



LESSON 38

God protects Paul

ACTS 27:1-44



Trust God to keep His promises.



“And he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told” (Acts 27:24–25).

Supporting Truths

1. God is in control over nature and trouble.
2. God gives good promises.
3. God keeps His promises.
4. God makes sure the gospel spreads.
5. Godly leaders trust God’s promises and providence.

Objectives

1. Describe the storm.
2. State two promises God made to Paul.
3. Explain how God was faithful.
4. Explain God’s providence in displaying the gospel through trouble.
5. Evaluate Paul’s leadership based on God’s promises.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God protects Paul • Acts 27:1–44



Lesson Summary

God promised that Paul would tell about Jesus in Rome, but a terrible storm threatened to kill him. During the storm God affirmed His promise and added that everyone on board would be saved. Because God said it, Paul believed, and because Paul believed, he proved to be a godly leader trusted by all the others. Then God did just what He had promised—He saved everyone. God glorified Himself by proving faithful, and Paul glorified God by being a faithful leader.

Spotlight on the Gospel

God used a storm to give Paul an opportunity to display God’s goodness, power, and faithfulness to those onboard the ship. Because of Jesus’ promise, and because of faithful men like Paul, the gospel has spread even to us. This gospel calls us to repent, and to trust Jesus to give us eternal life, just as Paul trusted Him to save him from the storm. When we do, God will shine His gospel through us just as He did through Paul.

LAST WEEK



Paul preaches in Athens

Acts 17:16–34

THIS WEEK



God protects Paul

Acts 27:1–44

NEXT WEEK



Paul testifies to the
gospel in Rome

Acts 28:11–31

THE GOSPEL SPREADS TO THE REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH

Lesson Commentary

Trust God to keep His promises.

The book of Acts is about God spreading the gospel of Jesus from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). God did this through apostles equipped with the Word of God and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:27; Acts 1:3–8). He especially used Paul, but then Paul was put in prison in Judea. Would this stop the gospel from spreading? Not at all. In fact, Jesus promised Paul that he would be a witness about Jesus far away in Rome (Acts 23:11). Two years later, after governor Felix, governor Festus, and King Herod Agrippa II all refused to release Paul, Paul appealed to Caesar. This meant that Festus had to send him to stand trial in Rome (25:11–12). But if God’s plan was to have Paul tell about Jesus in Rome, why did He allow a deadly storm on the way? According to His *providence*, or His *care and control*



THINK ABOUT IT

Honor Jesus not just in your final goal, but also in how you get there.

over creation, God sent the storm to glorify Himself as the promise-keeping God, and Paul made sure to display God’s glory through his godly leadership.

God used a storm to get people’s attention (27:1–20)

At Caesarea, Paul and some other prisoners were assigned to a centurion named Julius (27:1). Two of Paul’s companions, Luke (the author of Acts) and Aristarchus, accompanied Paul on his journey (27:2). On the first day they sailed north from Caesarea to Sidon. The centurion Julius “treated Paul kindly” and allowed him to leave the ship to visit the church in

Sidon (27:3). Already Paul had earned the centurion’s trust. Paul’s trustworthy character would soon allow him to lead everyone on the ship for the glory of Christ.



THINK ABOUT IT

Godly leaders are trustworthy, and God uses them to lead others to Jesus.

Because it was fall, the weather was already getting bad. This forced them to sail near the coast of Cyprus



until they got to Myra in modern-day Turkey (27:4–5). There in Myra they got on a different ship, one carrying grain from Egypt to Rome (27:6). Eventually they came to Fair Havens in Crete where they waited for better weather (27:7–8). But since the Fast (the Day of Atonement) was already passed (27:9; cf. Lev 23:26–32; Zech 7:3), it was October, maybe later. Sailing on the Mediterranean was risky from mid-September to mid-November and deadly from mid-November to February. In stormy weather, the Mediterranean can have waves over 30 feet tall! Paul, who had already experienced three shipwrecks (2 Cor 11:25), warned the centurion not to sail (Acts 27:10). Unfortunately, the centurion did not listen (27:11), hoping to make it to a more comfortable harbor in Phoenix (27:12). But God was in control. He would arrange circumstances so that the centurion and everyone else would listen to Paul’s wise message.

