

Paul's Shipwreck

(Acts 27)

Introduction

Have you ever had to wait a long time for God to answer your prayers? Waiting is not always easy. How long has Paul been waiting in jail to go to Rome? (2 years.) How was Paul able to remain faithful to Jesus?

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to have faith to believe the words of Jesus. Remember, Jesus Himself came to Paul while he was in the jail in Caesarea. [Flip back to chapter 23.]

Acts 23:11

*That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, "Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, **you must preach the Good News in Rome** as well."*

God comforted Paul and told him he would go to Rome and testify about Jesus, so Paul hung onto that promise, even though it might have seemed impossible.

In today's lesson we learn that Paul takes a very dangerous journey on a ship across an angry sea. It was getting towards winter and the winds blew strong and the waves were rough. We will learn that when we are in danger, God will help us, if we ask Him.

Let's see how God keeps His hand upon Paul and gives him protection and comfort.

Opening Prayer

Father, Help us to trust that You are always with us and that You have a plan and purpose for our lives and that You are not going to let anything stop Your plans for us until we have completed the mission You have for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

[Teacher, as you teach this lesson, trace the course of this voyage on a Bible map.]

Memory Verse

For the angel of the LORD is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear Him. (Psalms 34:7 NLT)

Lesson

Paul had been in jail for two whole years waiting for God to accomplish His plan. After having several trials—before the Jewish religious leaders, the Roman governor Felix, and the Roman governor Festus—and having no real charges stick against him, Paul demanded that governor Festus let him stand trial before Caesar in Rome.

Chapter 27 tells us about the voyage Paul took to get there.

Acts 27:1

*When the time came, we set sail for **Italy**. Paul and several other prisoners were placed in the custody of a Roman officer named Julius, a captain of the Imperial Regiment.*

A Roman officer named Julius was put in charge of Paul and the other prisoners and he was very kind.

Acts 27:3

*The next day when we docked at **Sidon**, Julius was very kind to Paul and let him go ashore to visit with friends so they could provide for his needs.*

Even though Paul was a prisoner, when the ship reached Sidon [show on map], Julius allowed Paul to go ashore and spend time with his friends.

When they were ready to set sail again, Paul and the others traveling with him returned to the ship.

Acts 27:4

*Putting out to sea from there, we encountered strong headwinds that made it difficult to keep the ship on course, so we sailed north of **Cyprus** between the island and the mainland.*

They were sailing against the winds so they had several days of slow sailing and great difficulty as they struggle along the coastline.

Acts 27:8

*We struggled along the coast with great difficulty and finally arrived at **Fair Havens**, near the town of **Lasea**.*

Paul warned Julius not to travel on until winter was past.

Acts 27:9-11

We had lost a lot of time. The weather was becoming dangerous for sea travel because it was so late in the fall, and Paul spoke to the ship's officers about it. (10) "Men," he said, "I believe there is trouble ahead if we go on—shipwreck, loss of cargo, and danger to our lives as well." (11) But the officer in charge of the prisoners listened more to the ship's captain and the owner than to Paul.

Julius did not listen to Paul's warning. When they set sail, the winds were light, so they thought they were OK, but as they sailed on, things got exciting.

Acts 27:13-15

When a light wind began blowing from the south, the sailors thought they could make it. So they pulled up anchor and sailed close to the shore of Crete. (14) But the weather changed abruptly, and a wind of typhoon strength (called a "northeaster") burst across the island and blew us out to sea. (15) The sailors couldn't turn the ship into the wind, so they gave up and let it run before the gale.

The wind blew the waves so high they looked like mountains. It was blowing so hard that the captain could not turn the ship back. They were caught in the middle of a terrible storm. The waves came crashing down onto the ship. The sailors had to work hard to keep the ship from filling with water. They thought the ship was going to break apart.

To lighten the load, they began to throw everything overboard.

Acts 27:18-20

*The next day, as gale-force winds continued to batter the ship, the crew began throwing the cargo overboard. (19) The following day they even took some of the ship's gear and threw it overboard. (20) The terrible storm raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last **all hope was gone**.*

It was a very dangerous situation. Everyone on the ship was terrified and had given up hope that they would survive this terrible storm.

Ask: How would you feel about being on this ship in this storm?

Paul seems to be the only one that had his mind at rest.

Ask: How was it that Paul had peace in the middle of this storm? (The Holy Spirit gave him comfort and courage.)

At this point, Paul takes charge of the situation. He stood up in front of all the men on the ship and spoke in a loud voice so everyone could hear him over the noise of the storm.

Acts 27:21-22

No one had eaten for a long time. Finally, Paul called the crew together and said, "Men, you should have listened to me in the first place and not left Crete. You would have avoided all this damage and loss. (22) But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down.

Paul encouraged everyone not to be afraid.

Acts 27:23-26

*For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, (24) and he said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul, for **you will surely stand trial before Caesar!** What's more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.' (25) So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. (26) But we will be shipwrecked on an island."*

Paul could have allowed fear to paralyze him. But Paul believed God and spoke words of encouragement to those all around him who were terrified.

Acts 27:27-29

About midnight on the fourteenth night of the storm, as we were being driven across the Sea of Adria, the sailors sensed land was near. (28) They dropped a weighted line and found that the water was 120 feet deep. But a little later they measured again and found it was only 90 feet deep. (29) At this rate they were afraid we would soon be driven against the rocks along the shore, so they threw out four anchors from the back of the ship and prayed for daylight. [Note: 1 fathom = 6 feet]

The sailors weren't thinking of the other passengers on the ship; they only wanted to save their own lives.

