

THE SHIPWRECK OF ST. PAUL

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For two years Paul had been a prisoner¹ in Cæsarea. Festus had succeeded Felix. In accord with the Roman plan of consolidating provinces into larger units, government for the region Judæa, Samaria, and Idumea was centered in Cæsarea. Jerusalem, still the religious capital, was in charge of a military Tribune, Claudius Lysias.² Festus paid early attention to business in hand.³ It was midsummer when he took up active duties, and late in the summer Paul was started on his long journey. By the time the voyagers were past Crete, the Fast, September 15, 54 A. D., was gone by.⁴

Rebuilt by Herod, capital under the Procurators, Cæsarea was a port of call, the chief seaport of Syria, and was possessed of a good harbor compared by Josephus to that of Piræus.⁴ "Its largeness," he says, "was not less than the Pyræum and had towards the city a double station for the ships. It was of excellent workmanship; and this was the more remarkable for its being built in a place that of itself was not suitable for such noble structures, but was to be brought to perfection by materials from other places, and at very great expense." In Paul's day the population was mixed and the Jews were often at odds with their neighbors. A greater offense to Jewish prejudice was the temple erected by Herod to Augustus.

So late in the year navigation would be uncertain. Only freight-boats would be moving, and, as in this case, even such craft would be making for home ports. The army knows no excuse, however, and the centurian Julius proceeded to get as soon and as far on his way as possible before storms or mutiny prevented. As the route was the usual course for ships sailing to Greek and Roman ports, one might reasonably hope to fall in with west-bound craft even before

¹ Ac. xxiv:27; ² Ac. xxiii:26; ³ Ac. xxv:16; ⁴ Tisri 10, cf. Lk. xxvii:9.

⁵ Navigation opened about the beginning of March and closed by the middle of November.

reaching Adramyttium. Ships of that time varied in size, vessels being reported at 500 and even 1,100 tons. Dimensions are given of 200 feet length and 50 ft. breadth; carrying capacity of 400,000 bushels of wheat besides passengers; and passenger-lists are cited as large as 600, or even 1,200 souls. Paul's boat was a large craft; there were 276 persons on board and a cargo of wheat.

A day's sail, sixty-seven miles, brought them to Sidon. This ancient port, once declared by Strabo to be the finest on the continent,⁶ was made possible by a rocky ledge, that formed with adjacent small islands a breakwater. There were really two harbors. Fifty galleys could ride at anchor. But Fakhr ed-Din to protect the city against the Turks had the harbor partly filled with rock and earth. Time and waves have added to their work and now only small boats can enter. In Paul's day Sidon, now outdone by the growth of Beirut as the outpost of Damascus, was a port of call for ships from Egypt to points in Asia Minor and further west.

Well up to the North, near the ancient Troas, is Adramyttium at the head of the Gulf of the same name.⁷ Once on the sea, the city was later moved inland to Edremid and made the metropolis of the new district of Roman Asia, where the assizes of the entire district were held. It became a trading port and a base for ship lines and was noted for its export of a famous oil.⁸ The city had the right of coinage and in the third century A. D. enjoyed reciprocal relations with Ephesus. It was a division point for sea-going trade east and west, Alexandria and intermediate points east; Adramyttium to points west. Here, it would seem, as in the case of this "ship of Adramyttium," goods were trans-shipped.

Under the Empire Myra on the south coast of Lycia became important and later became the capital of Byzantine and ecclesiastical Lycia. The city itself lay two and a half miles inland with port at Andrioke. When coast-wise trade gave way to trans-Mediterranean service, Myra became a division point on the route to Piræus and Rome. The "ship of Alexandria," also, like Paul's ship, driven out of course by gales stopped at recognized ports along the way for supplies and chance cargoes just as ships do today, save that today telegraph and cable add an element of certainty then unknown. Egypt was the granary of Rome. Trade, especially in wheat, gradually centered in Rome. Prevailing winds in the Levant are westerly, and ships did not sail directly for Rome, but often, reaching the pro-

⁶ Xvi, 2.

⁷ See Philippon's map or Br. Admiralty map—eastern sheet.