As they sailed toward Phoenix, a huge storm blew the ship away from Crete (27:13–15). They quickly prepared for the storm, and they even threw some cargo and even the ship’s tackle overboard (27:16–19). Since the storm blocked out even the sun and stars, the sailors could not track where they were. They were now lost in the storm, and they gave up hope of surviving (27:20). But this was all under God’s control, for He controls and cares for all creation (Job 36:26–32; Ps 145:15–16). In His providence, God sent a storm to create an opportunity for Paul to display God’s glory.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God protects Paul • Acts 27:1–44



Paul led by faith in God's promise (27:21–38)

Now that their own wisdom was at an end, Paul spoke up. Since he had been right not to sail in the first place, he argued they should listen to him now (Acts 27:21). How could Paul, who was just a prisoner, speak with such conviction? Because he was not trusting his own opinions. Instead, he was relying on God's promises. That night God had promised him two things: first, Paul would survive because God wanted him to preach to Caesar; second, everyone else would survive for Paul's sake (27:24).

This promise is the turning point of the story and the key truth of the passage. First, it shows that God is **faithful**: *He fulfills His promises just as He says* (2 Cor 1:20). We are not Paul, and we do not have a promise that we will preach in Rome. But we do have many good promises (2 Pet 1:3–4), and we can trust God to keep them all. In particular, we can trust God to be with us and give us success when we are committed to being faithful witnesses about Jesus (Matt 28:19–20). And we can also trust Him to give us the ability to be faithful witnesses, without sin ruining our testimony (1 Cor 10:13).

Second, God's promise to Paul shows God's providence as He causes the gospel to spread (Matt 16:18). He allowed the storm in order to force the sailors to stop trusting themselves. He also controlled the exact nature of the storm in order to spare Paul, and He saved Paul so that Paul could tell about Jesus in Rome. The book of Acts is all about God arranging everything just right

to spread His gospel. And while we are not apostles, we have the same mission to tell about Jesus (1 Pet 2:9). As we do, we can trust God will give us success in His way and in His time.



THINK ABOUT IT

God commands even the lightning where to strike (Job 36:32).

Third, the others on the ship were saved for Paul's sake (Acts 2:24). For the sake of the righteous, God often shows mercy to the wicked (Gen 18:23–32). Even just one righteous man can make the difference between many being saved or destroyed (Ezek 22:30). It is possible that through Paul's faithful witness, God's promise included not just physical life, but even spiritual life for many of those on the ship. We also can witness faithfully, knowing that through us God can save many.

Fourth, God's promise is the foundation of Paul's godly leadership. Because Paul believed God's promise, Paul encouraged the men that they would survive. Also, because of his faith, Paul remained calm when the rest were afraid (Acts 27:29). The sailors were so afraid that they tried to abandon the ship (27:30), but by this point Paul, the prisoner, had become the real leader of the ship. The centurion listened to Paul and everyone followed Paul's example and ate (27:32, 35–36). Godly leadership starts by being convinced of God's promise. This allows the godly leader to be calm enough to care for the needs of others. This also motivates him to direct attention back to God, like Paul did (27:35).

God saved everyone just as He had promised (27:39–44)

As they listened to Paul, the men on the ship gained hope. They even saw an island to land on, and they lightened the ship so that they could sail into shallow water right up onto the beach (27:38–39). But then their hope was crushed again when they crashed into a reef hidden under water (27:41). God used this as yet another opportunity to show His power through Paul. Out of respect for Paul, Julius kept all the prisoners alive, and everyone survived, just as God had promised (27:42–44). Then, after a brief stay on Malta (28:1–11), Paul went on to Rome (28:14), just as God had promised.

THINK ABOUT IT

The prayer of a righteous person is powerfully effective (Jas 5:16).



