

PAUL SHIPWRECKED

Acts 27:1 - 28:11

STRUCTURE

Key-person: Paul

Key-location: Onboard a ship to Rome

Key-repetitions:

- Difficulties: they set out to sea and the wind didn't allow them to hold their course (Ac 27:6); sailing became dangerous (Ac 27:6-8); Paul warned of disaster if they continued the voyage (Ac 27:9-10); a fierce wind came (Ac 27:14); men went without food (Ac 27:21, 33); they were shipwrecked (Ac 27:39-41); soldiers planned to kill the prisoners but the centurion kept them from doing it (Ac 27:42); a poisonous snake fastened itself on Paul's hand (Ac 28:3); the father of the island's chief official was sick (Ac 27:7-8).
- Paul spoke: he warned that they would face a disaster at sea (Ac 27:9-10); he promised that God would save all the lives on the ship (Ac 27:21-25); before the shipwreck, he encouraged all to eat (Ac 27:33); he prayed for the father of the island's chief official (Ac 28:8).

Key-attitudes:

- Desperation in the storm.
- Paul's warning and encouragement.
- Relief after storm.

Initial-situation:

Paul was in Jerusalem and Jews from Asia falsely accused Paul of bringing non-Jews into the temple courtyard. A mob seized Paul and began to beat him. The Roman commander rescued and arrested Paul. The crowd kept shouting, "Kill him!"

The commander discovered that more than forty Jews conspired to kill Paul, and he sent Paul to Governor Felix in Caesarea. Felix wanted to do the Jews a favor, so he left Paul in prison for two years. Festus replaced Governor Felix. The Jews requested for Felix to send Paul to Jerusalem for trial. Paul requested to be tried by Emperor Caesar. Festus agreed to send Paul to Rome to be judged by the emperor.

Initial-problem:

Paul and other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius. They boarded a ship and put out to sea headed for Italy.

Final-situation:

Paul and his traveling companions were shipwrecked on the Island of Malta. The islanders honored Paul and his companions.

BIBLE STORY

Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius. Luke and Aristarchus traveled with Paul. They boarded a ship and put out to sea headed for Italy. The wind did not allow them to hold their course. With difficulty they came to Fair Havens on the island of Crete. Sailing became dangerous. Paul warned, "We're going to face a disaster for the cargo, the ship, and our lives if we continue the voyage." However, the centurion followed the advice of the pilot and the ship's owner. The harbor was unsuitable to spend the winter. The majority decided to sail on, hoping to reach Phoenix and winter there (Ac 27:1-12).

A gentle south wind began to blow and they put out to sea. But then a fierce wind, called the "Northeaster," swept down from the island. The ship was caught in the storm and was driven by the wind. Fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along. They threw the cargo and the ship's tackle overboard. Neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging. They gave up all hope of being saved.

The men went a long time without food. Paul stood up and said, "You should have taken my advice and not have sailed from Crete. Now I urge you to have courage. No one will lose his life. Only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel from the God I belong to and serve, stood beside me and said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar. God promises to save the lives of all who sail with you.'"

Around midnight on the fourteenth night, the sailors sensed they were approaching land. Fearing that they would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.

Just before dawn, Paul urged all of them to eat. He said "For the last fourteen days you haven't eaten anything. You need food to survive." Paul took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. Altogether there were 276 onboard. After eating as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

Daylight came. They did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach. They decided to try to run the ship aground. They cut loose the anchors and untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and the stern was broken into pieces by the pounding of the surf.

The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. However, the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their plan. The centurion ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. He ordered the rest to follow on planks or on pieces of wood from the ship. Everyone reached land safely (Ac 27:13-44).

The island was called Malta. The islanders showed kindness to the shipwrecked victims and built a fire because it was raining and cold. Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and put it on the fire. The heat drove a poisonous snake out of the brushwood and the snake fastened itself on Paul's hand. The islanders saw the snake hanging from Paul's

hand. They said to each other, "This man must be a murderer. He escaped from the sea, but justice won't allow him to live." Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. When nothing happened to Paul, the islanders changed their minds and said Paul was a god.