⁸ Pliny xiii, 2, 5.

tection of the Syrian coast and the islands, as Crete, they sailed westward, favored by local coast winds. In stormy weather with unfavorable winds, boats always took the longer route via the Syrian coast. This was true of Paul's voyage and Lucian affords another instance. "Alexandria to Akamas 7 days; strong west wind; run for Syrian coast; Sidon to Khelidonian islands east of Myra; failed to go South of Crete⁹ and made Piræus when 70 days out from Alexandria." Still another instance we have in the story of Gregory Nazianzen: "Alexandria direct to Greece, till he came near Cyprus, thence west to Greece.¹⁰ 20 days Alexandria to Rhodes.¹¹ Here sailors paid their vows—possibly to Poseidon. Later a Christian St. Nicholas, a Bishop of Myra, became patron saint of the sailors. In Ac. 21 we have an account of another, the usual voyage, this time en route for the Palestinian coast. This time Cyprus was on the left. The hindering winds in this later voyage were from the west.

But in the voyage in question Luke states that they sailed through *διαπλεύσαντες* the sea adjacent to Cilicia and Pamphylia, i. e. north of Cyprus.

Cnidus, back of the present Cape Krio, famous for fish and wine, and for unswerving loyalty of the citizens to their city's honor, stands on a peninsula that boldly thrusts westward into the Aegean Sea. Scarcely any ruined Greek city still in existence shows so varied a store of specimens of Greek architecture.¹² On a hill nearly a thousand feet high, it is a sightly point for mariners. West of it lies the island of Cos, and once beyond this a ship gets the full sweep of the north winds from the Aegean, which bear the ship southward despite efforts to tack on its course. The sailor's next hope was Crete, 140 miles east to west, and with its central mountain chain forming a break against wind and sea. The ship was many days making a distance of 130 miles, hence there must have been much storm or calm, "adversis ventis usi essemus,¹³ tarde que et incommode navigassemus." According to Aristotle¹⁴ and Pliny¹⁵ the prevailing winds at this time are North-west. With no harbors on its Southern coast, Crete's only trade on the south is carried on by small sail and coasting boats. Steep shores prevent anchorages and landings are uncertain and dangerous.

⁹ Cf. Ac xxvii:7.

¹⁰ *Carmen de vita sua* 128 ff; *Orat.* 18:31.

¹¹ *Carmen de rebus suis*, 312.

¹² *Med. Pilot.* IV, pp. 269, 445.

¹³ Cicero, *Ep. ad Familiares*, xiv, 5.

¹⁴ *De Mundo* 4.

¹⁵ *Med. Pilot.* iv, 434.

Fair Havens-Lasea-(Kalo Limniones)¹⁶ lies at the other point of a considerable triangle of land projecting from the south shore about midway of the island. It was scarcely more than a port for the adjacent town of Lasea of which practically nothing is known. A small bay opens eastward from the present Cape Matala, partly sheltered by two small islands, St. Paul and Megalonisi, to the S. E. and S. W. respectively. "Not recommended as an anchorage to winter in; although a vessel well found in anchors and chains as in the present day, would have a better chance than in the days of St. Paul by securing with stern-fasts to the shore, under the lee of or on the northern side of the islet of St. Paul." The swell rolling around the point of the island during a S. E. or southerly gale would even be dangerous. In westerly or northerly winds there is anchorage in the roadstead. In the middle of the bay is a steep rock 36 ft. high. Between this rock and the ancient site of Lasea is a reef extending about an eighth of a mile from shore. For a ship like Paul's, the anchorage was undesirable though better than what followed. So long as this point of land shielded the vessel, the force of contrary winds was not so seriously felt. Once past this point, the ship was caught in the vast expanse of water including the open Mediterranean and the Ionian seas. Fair Havens lies east as Phœnix lies west of Cape Matala. How could a sailing vessel round the point into a N. W. gale?

