tables, planks, or any such like things: and some on broken pieces of the ship;*** or what came from it, as masts, beams, etc.

***and so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land;*** not one was lost, as Paul had foretold. And so it will be with the saints after their afflicted state in this life, who are safe by being in Christ, and by abiding in him and in the use of means; and though by reason of the many difficulties in the way, through the corruptions of their own hearts, the temptations of Satan, the hidings of God's face, various afflictions, and sometimes violent persecutions, they are scarcely saved, yet at last they are certainly saved.

So it comes to pass that they get safe on the shores of eternal bliss and happiness; because they are ordained unto it, are the care of Christ, and the purchase of his blood; and are partakers of the blessings of grace, and have the Spirit, as an earnest of the heavenly inheritance; and when landed they are safe; sin will be no more; Satan will be under their feet; there will be no more afflictions of any kind; and they will be with the Lord, and for ever with him.

This voyage of the apostle, and the saints with him, was an emblem of the passage of the people of God in this world to heaven: their number was but few; who besides Luke, and Aristarchus the Macedonian, were with him, is not known, (Acts 27:2).

And so the number of the children of God, in anyone period of time, is but small in comparison of the rest of the world: the apostle and his companions had but very indifferent company, as other prisoners, a band of soldiers, and the sailors; Christ's church is as a rose in a field, a lily among thorns, vexed with the conversation of the wicked, being in a world which lies in wickedness; and which may very fitly be compared to the sea, for the waves of afflictions in it, and the restless and uneasy spirits of the men of it.

Sailing at this time was dangerous, (Acts 27:9) as the saints' passage through this world always is, and especially now in these last and perilous days; partly through the abounding of immorality on the one hand, and partly through the spread of error and heresy on the other.

A great storm arose, (Acts 27:14) and there are many the Christian meets with in his voyage to heaven; and well it is for him that Christ is an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and that he is built on such a foundation, which the most violent storms cannot move him from.

There was no sight of sun or stars for many days, (Acts 27:20) and so it is sometimes with the people of God; the sun of righteousness is not seen by them, clouds interpose between him and them; and the stars, the ministers of

the Gospel, are removed from them, and their eyes cannot behold their teachers, which make it a distressed time with them: yea, all hope of salvation was gone, (Acts 27:20) and such at times is the case of truly gracious souls; their hope, and their strength, they are ready to say, are perished from the Lord, and they are cut off from before his eyes: there was also a long abstinence from food, (Acts 27:21,33) which is sometimes the case in a spiritual sense, and is owing either to want of food, the word of the Lord being precious, there being a famine of hearing the word; or for want of appetite to it: and last of all, there was a design formed by the soldiers to kill Paul, and the prisoners, but were prevented by the centurion, (Acts 27:42).

The sincere followers of Christ are accounted as sheep for the slaughter, and are killed all the day long in the intention of wicked men; who have always a good will to it, were they not restrained through the goodness of a civil government, and especially by the power and providence of God: however, at last, they get safe to their port and haven, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest.

### Malta

from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia  
**MALTA** mal'te [Gk. *Melitē* (Acts 28:1); AV MELITA. The island where Paul was shipwrecked. Though some have identified Malta with Meleda on the east coast of the Adriatic Sea, the African Melita (Malta) is most likely the correct identification. The Romans called the island and principal town Melita.

Malta is a rocky islet 93 km (58 mi) S of Sicily, 240 km (149 mi) S of the Italian mainland, and 290 km (180 mi) N of Cape Bon in Tunisia. A little over 27 km (17 mi) long, 14 km (9 mi) wide, and with a shoreline of 137 km (85 mi), it is the chief island of the Maltese group—which includes Gozo and Comino islands.

Though Malta lacks significant natural resources, it has often had strategic importance as a base from which to control the

Mediterranean narrows. Its excellent harbor can accommodate a considerable fleet.

Phoenicians occupied Malta in Paul's day. Luke's calling the people *bárbaroi* (not Greco-Roman; Acts 28:2) agrees with the testimony of Diodorus (v 12) that they were Phoenicians, neither Hellenized nor Romanized. The date of the Phoenician arrival is uncertain, but Carthage dominated Malta after the 6th cent. B.C. and Rome captured the Maltese islands from Carthage in 218 B.C.

On his voyage to Rome, Paul was shipwrecked on the island (Acts 27:43) and stayed there three months until favorable sailing weather (28:11). The traditional site of Paul's shipwreck is 13 km (8 mi) NW of the present capital of Valletta at a place now called St. Paul's Bay. The location is reasonably certain. W. Ramsay and J. Smith (*Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*, 1880) have exhaustively treated the topographical question.

