

Acts 27:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

Analysis

And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms—The Greek *bolisantes* (having taken soundings) describes dropping a weighted lead line to measure depth. Twenty fathoms (120 feet) confirmed approaching land. **When they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms**—decreasing depth from twenty to fifteen fathoms proved they neared shore. Luke's nautical precision validates his 'we' sections as genuine eyewitness testimony. This practical seamanship combined with Paul's prophetic word shows God's guidance includes both supernatural revelation and natural wisdom.

Historical Context

A fathom equaled six feet, the span of a man's outstretched arms. Ancient lead lines often had tallow in the bottom to sample the seabed, helping sailors identify location. The decreasing depth indicated they approached Malta's coastline, though in darkness they couldn't see land. Modern soundings confirm Luke's accuracy—the approach to St. Paul's Bay matches these depths.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How do you discern God's guidance through both supernatural direction and practical wisdom?
2. What 'soundings' help you recognize you're approaching God's intended destination?

Interlinear Text

καὶ βολίσαντες εὗρον ὀργυιὰς εἴκοσι βραχὺ δὲ
And **sounded** **and found** **fathoms** **it twenty** **a little further** **and**
G2532 G1001 G2147 G3712 G1501 G1024 G1161

διαστήσαντες καὶ πάλιν βολίσαντες εὗρον ὀργυιὰς
when they had gone **And** **again** **sounded** **and found** **fathoms**
G1339 G2532 G3825 G1001 G2147 G3712

δεκαπέντε·
it fifteen
G1178