

## FOR THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

### Acts 27:1 – 28:31 (28:20)

“For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”

Heavenly Father. Thank you for allowing us through Acts bible study to realize God’s sovereign plan for our lives. Today, you are allowing us to study the last lecture. Let us be encouraged through Paul to carry the chains for the hope of Germany, Europe, the M-World and the whole world and to continue to write the book of Acts until you come again. Use me as your voice to proclaim your word. I thank you and pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Thanks and praise be to God for GLEF 2025 and for the opportunity to study the whole book of Acts deeply. Over the past days, we have heard six meaningful and powerful messages from Acts through our Next Generation missionaries. Through these messages, we could clearly understand how, by the obedience and decisions of faith of the early Christians, the twelve apostles, and Paul, the gospel spread from Jerusalem to the whole world.

Yesterday, through Peter Ryus message, we learned how Paul boldly gave five powerful testimonies of faith before governors and kings and appealed to Caesar. Through God’s promise, *“As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome,”* Paul received comfort and was encouraged to continue to live as God’s witness to the ends of the earth.

In today’s final lesson, we accompany Paul on his voyage to Rome. From a human point of view, he was being transported to Rome as a prisoner in chains. But spiritually, God was fulfilling His plan through Paul’s life—to use him as His chosen instrument for world mission. Because of one shepherd, Paul, who made the decision to be bound to chains for the hope of Israel, the whole of Rome could be saved and the word of God could spread to the entire known world at that time. Let us, like Paul, keep carrying the chains for the hope of God under all circumstances, form one-to-one Bible study teams on campus, and through this, experience spiritual revival across the 1,700 campuses in Germany and Europe—and even in the M-world.

### I. Paul’s voyage to Rome in chains (27, 1-44)

#### 1. A Deceptive Hope (vv 1–20)

Let’s look at verse 1: “When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, who belonged to the Imperial Regiment.” Finally, for Paul the day of departure for Italy had come. In the last lesson, we learned that according to King Agrippa’s judgment, he could have been released, if he had not appealed to Caesar. But Paul had done this so that God’s plan would be fulfilled, to proclaim the gospel all the way to Rome.

Let’s read verses 2 and 3: “We boarded a ship from Adramyttium about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us. The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs.” Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to the centurion Julius. Julius realized that Paul wasn’t just an ordinary prisoner, and so he treated

him kindly. Faithful coworkers of Paul accompanied him, like Aristarchus, a Macedonian whom we know from Acts 19 and 20; and Luke himself, the author of the book of Acts, was also with them.

Verses 3–8 describe the rest of the journey, which we can follow on the map. First, they sailed along the sheltered side of Cyprus, because they were facing headwinds. Then they continued across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, and arrived at Myra in Lycia. There they switched to an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy. Because of the wind, they made slow progress and had difficulty reaching the area of Cnidus. Taking shelter along the coast of Crete, they finally came to a place called Fair Havens.

What we can observe from these verses is that the journey from Caesarea to Fair Havens had already been difficult. Verse 9 tells us that the Day of Atonement was almost over, which means it was likely early October. As is well known for that region, the sailing conditions became increasingly dangerous at that time due to strong winds and storms. Let's look at verse 10: "Men," he said, "I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also." Even though Paul wasn't a trained sailor, he had gained a lot of travel experience through his mission journeys. Based on that, and with his spiritual insight, he clearly saw the risk of continuing and warned the ship's leaders.

Verse 11 says: "But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship." The pilot and the owner appeared to be the experts when it came to sailing. But the centurion didn't realize that they were irresponsibly pursuing their own interests—and in doing so, they put everyone's lives at risk. Fair Havens was just a poor harbor for wintering. From there, one could have easily reached the nearby city of Lasea and stayed there for the winter. However, the leaders and influenced by them the majority wanted to make the longer and riskier journey to Phoenix, a large city, where winter would be more enjoyable. As they thought about that pleasure, they lost all sound judgment and ignored the wise advice of a servant of God.

Let's look at verse 13: "When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete." When a seemingly favorable south wind started to blow, they calculated that it would keep them near the coast and take them to Phoenix. But what happened? Verse 14 says: "Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island." As not unusual during this season, a hurricane-like wind known as the Northeaster suddenly came down from the island and drove them away from the coast into the open sea.

Verses 16–20 describe the crew's desperate struggle in the storm that lasted for days. They tried everything possible. They passed ropes under the ship to hold it together. They lowered the sea anchor to avoid being driven into the sandbanks of the Syrtis. They threw the cargo overboard, and later even the ship's tackle. Let's read verse 20: "When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved." When those on board could no longer control the ship with their strength, they lost all hope and simply let themselves drift. This was the bitter result of following their desires instead of listening to the voice of wisdom.