Lesson Outline

Trust God to keep His promises.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. A huge storm threatened to stop Paul from reaching Rome (27:1–20).
2. God promised that Paul would tell about Jesus in Rome (27:23–24).
3. God promised to save Paul's shipmates for Paul's sake (27:24b).
4. God saved everyone just as He had promised (27:39–44).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God used a storm to get people's attention (27:1–20).
 - Even as a prisoner, Paul earned the centurion's trust (27:1–3).
 - Bad weather kept the ship from sailing before the stormy season (27:4–8).
 - Paul warned not to sail, but the men did not listen (27:9–13).
 - A terrible storm made them all lose hope (27:14–20).
2. Paul led by faith in God's promise (27:21–38).
 - Paul gained respect because he had been right not to sail (27:21).
 - God reaffirmed that Paul would live to preach in Rome (27:24a).
 - God graciously promised to save all the others too (27:22–26).
 - Paul was wise: he kept the sailors from leaving and urged all to eat (27:27–38).
3. God saved everyone just as He had promised (27:39–44).
 - The ship hit a reef and began to break apart (27:39–41).
 - The centurion kept the prisoners from being killed (27:42–43).
 - Everyone got safely to the island (27:43–44).





Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3-5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Where was Paul sailing to?**
Rome.
- 2. What scary thing happened on the way?**
A huge storm was about to wreck the ship.
- 3. What two things did God promise Paul during the storm?**
God promised Paul would still preach in Rome, and that everyone else would be saved too.
- 4. What happened to the ship and everyone on it?**
The ship crashed, but everyone made it to Malta and survived.



Ages 6-11 Lesson Questions

- 1. Why was Paul a prisoner?**
He was arrested in Jerusalem for disturbing the Jews by his preaching. He was never released because the governors there wanted a bribe, not justice. So Paul appealed to Caesar.
- 2. How did the centurion show he trusted Paul while at Sidon?**
Julius allowed Paul to go see his friends there.
- 3. How did Paul show wisdom and boldness in Fair Havens?**
Even though he was just a prisoner, he spoke up and said it was foolish to sail during stormy winter weather.
- 4. What did God use to get the men on the ship to stop trusting themselves?**
A huge storm.
- 5. How long were they caught in the storm?**
Fourteen days (Acts 27:33).
- 6. Why did Paul lead with such confidence, even though only a prisoner?**
He found strength not in himself, but in the promises of God.
- 7. How did Paul care for the needs of others?**
He encouraged them to eat, and he prevented the sailors from abandoning everyone else.
- 8. How did Paul's godly character save all the prisoners at the end?**
Julius kept the prisoners alive because he wanted to keep Paul alive.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES

Hold up a picture of a rainbow. What promise did God make to Noah, his family, the animals, and all future generations? That He would not destroy the earth again with a flood (Gen 9:8–17). What is a promise (God always does what He says He will do)? In today's lesson, God makes a promise with the apostle Paul. Do you think God will keep His promise? Does God always keep His promises?

PROMISE KEEPER

Make a promise to the children at the beginning of class. Talk about things you are going to do to help you remember to keep it: write a note on the board, write a note on your hand, tie a string around your finger, set a reminder in your phone, ask the class to remind you, ask another teacher to remind you, etc. Do people sometimes forget to keep their promises? In today's lesson, God makes a promise to Paul. Do you think He will remember to keep it?



TOSSED TO AND FRO

To illustrate Paul's ship being tossed to and fro, take a huge sheet and lay it across the middle of the classroom. Place a soft ship in the middle of the sheet, and instruct the children to gather around and place both hands upon the sheet. As the class slowly begins to wave the sheet up and down, the ship will begin to be tossed back and forth. As the tossing of the sheet intensifies, explain to the children the nature of what was happening to Paul and his ship in today's lesson.

TRUSTING GOD'S PROMISES

In today's lesson, Paul is calm and brave when all the other people on the ship are upset and afraid. How was Paul able to be so strong? He trusted God's promise. Illustrate this with a length of wood four feet long by four inches wide and two inches tall. Have the children try to walk the entire length without falling off. Now offer your hand to guide them while they walk. Did your hand make it easier to keep your balance? So do God's promises when we trust them.



SAVED FROM THE STORM

Materials: White paper. Scissor, brown copy paper, crayons, light blue cardstock, yellow copy paper, glue stick.

Directions: Use your hand to make the shape of a boat on the brown copy paper. Cut it and glue it to the light blue cardstock. Cut three sail-shaped pieces of white paper and glue them to the boat. Make some thunderbolts with the yellow copy paper and glue them to the cardstock. (You can also make the boat using your hand and brown paint.)

Saved from the Storm



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God protects Paul • Acts 27:1–44



AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

WHAT IS A BROKEN PROMISE?