Acts 27:30

Then the sailors tried to abandon the ship; they lowered the lifeboat as though they were going to put out anchors from the front of the ship.

The sailors were afraid. They thought the ship was going to crash into the rocks and they were all going to die. So, they tried to sneak off the boat. But the Holy Spirit gave Paul wisdom to know that they were planning to escape so he spoke up and the soldiers listened to him.

Acts 27:31-32

But Paul said to the commanding officer and the soldiers, "You will all die unless the sailors stay aboard." (32) So the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.

At this point, it had been 14 days since anyone had anything to eat. They were weak and exhausted, so Paul encouraged everyone to eat.

Acts 27:33-38

*Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. "You have been so worried that you haven't touched food for two weeks," he said. (34) "Please eat something now for your own good. For **not a hair of your heads will perish.**" (35) Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God*

before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. (36) Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat— (37) all 276 of us who were on board. (38) After eating, the crew lightened the ship further by throwing the cargo of wheat overboard.

Paul assured everyone that not a single one of them would die. So everyone relaxed and had something to eat. After they ate as much as they wanted, they threw the rest of the grain overboard.

Acts 27:39-40

When morning dawned, they didn't recognize the coastline, but they saw a bay with a beach and wondered if they could get to shore by running the ship aground. (40) So they cut off the anchors and left them in the sea. Then they lowered the rudders, raised the foresail, and headed toward shore.

Everyone must have thought that they were out of danger. But suddenly the ship jerked to a stop.

Acts 27:41

But they hit a shoal and ran the ship aground too soon. The bow of the ship stuck fast, while the stern was repeatedly smashed by the force of the waves and began to break apart.

Suddenly everything got crazy. The ship was sinking and people were panicking, especially the guards. If any of the prisoners escaped, the soldier guarding them would be put to death.

Acts 27:42-44

*The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners to make sure they didn't swim ashore and escape. (43) But the commanding officer wanted to spare Paul, so he didn't let them carry out their plan. Then he ordered all who could swim to jump overboard first and make for land. (44) The others held on to planks or debris from the broken ship. So **everyone escaped safely to shore.***

Once again, we see God's kindness and protection of Paul. Julius wanted to save Paul so he told the soldiers not to kill any of the

prisoners. Everyone made it to the beach alive. Not one person on the ship died; everyone escaped safely to shore.

The Holy Spirit enabled Paul to have courage and to trust God in a very frightening situation. Paul's faith in God enabled him to encourage the other passengers on the ship during this very scary time.

God had a plan and purpose for Paul's life and no difficulty was going to stop God's purpose for Paul. And, as God's purpose for Paul's life was being fulfilled, many other lives were blessed and touched by God, as well.

God has a plan and purpose for each one of us. If you are a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will enable you to fulfill that purpose in your life. God wants your faith to grow so you can be a strong witness to share Jesus with others. We will face difficulties at times, but God never leaves us in those difficulties. The Holy Spirit will help you be strong and courageous and to encourage others to trust in God, too.

Maybe you are not a believer yet. Maybe you are like many of the passengers on the ship sailing to Rome. You may be going through a very difficult time in your life and you are scared. You don't have to go through this difficult time alone. God sent His Son Jesus to die for your sins so you can have a right relationship with God.

When you believe in Jesus you are adopted into God's family and will never be alone because the Holy Spirit will live inside your heart. The Holy Spirit will give you the strength and courage you need as you face different circumstances in your day-to-day life. Your courage will encourage others to have faith, too.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You that You give us courage in difficult situations. When we are encouraged and strengthened in our spirits, help us to encourage others around us to have faith in You and to trust You in every circumstance in life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Basket Ball

For every right answer, the child gets three shots at basketball. Each basket is worth 200 points. [You can use a trash can and paper wadded up.]

Use the following questions in a game or discussion.

1. Do you think Paul's life as a Christian was easy or hard? Why? (Encourage their answers.)
2. How do you think Paul was able to keep serving God despite the difficulties? (The Holy Spirit gave him power to continue to follow God.)
3. Where was Paul sailing to? (Vs 1. Rome)
4. Who was the centurion in charge of Paul? (Vs 1. A Roman officer named Julius, a captain of the Imperial Regiment.)
5. How did God show love and kindness to Paul on this trip? (Vs 2. God allowed Paul's friends to travel with him (Luke, Aristarchus). Vs 3. Julius let him spend time with friends. Vs 43. Spared his life when soldiers wanted to kill prisoners.)
6. What advice did Paul give Julius? And did Julius follow Paul's advice? (Vs 10. Stay where they were for the winter. Vs 11. No)
7. Why did the sailors begin to throw the cargo overboard? (Vs 18. To lighten the load.)

8. How did Paul encourage the people on the ship when it was very frightening and everyone had given up hope of being saved? (Vs 22-24. He shared God's message of promise with them.)
9. What did the sailors try to do because they were so afraid for their lives? (Vs 30. They tried to sneak off the ship in lifeboats.)
10. How did the soldiers stop the sailors from sneaking off the ship? (Vs 32. The soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.)
11. At about day 14 of this violent storm, what did Paul urge everyone to do? (Vs 33. Paul urged everyone to eat.)
12. How many people were traveling on the ship? (Vs 37. 276)
13. Why did the soldiers want to kill the prisoners? (Vs 42. So they wouldn't escape. They knew the penalty for letting a prisoner escape was death!)
14. What did the commanding officer, Julius, order everyone to do? (Vs 43. Jump overboard and make for land.)
15. How did God show these men on the ship that His promises could be trusted? (Vs 44. Not one person died in the shipwreck.)
16. Who are some people you could encourage? What could you tell them about God to encourage them to trust Him today?

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