Here we can learn the curse of disobedience; and the blessing of obedience. Proverbs 1:30-33 says: "Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at

ease, without fear of harm.” The ship, helplessly drifting in the storm, is a metaphor of a sinful life in disobedience to God. People who follow a deceptive, convenient south wind and disobey God end up fighting a hard, lonely battle in the darkness with their own strength. True peace, happiness, and direction come only through obedience to God’s word.

During my medical studies, I followed a convenient south wind leaving Bonn to another city to expand my career options. But in disobedience to God, I experienced what it was like to be directionless, driven by the storm of the world. In this situation my parents gave me one of my life key verses Matthew 6:33: But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Only when I obeyed this word of God, returned to my spiritual home, and chose to work together with God’s servants, was I able to rediscover my true spiritual identity as part of the Next Generation and live as a global spiritual leader. The Next Generation can experience spiritual blessing by obeying God and seeking first the kingdom of God.

In our time, young people often don’t know who they should listen to. So-called life coaches and influencers, who seem to be experts in life, tell us to quickly follow the next convenient “south wind” when things get hard. But the best direction for our lives comes from obedience to God’s word. By obeying Ezekiel 37:10, we can stand against this world’s temptations and experience how the 1,700 campuses in Germany and Europe - even the M-world and the online world - can be conquered through the word of God.

## **2. God’s Grace in the Storm (21-44)**

Let’s read verses 21-24: “And when they had not eaten for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said: ‘Men, you should have listened to me and not set sail from Crete; then you would have avoided this damage and loss. But now I urge you to be courageous; for there will be no loss of life among you, only the ship will be lost. For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, “Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.”’”

In this passage, we learn two qualities of Paul: his leadership and his shepherd’s heart. In the current situation, everyone was desperate and resigned - even those actually responsible. But Paul did not let the desperate situation take over but served everyone as a leader by rebuking and encouraging them. Humanly speaking, Paul, as a prisoner, was at the very bottom of the hierarchy chain. Yet in the crisis, he was the only one who had something to say.

Where did his spiritual assurance and confidence come from? It came from his absolute faith in God’s promise and sovereignty. Paul did not know exactly how they would be saved in this situation, much less how he himself would get to Rome. But Acts 9:15, God’s promise to him, was alive in his heart: “...this man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the people of Israel.” He believed that nothing - not even a shipwreck - could prevent God’s sovereign will for the gospel to come to Rome.

We also learn here that one shepherd with a sense of responsibility makes all the difference for the salvation of many. Let’s read verse 24 again: “And said: Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has given you all who sail with you!” Numerically, Paul was only one person out of 276 (Who is good in mental arithmetic? Which equals 0.36%). But God saw the heart of this one shepherd and saved the lives of everyone on board through him. Among them were people who had even despised Paul. But because, one shepherd, was on board, God was with all of them.

One shepherd makes a difference for a family, a university, a society, and an entire nation. Where there is one shepherd, there is hope and there is the work of God.

When one shepherd gave up his PhD title, young German students and the next generation could be mobilized for world mission and the GLEF. Because of one shepherd M. Point and his family Turkey and the muslim nations have hope to be used as bible nations. Because of one bible teacher, Peter-Josef Chang, God will bless all dental students in Germany. Let us be one shepherd or one shepherdess, through whom God will save many students from the storm of darkness and lead them through salvation in Jesus.

Let's look at verses 27–32 and read verse 27: "But when the fourteenth night had come, as we were drifting across the Adriatic, the sailors sensed they were approaching land at midnight." Finally, there was hope for land. In verses 38–44, we see that they headed for a shallow shore. There the ship broke apart. Those who could swim jumped into the water; the others clung to the wreckage. Luke emphasized that none of the 276 people on the ship perished, but all survived and reached the land, just as God had promised Paul.

Through this event of the shipwreck, God prepared Paul for his ministry in Rome. The challenges in Rome would be even harder. But as God was with the 276 people on the ship, he would also be with hundreds of thousands in Rome and plant the gospel in their hearts. In reality, Paul came to Rome as a prisoner in chains. But spiritually, he came as a leader, shepherd, and conqueror. God has also allowed us to overcome challenges and has worked mightily in and through us. Now let us accept the even greater task and challenge, to courageously proclaim the gospel in the online world and to M-countries and establish spiritual basecamps and headquarters there. May God use each of us the Next generation as leaders and shepherds for our schools, universities, and world mission.