The Fast of the Atonement occurred on 10th Tishri,¹⁷ the Autumnal equinox.¹⁸ Closed season for navigation lasted Nov. 11 to Mar. 5. Voyages were considered dangerous after middle of September. As the ship was a grain ship, the Centurian was chief in command.¹⁹ He listened to the skipper and accepted his plan to sail on 40 miles to Sutro (read vs. 12 after vs. 8), Phœnix, the best harbor of Crete, with its mouth protected by an island, and affording shelter from S. W. and N. W. winds. This seems the meaning of *κατὰ λίβα κατὰ γῶρον* i. e. towards the points to which these winds blow.²⁰

Being on the south side of the island of Crete, there would be little danger from northerly winds. Opposite is the little island of Clauda. The northward slant of shore gave opportunity for ἀνεμὸς τυφωνικός, a tempestuous wind. From what quarter did this wind blow? If we follow A. V., we read Euroklydon, S. E. wind, "East

¹⁶ 2d. p. 437.

¹⁷ Sept.-Oct.

¹⁸ 2-Cf. 2c. 11:25 ff.

¹⁹ Ramsay, St. Paul, P. 321.

²⁰ Cf. *Arrian Periplus Euxini*, p. 3.

billower, i. e. a rear wind and a following sea, a most difficult thing to handle. Following the reading of γAB^x we have Euraquilo, N. E. wind, which seems the more likely in the light of what happened. Out in the open water, driven by the N. E. wind farther and farther from port not only westward but southward as well, out into the greatest stretch of water in the entire Mediterranean Sea, the ship now faced the probable alternative of foundering in mid-ocean or ultimately driving onto the broad shoals of the north African shore. The farther westward the boat went, the farther was it from the protection of land and the more violent became the force of the wind now unimpeded by any land contours. Driving southward the ship came to the lee of the island of Claudia X^x which gave relief for the time sufficient for the sailors to bring the now water logged small boat up on deck. This little island is a rocky crest $5\frac{1}{2}$ by 3 miles and 1065 ft. above water level.²¹ On the eastern side is a roadstead with anchorage. The east side furnished protection against west winds, the south-east point of the island is a harbor against north winds, but here we have a north-east wind that drives full front into the little triangular bay and churns it into foam. On the north side of the island are rocks and shoals; on the south side a high, precipitous shore-line without break or inlet, but as the depth rapidly increases there is no anchorage and a boat must drift or be dashed on the rocks. There may be safety in a S. W. or westerly gale but not so when the wind is easterly. To-day the island is poor, barren, and with few inhabitants, and then, as now, was a sorry place for stranded sailors.

Now began an eleven days drift before the gale. Clouds and fogs shut out all light of sun and stars. There could be no reckoning. From the north and east came the storm, to the South were the Syrtes. On the North shore of Africa lie two bays, the larger, Syrtis major, full of dangers from sand-bars and quicksands, with a desert shore, syrtica regio, on the South. The smaller bay, Syrtis minor, has rocky, shelving shores, and, due to its exposure to N. E. winds, with variable currents.

Tides in the Mediterranean are not extreme. Thus the maximum at Venice is sometimes three feet, at the island of Zante only six inches.²² The danger was not so much from being drawn into a vortex as popularly supposed, but from being driven on to shoals or on a desert shore. With a N. E. wind driving them, the sailors so

²¹ *Med. Pilot, IV*, p. 442.

²² Chisholm, *Stanford's Compendium of Geography*, I, pp. 84.

maneuvered with sails and steering oars as to gain one degree of northing in their zig-zag course of fourteen days, διαφερομένων ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ Ἄδρια ἰ. e. the Ionian Sea. Some allowance must be made for currents, which are stronger during and after a northeast storm. The general set of the currents is southward for the Archipelago, though varying according to the wind. From Syria to the Archipelago the current is westward and at times violent, especially to the west as between Rhodes and the mainland. Off the coast of Crete the currents are variable, varying with the direction of the wind. From Egypt a current sweeps up the Syrian coast, passes Asia Minor, and meeting a southward current from the Dardanelles and the Aegean takes a southerly course off Crete at a rate of one-half to one and a half knots an hour. Mariners are instructed to allow for one to one and a half knots an hour for a fresh breeze; it must have been much greater for Euraquilo.

