

17. From this account we are able to notice a number of incidences that caused the captain to make decisions against Paul's advice leading to a series of dire circumstances including loss of the ship.
18. Several weather forces dictated the course of the voyage. The first was the decision to sail due south "under the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us" (27:4).
19. The lee side of an island is the one that protects the ship from prevailing winds, in this case from the south, thus they were east and north of the island.
20. After being transferred at Myra to a ship bound for Rome, Paul and his fellow sailors embarked with a new crew. Their next weather event was also affected by the wind.
21. At Cnidus [**Κνίδος (Knidos): nī'-dus**], "westerly currents and headwinds" forced the crew to sail due south to the island of Crete where the captain could then turn due west under the protective lee of the island.
22. When at the mercy of the winds and currents of the Mediterranean Sea, it helps to have divine guidance while others make decisions from a position of weakness.
23. Docked at the town of Fair Havens, Paul addressed the captain and ship's occupants warning them against proceeding further on the voyage. Note his recitation from the source of divine guidance:
Acts 27:10 "Men, I observe from past experience this voyage is going to end in disaster and much damage not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." (EXT)
24. Paul's warning was overruled by the captain and the ship's owner. These two men had the rank and authority to make the final decision. The centurion, charged with the duty of presenting Paul to authorities in Rome, agreed.
25. They charted a course for Phoenix, located some 50 miles toward the western end of Crete, and spend the winter there. It was on this short sail that Paul's prophesy began to be fulfilled.

26. Aided by a south wind, the captain charted his course, weighed anchor, and set sail near the coast of Crete. What happened next is described by the NET Bible in **Acts 27:14** Not long after this, a **hurricane-force wind** [τυφωνικός (*tuphōnikós*): **whirlwind**] called the **northeaster** [Εὐροκλύδων (*Euroklúdōn*):⁷ **Euráquilō** (*ū-rak'-wi-lō*)⁸ **a sailor's term**] **blew down from the island.** (NET)
27. Hurricane-force would be in excess of 73 miles per hour. Here is further analysis about this phenomenon:
Sailing along the southern coast of Crete, the ship passed up a winter anchorage at Fair Havens in an attempt to reach what the captain thought was a more desirable port at Phoenix, 50 miles further west. (It was) late fall, and sailing on the Mediterranean in that season became precarious. (pp. 186–87)
Indeed, a “northeaster” wind sprang up, and the ship was driven off course. As it was passing on the east side of the island of Cauda the ship had to be lashed together, and as the storm continued there was considerable danger that the ship would run aground and be wrecked on the sandbars of Syrtis, off north Africa. Instead the ship eventually ran aground on the island of Malta, 60 miles south of Sicily. All 276 passengers were saved, but the ship and its cargo were lost.⁹ (p. 187)
28. The Euráquilō prohibited the ship from being properly guided by sail so it was driven along out of control until the captain was able to move behind the small island of Caúda.
29. Through this entire ordeal, another difficulty was contributing its annoyance to the mounting problems. What the text refers to as the “ship’s boat,” a sort of skiff or dinghy, was being tossed to and fro as it slashed through the surf behind the ship.

⁷ “Εὐροκλύδων, a tempestuous wind occurring on the Mediterranean. It blows from all points and its danger results from the violence and uncertainty of its course” (Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. [Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993], 682).

⁸ The Euráquilō is easily explained as a compound of Greek *eúros*, “east wind,” and Latin *áquilō*, “northeast wind,” hence *euráquilō*, “east northeast wind.” This agrees with the experience of navigators in those waters” (Alfred H. Joy, “Euraquilo,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956], 2:1039).

⁹ Carl M. Rasmussen, *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 186–87).

30. Once order was somewhat restored, the captain realized they had been driven into the south Mediterranean and in danger of what was called as he Syrtis:

σύρτις (súrtis). A sandbank, shoal or quicksand, so-called because ships running into it are held fast and gradually sink into it—thus becoming a great danger to navigation (Acts 27:17).¹⁰

31. The Syrtis is mentioned by Flavius Josephus as, “Syrtis, (*sic*) a place terrible to such as barely hear it described.”¹¹

32. Hurricanes are slow-moving monsters and this one kept this ship in its whirlwind for fourteen days as noted in:

Acts 27:27a When the fourteenth night had come, while we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea ... (NET)

33. On the second day, as the storm continued its violent assault, they threw cargo overboard (27:18) and on the third day followed it with the ship’s gear (v.19).

34. The winds associated with a hurricane are relentless. They blow constantly varied only by its increasing speed while building and then slowing gradually as it dies down. It literally never stops for days on end. This is noted in:

Acts 27:20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and a violent storm continued to batter us, we abandoned all hope of being saved. (NET)

35. The elements were beginning to impact everyone on that ship with the exception of Paul. The storm continued to rage. The sea was in turmoil.