## **II. Paul's Mission in Rome (Acts 28:1–31)**

### **1. For the Hope of Israel: From Malta to Rome (vv. 1–28)**

Let us look at verse 1: "Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta." Malta lies about 80 kilometers south of Sicily and to this day, there is a smaller island belonging to Malta that is called St. Paul's Island. Luke emphasizes that the people of Malta had kind and compassionate hearts toward the exhausted survivors of the shipwreck and welcomed them unconditionally. While gathering brushwood for the fire, a venomous snake fastened itself onto Paul's hand. The Maltese expected Paul to swell up and suddenly fall dead. But Paul calmly shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects, because he had absolute trust in the almighty God.

Let us read verse 11: "After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island—it was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux." After wintering for three months on Malta, Paul and his companions boarded this ship and traveled quickly via Syracuse and Rhegium to Puteoli, a journey that only took a few days. From there, they continued on foot along the Appian Way to Rome, and about 70 kilometers before reaching the city, they were met by some believers at the Three Taverns.

Let us look at verse 16: "When we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him." Though it is only described so briefly, finally, Paul arrived in Rome. With that, his deepest spiritual longing and prayer was fulfilled: to be God's witness in Rome. He was allowed to live by himself until his trial would take place, with a soldier assigned to guard him. From a human

perspective, this situation was depressing. Paul was under house arrest meaning he was not allowed to leave his residence. Moreover his trial was delayed for two years. But Paul was not discouraged by this situation. What **he** saw was that God had prepared the best possible environment for him to do God's mission in Rome. Because Paul had not come to Rome to win a human trial, but to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Let us now look at verses 17-28. After three days, Paul arranged a meeting with the most prominent Jews living in Rome to explain why he had come and to win them as prayer co-workers. They gathered at his place, and Paul spoke to them about the kingdom of God, explaining from the Law of Moses and the Prophets from morning until evening. His goal was by no means to justify himself, but he wanted to convince them of the hope of God.

Let us read the key verse, verse 20: "It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain." For Paul, it was actually humiliating to stand before these Jews while wearing chains. He was a most educated and highly qualified man, having received the best training under Gamaliel, and he was certainly more than equal to them. But he was not fatalistic about it. He did not think that the chains would drag him down or disgrace him. Rather, he was proud of them and boldly said, "It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."

Paul had a very clear reason why he served God's work while being in chains: the hope of Israel. It was God's hope to use His people as a kingdom of priests for world mission, as Exodus 19:6 says: "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." It was God's deep desire for Israel to be a Bible-teaching nation for the whole world. As we heard in the message by Esra Schweitzer, Paul had once been the chief persecutor of Christians. But since he met Jesus personally, he carried God's hope for Israel in his heart. Because Paul understood this hope and was convinced of this hope, he could bear all hardships as a prisoner with joy and dedicate himself fully to God's mission.

Recently, we have come to know many men and women who, for the hope of God, willingly endured suffering—even to the point of martyrdom. Polycarp of Smyrna, one of our Church Fathers, chose not to renounce Christ when he was threatened to give up his faith. Instead, for the hope of Israel, he rather chose to die a martyr's death even at the age of 86. Marie Durand, a young Huguenot woman, was only 19 years old, like Sarah Grace and newly married when she was arrested for her faith. But because of the hope God, she firmly refused to deny Christ, and as a result, had to spend 38 years as a prisoner in a dark tower without any daylight. Her spiritual strength inspired countless others to endure persecution and dedicate their lives for the hope of God.

Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a successful German theology professor. He had to face hardships when he served the discipleship ministry during the Nazi regime and refused to follow them. At the beginning of World War II, an opportunity opened up for him to stay in America during these difficult times, forget everything going on and save himself. But Bonhoeffer chose to gladly carry the chains for the hope of Germany. He did not save himself, but returned, and eventually had to suffer martyrdom in a concentration camp. But because he carried the hope of God in his heart, he said that his death for was him the beginning of life. He encouraged many generations of Christians in Germany to rejoice in suffering and dedicate their lives for the hope of their nation. "Und reichst du uns den schweren Kelch, den bitteren, des Leids, gefüllt bis an den höchsten Rand, so nehmen wir ihn dankbar ohne Zittern aus deiner guten und geliebten Hand. Von guten Mächten wunderbar geborgen erwarten wir getrost, was kommen mag. Gott ist bei uns am Abend und am Morgen und ganz gewiss an jedem neuen Tag."

For the hope of Germany and the Medical Faculty, I, like Paul, may consider my life as a professor worth nothing to me, but dedicate it for the salvation of medical students and for the raising of 120 spiritual leaders among them. Together with my family including my children and the house church, I can boldly testify my life goal before students and professors, to seek first the kingdom of God and to live as a spiritual leader.