Publius was the chief official of the island. Publius' father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went to his father, prayed, placed his hands on him, and healed him. Then the rest of the sick on the island came and were healed. The islanders honored Paul and his companions (Ac 28:1-10).

After three months on the island, Paul and his companions put out to sea in a ship which had wintered at the island (Ac 28:11).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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| 1. What catches your attention in the story? | 6. How have you faced similar problems? |
| 2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand? | 7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 3. Who are the main characters in the story? | 8. What does the story tell about God? |
| 4. What problems did the characters face? | |
| 5. How did the characters face their problems? | |

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What warning did Paul give fellow travelers about the danger of sailing from Fair Havens?
2. When have you received and ignored good advice that you later regretted not taking?
3. When the travelers were caught by the fierce storm, how did Paul's words and example help his fellow travelers?
4. Who helped you the most during a time when you felt that your life was driven by fierce winds over which you had no control?
5. What can you learn about facing problems from the example of how Paul faced the storm at sea?
6. How can Christians help other people face fierce personal storms over which they have no control?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Dedicated Christians can face desperate, undesirable situations.** Paul was faithfully serving God when he faced false accusations (Ac 21:27-29), had enemies who tried to kill him (Ac 23:12-15), experienced a long delay in prison (Ac 24:26-27), survived a fierce storm at sea (Ac 27: 13-27), survived a shipwreck (Ac 27:39-44), and endured two years under house arrest while waiting in Rome to be judged by the emperor (Ac 28:30).

2. **Decisions made by others may put Christians in a desperate situation for which they are not personally responsible; however, they are responsible for their reactions.** Paul warned the centurion, the ship's pilot, and others that the voyage would be disastrous. They didn't listen to Paul and set sail. As a result, all the travelers experienced a fierce storm and being shipwrecked. During the storm Paul prayed, received a promise from God that no one would be lost (Ac 27:22-24). Paul transmitted to others the word of encouragement from God (Ac 27:21-26). Also, he encouraged all to eat so they would have physical strength to struggle against the waves (Ac 27:33-36).
3. **The person who trusts God and the word of God can encourage others who are in desperate situations.** When their ship was in danger of sinking, Paul encouraged his traveling companions with his trust in God and the certainty that God does what he promises (Ac 27:22-26).
4. **Christian leaders need to be both spiritual and practical.** During the trip to Rome, Paul showed his spiritual side: he fasted (Ac 27:9); he prayed during the storm and received a promise from God that no one would be lost (Ac 27:22-24); and he transmitted to others the word of encouragement from God (Ac 27:21-26). Nevertheless, Paul also showed his practical side. He encouraged all to eat so they would have physical strength to struggle against the waves (Ac 27:33-36).
5. **Sometimes an insignificant person has opportunity to assume leadership and greatly influence others.** Paul boarded the ship as an unimportant prisoner. However, he unexpectedly assumed command of the ship during the storm at sea (Ac 27:9-11, 21-26, 30-36).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Series of Tableau:

- 1st Tell the story of Paul's shipwreck.
- 2nd Ask volunteers to dramatize the story with a series of frozen images. Assign volunteers to represent the following characters in the story:
 - Paul.
 - Roman centurion.
 - Ship's pilot.
 - A sailor.
- 3rd Retell the story with drama participants standing around the performance area. When the storyteller pauses during the narration, drama participants interpret that narrated event by stepping into the performance area and establishing a frozen image in relation to one another until the tableau is complete. This means that they will freeze (stand still) and depict with their

facial expressions, hand gestures, and body positions what happened in that scene.

4th Pause in storytelling for a tableau after narrating the following events:

- Paul warned of disaster if they continued their voyage.
- During the storm, Paul encouraged the sailors and fellow travelers and urged them to eat.
- Paul healed the sick on the island after the shipwreck.

At the end of each tableau interlude, drama participants resume standing around the performance area and the storyteller resumes narrating the story.