

Acts 27:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

Analysis

And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. This verse describes a critical moment during Paul's voyage to Rome. The Greek word for "eaten enough" (*korennymi*, κορέννυμι) means to be satisfied or filled, indicating they ate to full strength after days of fasting due to the storm. This meal followed Paul's prophetic encouragement and the breaking of bread (v. 35), which some scholars see as echoing the Lord's Supper.

"Lightened the ship" (*kouphizō*, κουφίζω) was a desperate measure to keep the vessel afloat. The "wheat" (*sitos*, σῖτος) being cast overboard was likely the ship's cargo destined for Rome—Rome depended heavily on Egyptian grain shipments. This represents a significant financial loss willingly accepted to preserve life.

The passage illustrates providence and priorities. Material possessions, even valuable cargo, must be sacrificed when life is at stake. Paul's faith-filled leadership brought hope to all 276 souls aboard, demonstrating how one faithful servant can impact many. The account foreshadows resurrection themes—through suffering and loss comes salvation, and what seems like disaster (grain lost to the sea) produces deliverance (ship lightened, lives saved). Christ's presence with His people through storms guarantees safe arrival at the destined shore.

Historical Context

Acts 27 records Paul's journey to Rome around 60 AD as a prisoner appealing to Caesar. The detailed nautical language suggests Luke (the author) was an eyewitness on this voyage. The ship was likely an Alexandrian grain freighter—massive vessels that transported wheat from Egypt to Rome, the empire's breadbasket.

Ancient Mediterranean shipping ceased during winter (November-March) due to dangerous storms. Paul warned against sailing (v. 10), but the centurion trusted the ship's pilot instead. The storm described is a "northeaster" (Greek Euroklydon), a violent wind combination still known in the Mediterranean.

The cargo of wheat being jettisoned was economically devastating but necessary. Roman grain ships carried hundreds of tons—enough to feed thousands. The willingness to sacrifice this cargo shows the desperation of their situation. Archaeological discoveries of ancient shipwrecks reveal similar cargos and confirm Luke's accurate nautical knowledge. This historical detail demonstrates Acts' reliability as eyewitness testimony. The centurion Julius' later protection of Paul (v. 43) may reflect gratitude for Paul's guidance that saved all aboard.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What material possessions might God be calling you to 'throw overboard' to preserve spiritual life?
2. How does Paul's faithful leadership in crisis model Christian witness in difficult circumstances?
3. What storms in your life require you to trust God's promises over human wisdom?

4. How can taking spiritual nourishment (like the bread in v. 35) strengthen you for trials ahead?
5. Where do you see God's providence protecting you through losses and difficulties?

Interlinear Text

κορεσθέντες	δὲ	τροφῆς	ἐκούφιζον	τὸ	πλοῖον
enough	And	when they had eaten	they lightened	G3588	the ship
G2880	G1161	G5160	G2893		G4143
ἐκβαλλόμενοι	τὸν	σῖτον	εἰς	τὴν	θάλασσαν
and cast out	G3588	the wheat	into	G3588	the sea
G1544		G4621	G1519		G2281

Additional Cross-References

Jonah 1:5 (Light): Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

Matthew 6:25 (Parallel theme): Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Matthew 16:26 (Parallel theme): For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?