For the hope of Germany and Europe, despite obstacles we have committed ourselves through the GLE Forum over the past 8 years now to the continuous training of spiritual leaders who carry God's hope for Europe, the M-world and even online-world in their hearts. Where there is one person who lives with God's hope and willingly endure sufferings, a nation can be saved. Let us not be content with our own salvation, but, like Paul, unwaveringly carry the chains for Germany and Europe to the ends of the earth—and in doing so, experience spiritual revival.

## **2. Paul's One-to-One Bible Study in a Rented House (vv. 30–31)**

Let us look at verses 30 and 31, the two last verses of the book of Acts: "For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance." The book of Acts does not end with a dramatic conversion movement, but with these two short and simple verses describing Paul's one-to-one Bible study ministry. This ministry may have seemed small, but through it, the word of God spread to the ends of the earth.

In conclusion, let us briefly reflect on two points about God's work through Paul's one-to-one Bible study ministry.

First: God's work was carried out through a man of faith who was not dependent on his circumstances. From a human point of view, Paul faced a mountain of obstacles and poor conditions. He was a prisoner, He was under strict guard and could not simply go out to preach God's word. He was also no longer young—he was around 60 years old. How could he possibly serve God's work under such circumstances? But Paul did not remain helpless or fatalistic. Within an impossible situation he looked for and found an opportunity.

By faith, and with God's hope for world mission in his heart, he transformed his small rented house into a One-to-one bible study headquarter. He welcomed all who came to him and taught them about the kingdom of God. Starting with the soldiers who guarded him, the word of God slowly but surely spread—even into the palace of the emperor. God's work does not happen in ideal conditions or through special abilities, but through one person of faith who carries God's hope and mission in their heart, and finds ways to fulfill it.

Second: One-to-one Bible study is the fulfillment of world mission. Paul's work in Rome was not some big megachurch event, but he served the ministry of disciple-making by forming one-to-one Bible study teams. By sharing his life, his testimony, and his hope, some of the people who came to him remained and accepted God's hope for their lives and became Bible teachers, through whom the gospel spread to the whole world. Paul did not see them as individuals, but as nations and multipliers. 1 Person for him was like 10000. For this reason, through one-to-one Bible study, Paul saw the fulfillment of the world mission command from Acts 1:8. Today, the world seems to be fixated on how many numbers and likes you have. But it is not about the number—what matters is whether we engage in life-together fellowship and one-to-one Bible study with one person, so that they can make a personal decision for Jesus and be multipliers.

This was also the principle of UBF. Beginning with one Bible study, more than 2,000 missionaries could be sent out from a former 3<sup>rd</sup> world country to the entire world. One bible-study with Olaf is most important, because he is like a great nation. The bible study of one person - Lydia Point - is most important for pioneering the M-world. World mission begins with one Bible study.

With chapter 28, the book of Acts does not end. Acts 1-28 was only the beginning of God's sovereign redemptive plan for the world, and it served as a catalyst for preaching God's word through numerous heroes of faith—from the New Testament all the way to today. The evangelist John Stott once said: "The Acts of the Apostles is long finished. But the Acts of the followers of Jesus and the next generation, who now walk in their footsteps, will continue to the ends of the earth."

Who is this next generation? We are this next generation. And we may find ourselves in God's wondrous story and the continuation of Acts, and take up our place in it. So let us step into the footsteps of our ancestors of faith—with a clear decision, and vision - and actively participate in writing Acts chapter 29 and beyond. Let us see through GLEF 2025 and more GLEFs to come that God's hope is fulfilled and that the next generation will be bible teachers and missionaries to the 1,700 campuses in Germany and Europe, the M-World and to the ends of the earth.

In today's passage, from a human point of view, Paul was transferred to Rome as a prisoner in chains. But because he carried the hope of Israel deep in his heart he came to Rome a spiritual conqueror, through whom God fulfilled His sovereign will to bring the gospel from Rome to the whole world. Where there is a shepherd and leader who is not bound by circumstances, but who carries the chains for the hope of God, a society can be saved and a nation revived. God may use our Next generation to continue to writing the book of Acts, so that they may be used as history makers for world and M-mission.

Dear heavenly Father,

Thank you that you allowed us to study the book of Acts deeply in seven lessons during GLEF. Thank you that today you have encouraged us through Paul, who carried the chains for the hope of Israel with a clear decision and devoted his life to the one-to-one Bible study ministry. Thank you for blessing GLEF 2025 and continue to bless the Next generation. Raise spiritual leaders and house churches among them for your word to be preached to all nations. I thank you and pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.