



Resources for
Week 5.
Life (and near death!) on the ocean wave.

SETTLING

If in a Small Group, share your experiences of sea voyages, (short channel crossings or long cruises) choose your best and worst memories! If you're looking at this on your own, then reflect upon your experiences and try to work out exactly what it was that made the occasions either truly wonderful or rank awful!

FOCUSING

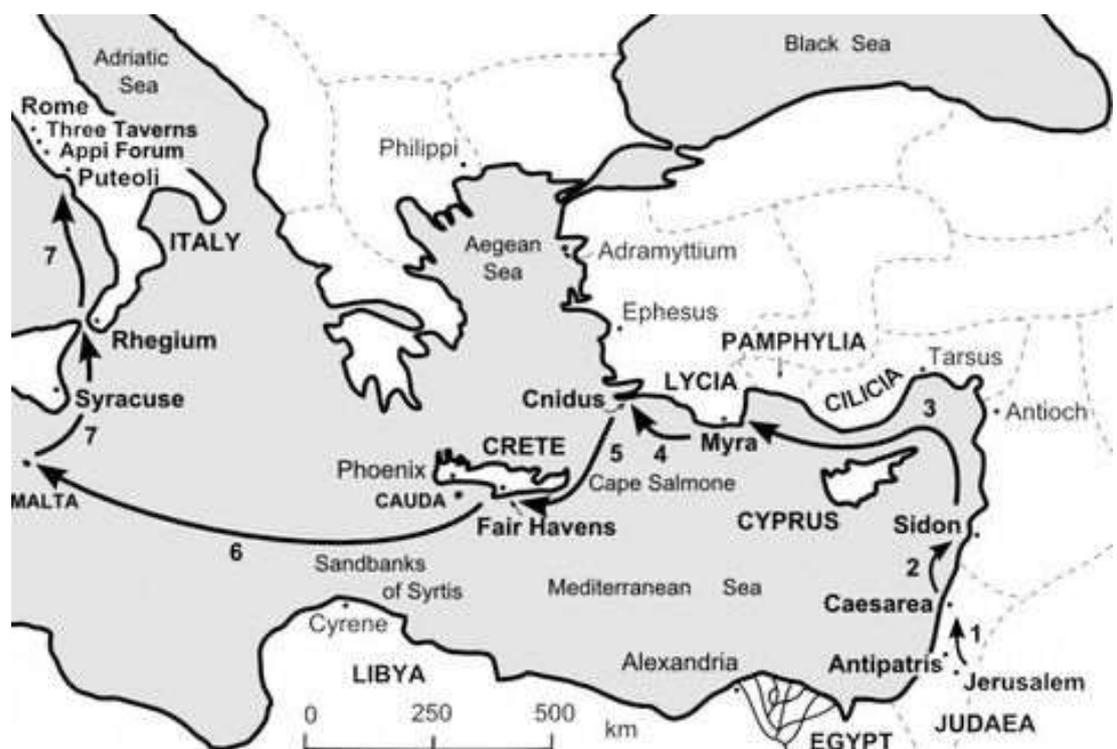
Read slowly through Psalm 107, ideally all of it, but focus on vs 23- 32. Then use the next few minutes to write down a of summary of what the Psalmist is saying. If in a group, share your conclusions with one another. The psalm might trigger a need for contrition about your own experiences as well as a sense of thanksgiving for God's "unfailing love". In the privacy of a time of quiet, reflect before God on your current need of his "unfailing love" and try to identify how God merits your thanksgiving.



Read Acts Chapter 27 vs 1-14

This map might help in making sense of the places mentioned in the passage and is relevant for the next couple of weeks too.

 **N.B.** In a post Covid era, the idea of a "winter sun" cruise in the eastern Mediterranean, might seem appealing, but as Paul discovered, the weather there can be ever so slightly unreliable!



After all the delays in Caesarea, Paul is finally on his way to Rome to meet the Emperor, Nero. The map traces the route that he followed, firstly catching a ship working along the coast from Caesarea northwards towards modern day Turkey. There were no “service” ships in those days so it was a case of negotiating a passage on whatever boat was going your way. It was not “plain sailing” because of a strong head wind blowing down the Aegean Sea from the north and north east. It still blows today and is a seasonal, named wind called, Etesian or Meltemi. Just as in Paul’s day the winds can be strong and disruptive although for first century A.D. sailing ships, they presented real problems.

At the port of Myra, the Roman centurion in command arranged for them to hitch a ride on a ship bound for Rome. As becomes clear later on, this was one big ship, a “super-tanker” of its day carrying grain from the Egyptian part of the empire back to provision the citizens of the capital. Despite its size, the vessel struggles to make meaningful progress against the wind and so the ship’s captain chooses to head west and find some shelter to the south of the island of Crete. Even so progress was still difficult because the season had changed sailing conditions were deteriorating. The festival (and Fast) of Yom Kippur falls in late September so this dates the time off Crete to October. Paul warns of the danger of continuing the journey but is out voted and so the ship sails on along the sheltered coast of the island until the weather changes for the worse.

Read vs 15-26: The Storm

In addition to the tactics adopted before the storm, identify (possibly 8) ways that the ship’s crew try to deal with the difficulties and dangers of the weather. Are there any parallels that you can think of with the way the we might try to deal with “the storms of life”? Consider and discuss how Paul’s contribution might have helped the captain and crew of the ship.

Read vs 27-44: The shipwreck

The inclusion in the narrative of the “we” clauses indicates that Luke was once again journeying with Paul. Luke clearly saw the adventures of this trip as important and includes a lot of detail. If it is appropriate to sub-title Acts – “The acts of the Holy Spirit” what might we point to in the account of the voyage and the shipwreck that reveal the work of God’s Holy Spirit?



Much of the food and goods that we enjoy come to us by sea, either from Europe or further afield. Give thanks to God today for:

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

Take a moment to pray about your own current situation. Consider what practical things you might do as you navigate your way through the challenges of life, and equally how your Christian experience can or should make a difference.

Is there someone who you might help “weather the storms of life”, either by practical advice or sensitive spiritual counsel?

Paul brought hope and encouragement to his fellow travellers. Give thanks for those who have done (or are currently doing) the same for you.

In the end Paul and the others worked out that life mattered more than the ship, it’s equipment or cargo. Pray for someone who needs to discover the “life in all its fulness” that coming to know Jesus offers.