The ship had now been driven 30 miles westward but also half that distance to the South. At that rate the ultimate destination could not well be other than the shoals of the African shore. To avoid this disaster was now the sailors' problem to work out in a fierce gale with sails and a north-east wind, by tacking and keeping the vessel's nose as much as possible to the north. The nearest harbors were those of Crete to which there was now no hope of returning. Their only possible goal was the shores of Italy.²³

The real peril must have been due to the straining of timbers and the leaky condition of the ship—to be driven on a lee shore or to founder in mid-ocean. Pliny refers to this wind as "pestis non antennis modo verum ipsa navigia contorta fragens."²⁴ So Josephus: Βαπτισθέντες γὰρ ἡμῶν τοῦ πλοίου κατὰ μέσον τὴν Ἄδριαν.²⁵ And Virgil, "Laxis laterum compagibus omnes. Accipiunt inimicem imbrem, rimisque fatiscunt."²⁶ To the burden of keeping the ship afloat, would be added the horrors of general destruction from the sweeping seas, the difficulty of moving about, the loss of stores, and the impossibility of preparing food.

²³ (1) Only a N. E. wind could have driven the boat to Claudia.

(2) The crew's fears of being driven onto the Syrtes (vs. 17) could only have been caused by a northerly wind.

(3) Euraquilo equals eurus (S. E. wind) plus aquilo (N. wind); N. E. or E. wind is necessary.

(4) Must have been a west driving wind.

(5) Note the violence of the wind; ὑποδράμοντες as over against ὑπελεύσαμεν. Vs. 8. cf. vs. 17. ἐπιθόντες ἐφερόμεθα.

²⁴ HNii. 48

²⁵ Life iii.

²⁶ Aeneid.

To meet the peril of foundering or of going to pieces, resort was made to undergirding the ship, ὑποζωννύοντες. Two explanations are possible:

1—Passing a heavy cable about the ship from stem to stern, thus preventing the higher ends from sagging or being forced apart by the violence of the sea, thus breaking the ship through the middle. This seems the only possible way for a ship at sea in a heavy storm.²⁷

2—Passing the cables about the ship from top down to keep the planks from springing apart. Query: how could it be possible? But:

1)—This is the meaning of the words ὑποζωννύοντες τὸ πλοῖον, "undergirding the ship."

2)—This is the exegesis of scholars, as James Smith, David Smith, Ramsay.

3)—Instances ancient and modern: e. g. (Smith, "shipwreck of St. Paul, pp. 65ff.):

a—Russian ship Jupiter, England to Baltic, 1815.

b—British ship home from Arctic, 1837.

c—British ship Albion, home from India, 1846.

d—Two ships, cited, without date, by Smith.

4)—Such gear, ὑποζώματα, formed part of the ship's gear and might well be tackle specially rigged for the purpose.

5)—Such is the definition laid by such technical works as Falconer's *Marine Dictionary*, "To frap a ship is to pass four or five turns of a large cable-laid rope around the hull or frame of a ship, to support her in a great storm. . . . : this expedient, however, is rarely put in practice." In the case of the Arctic ship above (b—) we have the ship's log: "A length of the chain-cable was passed under the bottom of the ship four feet before the mizzen mast, hove tight by the capstan, and finally immovably fixed to six ring bolts on the quarter deck."

The problem of lowering the gear, κατέσαντες τὸ σκεῦος. The term σκεῦος refers to all tackle of ships, naval gear, and lowering the gear meant sending down every stick, spar, and every bit of canvas not used by reason of the violence of the storm. Some sail was necessary for the ship to mind the rudder. The regular furling of the sails was aloft. In storm superfluous sail would be sent down. The ship made a brave fight, heading into the storm, and between the southward drift due to the storm and the constant northward star-