Two points about the incident of Paul and the snake (Acts 28:3–6) need mention. First, as F. F. Bruce and others have pointed out, there are now no snakes on Malta, but there may have been in Paul's day. Second, in the natives' initial reaction to the incident, "Though he has escaped from the sea, justice [Gk. *díkē* has not allowed him to live," Gk. *díkē* is probably Luke's Hellenizing of a Punic deity. Thus Bauer, rev, p. 198, defined *díkē* here as "Justice personified as a goddess"

### Roman Law

#### I. Introduction

The source of Roman law is the family or *gens*. The proprietary rights of the *paterfamilias* as head of this primitive unit of organization are fundamental in private law, and the scope of the criminal jurisdiction of the state was limited by the power of life and death exercised by the head of the family over those under his authority. Their transgressions were tried before the domestic tribunal.

At one time many different classes of crime must have been punished by the priests as

sacrilege, in accordance with the divine law (*fas*); the offender would have been put to death as a sacrifice to the offended deity. Restitution for private violence or injustice would have been left to private initiative. Thus avenging the death of a kinsman was more than a right; it was a religious duty.

The law of the Twelve Tables that allowed the nocturnal thief and the adulterer caught in the act to be killed was a survival of primitive private vengeance. Survivals of the old religious rules demanded condemnation to death for sacrilegious acts. The secular conception of crime as an offense against the welfare of the state gradually superseded the older conception. Private law arose when the community eliminated an individual's or a family's right directly to seek justice, which caused societal disorder. The parties to a disagreement were compelled to submit their claims to an arbitrator.

## II. Roman Private Law

**A. The Twelve Tables** Roman private law was at first a body of unwritten usages handed down by tradition in the patrician families. The demands of the plebeians to know the laws by which they were governed and taxed resulted in the publication of the famous Twelve Tables (449 B.C.), which were later regarded as the source of all public and private law (Livy iii.34.6). But the code was not scientific or comprehensive. To meet the growing requirements of the republican community, its primitive form was expanded, chiefly by interpretation and the *jus honorarium*.

**B. Civil Procedure** The *praetor*, or magistrate, listened to the claims of the litigants and prepared an outline (*formula*) of the disputed issues. He submitted it to a *judex*, or arbitrator, a one-man jury, who decided the questions of fact involved. Neither *praetor* nor *judex* had special legal training. The court therefore had recourse to authorities on the law (*jurisprudentes*), whose opinions (*responsa*) formed a valuable commentary on the legal institutions of the time. The body of rules

amassed by such interpretative adaptation would never have been recognized by the authors of the Twelve Tables.

**C. Jus Honorarium** *Jus honorarium* was so named because this law rested upon the authority of magistrates (*honor* = magistracy). It was composed of orders that had been issued in cases for which the existing law did not make adequate provision. This second agency for legal expansion may be compared with English equity (chancery-court legal and procedural rulings that enforce common and statute law by supplementing or overriding it). These orders were issued by the praetors and had legal force during only the tenure of their office. But succeeding praetors usually reissued the ones that had proved just and expedient, and in time there arose a large and uniform body of rules which praetors issued in an edict before beginning their term of office. Thus Roman law maintained a proper balance between elasticity and rigidity.

**D. Praetor Peregrinus** The institution of the *praetor peregrinus* (241 B.C.) to hear cases in which parties were foreigners led to a series of similar edicts. Since most of the foreigners were Greeks from southern Italy, these edicts formulated principles based on the spirit of Greek law, which became an important means for gradually broadening Roman law.

**E. Imperial Ordinances** Under the empire direct legislation superseded the other sources of law — enactments of the senate (*senatus consulta*), imperial ordinances, and occasional bills ratified by the people (*leges*). Imperial ordinances eventually superseded all other types; they consisted of *edicta* (issued by the emperor as orders, similar to those of the republican magistrates), *decreta* (decisions of the imperial tribunal, of force as precedents), and *rescripta* (replies by the emperor to requests for interpretation of the law). All these imperial acts were known as *constitutiones*.

**F. Golden Age of Juristic Literature** In the 2nd cent A.D. Salvius Julianus was commissioned to

invest the praetorian edict with definite form. The Institutes of Gaius that appeared around the same time became a model for subsequent textbooks on jurisprudence. This was the Golden Age of juristic literature. A succession of able thinkers, such as Papinian, Paulus, Ulpian, Modestinus, and Gaius (cf. Codex Theodosianus ii.4.3), applied to the incoherent mass of legal materials the methods of scientific investigation, developing a system of Roman law and establishing a science of jurisprudence.

**G. Codification in the Later Empire** The emperor Justinian (A.D. 527–565) finally codified the immense body of Roman law. The board of eminent jurists engaged in the great work published (1) the *Code* in twelve books, a selection of imperial enactments from Hadrian onward; (2) the Digest or *Pandects* in fifty books, extracts from the juristic literature; and (3) the *Institutes*, a textbook in four books. Most Roman private law has come down to modern times in this form. Next to the Christian religion, it is the most plentiful source of the rules governing actual conduct in Western Europe (J. Bryce, *Studies in History and Jurisprudence* [1901]).