What's another name for a broken promise? A lie. When someone is unable to keep a promise, they fail to do what they said they would do. This should cause us to think carefully about every promise we make. It also points out something amazing about God: He never lies (Num 23:19; Titus 1:2). He never fails to keep His promises! If God says it, He will do it.

METAL BOATS, PART 1

Before the lesson, split the class into groups. Give each group some aluminum foil, straws, and tape. Ask them to build a boat. The challenge is to build a boat that can hold the most pennies without sinking. After the boats are built, test each boat to see how many pennies it can hold. Set the winning boat aside to use as an illustration during the lesson.



ILLUSTRATE

PINKY SWEAR/FINGERS CROSSED

Do the children know what it means to “pinky swear”? A pinky promise is the entwining of the little fingers to show that a promise has been made. Why do people do this? Does this guarantee that someone will keep their promise? What does it mean when someone has their “fingers crossed” when they make a promise? Does crossing your index and middle finger really make it okay to break your promise? Finally, what do these two gestures show about us? We cannot be trusted to keep our word. In contrast, does God ever need to “pinky swear” or “cross fingers”? Why not?

METAL BOATS, PART 2

Fill the winning boat (see “Metal Boats, Part 1” in Introduction) with as many pennies as it can hold without sinking. Make progressively larger waves and watch what happens: the waves crash over the sides of the boat and sink it. Empty the boat and fill it with pennies again. This time, take out all but one of the pennies, illustrating how the crew threw the cargo overboard to lighten the boat. Make waves again and watch what happens. Was the boat able to stay afloat longer?



APPLY

STORM IN THE SEA

See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheets, crayons, tape, scissors, craft stick.

Directions: Color all the images. Cut the boat and the people. Tape the extremities of the boat. Use a craft stick to make the mast, tape it in the boat and behind the sail. Cut the dotted line in the “Storm in the Sea” page. Tape a craft stick at the bottom of the page to move it.

Storm in the Sea
See Year 3 Craft Book, Book 2



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

CASH ONLY, PLEASE

Hold up a check and ask the children what you're holding. This check is a promise that you're going to pay for your purchase. So why do many private sellers not accept personal checks? For example, many people selling cars will only accept cash or a certified check (a check that is guaranteed by the bank). Many private sellers won't accept personal checks because people fail to keep their promise to pay. They write a check, but there isn't enough money in their bank account to cover the cost of the purchase—it "bounces." However, when God writes a check (makes a promise), it never bounces.

GOOD INTENTIONS

Have the children ever experienced the disappointment that comes with a broken promise? Many times the person had good intentions, but he or she was not able to follow through. They wanted to keep their promise, but something prevented them from keeping it (weather, finances, sickness, death, etc.). It is not this way with God. He is able to keep every promise because He is all powerful (omnipotent) and completely in control of all things (sovereign). There is nothing that can prevent Him from keeping His promise.



ILLUSTRATE

ADRAMYTTIUM SHIP

Using the internet or Bible encyclopedia, show the children pictures of the type of ship that Paul would have used to sail to Rome. Point out the differences between this type of ship and modern-day ocean liners.

HIGH REGARD

Even though Paul was a prisoner, he was highly respected by the centurion Julius and his ship-mates (Acts 27:3, 21, 31–37, 43). Paul's integrity and commitment to God elevated him in the sight of others. His respect and responsibility is similar to the treatment Joseph received in prison when the keeper of the prison put Joseph, a prisoner, in charge of everything and everyone else (Gen 39:20–23)!



APPLY

IS THAT PROMISE FOR ME?

In today's lesson, God keeps his promise to bring Paul safely to Rome. This promise was specifically given to Paul and concerned only him and the other people on board the ship. This is an important principle to remember when reading the Bible. Some promises God has made with all people, but some promises refer to a specific person or group of people. Illustrate this by talking about different promises from the Bible. Identify to whom God made these promises. For example, God's promise not the flood the entire earth was made to all people (Gen 9:8–17). However, God's promise about giving Abraham and Sarah a son was given only to them (17:15–21). Sometimes God makes a promise to a specific group of people, as He does with the Israelite exiles in Jeremiah 29:11. Consider also God's promise in Romans 8:28 "that all things work together for good," given to "those who love God" (believers).