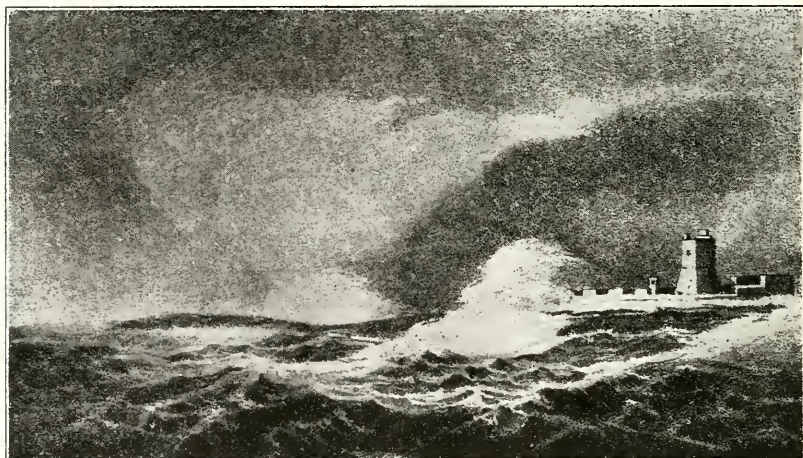
²⁷ Hor., odes, I, xiv:6—"ac sine finibus vix durare carinae Possuit imperiosius Aequor."

board tack under such sail as she could carry, the ship's course would head about west, Malta being a little north of west from Clauda.

Two large, long-handled oars let out one from each side of the ship's stern, and drawn up out of the water whenever the ship was riding at anchor, served for steering.

The time from Clauda to Malta is given as nearly fourteen days; the distance is 476.6 miles; the rate of drift in a storm of "mean intensity" for a large vessel is estimated at one-half to two miles an hour.

Taking a mile and a half as the mean, we have 476.6 divided by 1.5, which equals a little over 317.73 hours. 317.73 divided by 24 equals 13 days, 5 hours, 44 minutes, which would equal the fourteenth night, τεσσαρακαιδεκάτη νύξ, thus counting in the day the ship left Fair Havens.



Eureka Point, with the Tower and Battery of the University.

St. Paul's Bay, protected from all except N. E. to E. winds affords good anchorage after a ship is once inside, but shoal water and rock bottom render the passage in dangerous. Eastward of the bay from the easternmost extends a spit (now called Ras il kavra) for 1000 yards, reaching as far as the 60 ft. depth. To a ship approaching from the East there would come a roar of breakers and later the sight of the surf. The water shoals rapidly. Between two successive soundings there is a discrepancy of thirty feet (120-90). In the darkness of the night the wise course was to anchor prow to shore. Four anchors

from the stern held the boat fast and swung the bow toward the land. Then they prepared for the next likely move, viz., to drive the wind for a possible stream entering the bay, or, failing that, to run ashore on a sandy beach. Putting up sail, though not a big mainsail, to give them leeway, and letting down the steering oars, the sailors let the ship drive. An unforeseen circumstance prevented the successful outcome of their plans. To the north of the bay lies an island so situated that the waves passing around at either end form a whirlpool within the bay, and this threw the ship out of course. The water shoals rapidly and, though evidently not far from land, the ship ran aground, the fore part burying its keel in the bar and the stern breaking under the impact of the waves rolling shoreward. Under similar conditions and in this bay, was lost the British frigate, *Lively*, August 10, 1810.

Here again in the harbor of Malta was another grain ship, the "Twin brothers," from Alexandria bound for Rome, that had, with what experiences we know not, reached the Malta coast before the storms barred further progress. The island was not a desert island, possibly was one of Rome's many feeders, and, it may be, the sailors of this ship had witnessed the wreck of the ill-fated vessel. On this ship the Centurian, once more with superior authority, embarked the prisoners for Rome.

Touching at Syracuse for three days for cargoes, the ship stopped at Rhegium until the favoring south wind made possible the passage north through the straits of Messina. Puteoli on the Bay of Naples was the regular port for Italy. Thence by land, travel was over the Appian Way, to Rome. Puteoli was the Liverpool of Italy. The independent traveller preferring to go by water to Rome, landed at Puteoli and transferred to a smaller boat for Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber. Here freight boats also unloaded their cargoes, and thither, doubtless, the "Twin Brothers" sailed after disembarking passengers at Puteoli.