36. The ability to navigate was impossible since gaining a fix on the sun by day and stars by night were prevented by the storm.

37. The specter of running aground in the Syrtis was a source of constant dread for there was no way of determining where it was because of the hurricane’s constant pursuit.

¹⁰ Zodhiates, “σύρτις,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, 1349.

¹¹ Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews* in *The Life and Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, n.d.), bk. 2, chap. 16, par. 4.

38. And not to be ignored were the waves, their crests crashing on the deck in an ongoing effort to wash them down below.
39. It is not surprising that 275 people onboard that ship were not copacetic, they enjoyed no unalloyed happiness, and they most certainly had not advanced to the level of sharing the happiness of God.
40. They were prime examples of what James describes in James 1:6, "... the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed around by the wind." (NET)
41. All the passengers except Paul had reached a consensus opinion: "We finally abandoned all hope of survival" (Acts 27:20*b*).
42. "Abandoned" is the imperfect passive indicative of the verb **περιαιρέω** (*periairéō*): "to abandon." The imperfect tense is ingressive:

The imperfect is often used to stress the beginning of an action, with the implication that it continued for some time. The ingressive imperfect tense stresses beginning, but implies that the action continues.¹²
43. The passive voice denotes these individuals receive the action of this abandonment of hope from what they conclude is a hopeless situation and they are helpless to do anything about it.
44. The indicative mood is a statement of fact. This abandonment of hope is exactly what these people have concluded and that attitude continues.
45. The only person that maintained unalloyed happiness was Paul. Was he laughing and joking during all of this? No. What he did do was maintain stability of soul.
46. Paul's inventory of ideas plus the personal assurances by the "angel of the Lord" informed him that not only he but all aboard would weather this storm. Here's what he had to say in Acts 27:21–26:

(End JAS1-09. See JAS1-10 for continuation of study at p. 91.)

¹² Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 544.

Acts 27:21 Since many of them had no desire to eat, Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me and not put out to sea from Crete, thus avoiding this damage and loss.

v. 22 “And now I advise you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only the ship will be lost.

v. 23 “For last night an angel of God [**this is not a Christophany but a herald angel!**] to whom I belong and whom I serve came to me,

v. 24 and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul! You must stand before Caesar, and God has graciously granted you the safety of all who are sailing with you.’

v. 25 “Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will be just as I have been told.”

v. 26 “But we must run aground on some island.” (NET)

Analysis:

1. In verse 21, the passengers and crew are exhausted and famished. The physical and mental states of the people need to be encouraged.
2. Paul stands up, takes charge, and reminds them of how his warning of disaster awaited them if they disembarked from Crete. He was overruled by the captain and the ship’s owner in Acts 27:10.
3. Paul reestablishes his credibility by recalling how his cautionary tale has been partially fulfilled. Those to whom he issued his warnings now are consumed by doubt. Paul now takes the initiative to reassert his authority.

! “Note that it is an angel, rather than the ascended Lord Jesus, who addresses Paul here. Since angelic appearances are rare in the narrative, they are significant moments of divine revelation and action” (David Peterson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles*, gen. ed. D. A. Carson [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009], 689).

4. The captain, crew, and passengers are discouraged victims of the vicissitudes about which James warns in:
James 1:6b ... the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. (NASB)
5. A class one hurricane produced wave crests of about 45 feet driven by winds of at least 74 mile per hour. Currents in the south central Mediterranean flow from the west in opposition the westward movement of the hurricane.
6. Its violent winds and waves, plus the currents placed the ship in multiple areas of stress while the Syrtis sandbanks lurked off the coast of Libya.
7. The folk Paul addresses in Acts 27:21–26 are in no way copacetic. He assures them they will survive, but the ship will ultimately be lost.
8. During his warning he informs them of the source of his confidence is “an angel of the God to whom I belong.”
9. The angel commanded Paul, “Do not be afraid, Paul!” This mandate is introduced by the negative conjunction **μή (mḗ)**: “Do not,” followed by the aorist middle imperative of the verb **φοβέω (phobéō)**: “fear.”
10. The ingressive aorist stresses the beginning of an action or the entrance into a state which means Paul has not yet entered, that is, he was *not* in a state of fear.
11. Therefore, the apostle is obviously copacetic in the midst of horrid weather conditions. The seasoned sailors had already begun preparation to do battle with the elements by undergirding the ship in Acts 27:17.

Isagogics on Shipping in the Graeco-Roman World

1. The ships of the Romans were not steered by a single rudder. All Roman ships had a two-paddle rudder system noted in Acts 27:40 with the plural form of the noun, **πηδάλιον (pēdálion)**: “rudders.”
2. Most of the ancient ships had one large mast and therefore one sail.