### III. Roman Criminal Law

**A. Jurisdiction in the Royal Period** In the royal period criminal jurisdiction, insofar as it was a function of secular administration, was the right of the king. The titles *quaestores parricidii* (“prosecutors of murderers” [lit “parent-murderers”]) and *duumviri perduellionis* (lit “two-man commission for treason”) indicate the kind of crimes first brought under secular jurisdiction. The republican magistrates inherited the royal right to punish crimes and the power to compel obedience to their own decrees by means of penalties (*coercitio*).

**B. Right of Appeal** The right of the people to final jurisdiction in cases involving the life or civil status of citizens was established by an enactment (perhaps 509 B.C.) granting the right of appeal to the assembly (*provocatio*) against a capital or other serious sentence pronounced

by a magistrate (Cicero *De re publica* ii.31 [54; Livy ii.8.2]). This right of appeal was extended by subsequent enactments (*leges Valeriae*, Valerian laws) in 449 and 299 B.C. Generally the magistrates made no provisional sentence of their own but brought their charges directly before the people.

**1. Penalties** The death penalty was practically abrogated in republican times, for the accused was allowed to go into voluntary exile. The Romans rarely imposed imprisonment and granted the right to appeal heavy fines. A right of appeal was granted ca 300 B.C. against decisions of the dictator, who previously had held the power of life and death over the citizens (Livy xxvii.6.5).

**2. Porcian Law** The right of appeal to the people was valid in Rome and as far as the first milestone from the city. The Porcian Law virtually secured this protection for all Roman citizens, wherever they might be, by establishing their right to a trial at Rome. Thus Roman citizens in the provinces, in all serious cases, were sent to Rome for trial; other persons were subject to the criminal jurisdiction of the municipalities unless the governor summoned them before his own tribunal.

**C. Popular Jurisdiction Curtailed** The exercise of this popular jurisdiction was gradually curtailed by the establishment of permanent courts. The people delegated their authority to judge certain classes of cases. The first of these courts (149 B.C.) was authorized for the trial of charges of extortion against provincial governors. Compensation was the main purpose of accusers in bringing charges before this and later permanent courts. The procedure was similar to that in civil cases. A praetor presided over the tribunal; a number of *judices* replaced the single juror. Sulla provided seven courts — each dealing exclusively with extortion, treason, embezzlement, corrupt electioneering, murder, fraud, or assault.

**D. Jurors** Jurors were originally chosen from the senate, but C. Gracchus transferred membership in all the juries to the equestrian class. Sulla admitted three hundred members of the equestrian class to the senate, to which he then restored the exclusive control of the juries. In 70 B.C. a judicial law gave equal representation in the courts to all three classes of the people; 1080 names were then on the list of jurors (Cicero *In Pisonem* xl). Caesar abolished the plebeian jurors. Augustus restored them but confined their action to civil cases of minor importance (Suetonius *Caesar* 41; *Augustus* 32). He excused senators from service as jurors.

**E. Disappearance of Criminal Courts** The system of criminal courts diminished in importance under the empire and disappeared in the 2nd century. They were replaced by the senate, over which a consul presided, then by the emperor, and later by officials delegated by the emperor. At first the senate functioned as had the jurors in the permanent courts to the praetor. Then the emperor and imperial officials decided without a jury, and the judicial competence of the senate was gradually lost. After the 3rd cent trial by jury ceased to exist.

An important innovation was the right to appeal the decisions of lower courts to higher tribunals. The emperors and eventually their delegates (usually the two prefects) heard appeals from Roman and Italian magistrates and provincial governors.

**F. Right of Trial at Rome** Under the early empire provincial governors were generally obligated to grant Roman citizens' demand to be tried at Rome (Digest xlvii.6f), although this rule apparently had exceptions (Pliny Ep. ii.11; Digest xlviii.8, 16). Lysias, tribune of the cohort at Jerusalem, sent Paul as a prisoner to Caesarea, the capital of the province, so that Felix the procurator might determine what to do since Paul was a Roman citizen (Acts 23:27). Two years later Paul asserted his privilege of being tried at Rome by the

emperor (25:11–21). Roman citizens who were sent to Rome might be brought before the senate or the emperor, but usually the imperial tribunal handled these cases and eventually supplanted senatorial jurisdiction over them. The formula of appeal became proverbial: "I am a Roman citizen, I appeal unto Caesar" (cf. 25:11).

As Roman citizenship became more and more widely extended to people throughout the empire, its relative value diminished. Many of its special privileges, such as the right of trial at Rome, must have been gradually lost. It became customary for the emperors to delegate their power of final jurisdiction over the lives of the citizens (*jus gladii*, "right of the sword") to the provincial governors. After Caracalla had conferred Roman citizenship upon the inhabitants of the empire generally, the right of appeal to Rome remained the privilege of certain classes, such as senators, municipal decurions (Digest xlviii.19, 27), officers of equestrian rank in the army, and centurions (Dio Cassius lii.22, 33).

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