

### *The Unexpected Shipwreck*

1. Think of a time when you made plans that you thought were from the Lord—and then had to watch them change. What was your attitude?

***Bow in Prayer:*** “Father God, enable us to fully engage our hearts and minds in this amazing passage from Acts. May our eyes remain focused on You during the vivid array of dramatic events that continue to unfold.”

*As we begin this lesson Paul is a prisoner, on his way to stand trial before Caesar in Rome. Thus, his long-delayed desire to preach the Gospel in Rome is a step nearer to its fulfillment!*

Carefully **read** Acts 27:1-26. It is believed that they boarded ship in October A.D. 59—late in the fall to be on the open seas.

The story of Paul’s voyage gives us a fascinating glimpse into ancient sea travel. Arranging passage for Rome was very different from anything we would experience in today’s world. There were no ships that were strictly passenger ships and no regular schedules, so the centurion had to arrange passage in whatever way he could. The ship on which they traveled first came from *Adramyttium*, a port on the western coast of Asia Minor, not far from Troas.

**From Caesarea to Fair Havens** (Review Acts 27:1-8.)

2. From verses 1-3 and 27:43, what do we know about the centurion in charge?
3. How might Paul have been different from the other prisoners on board?
4. What does Luke tell us about Paul’s traveling companions? (Compare Acts 19:29, 20:4; Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 24.)
5. What do you think it says about Paul that Julius let him go see his friends (27:3)?
6. What happened after the ship set sail from Sidon (verses 4-6)?

7. According to Acts 27:7-8 what hindered their rapid progress? [*Trace their voyage from Caesarea to Fair Havens on Map 7.*]
8. What does Luke reveal about the time frame and the conditions on this leg of the journey (verse 9)?
9. What crucial decision had to be made at Fair Havens? What was Paul's advice (verse 10)?

*Paul isn't really speaking as a prophet of God but as an experienced traveler on the waters of the Mediterranean. He made 11 voyages—traveling at least 3,500 miles—before he set sail for Rome. (Consult 2 Corinthians 11:25 for additional information about Paul's sailing experience.)*

10. What influenced the centurion's decision not to stay where they were safe (Acts 27:11-13)?

**From Fair Havens to Malta** (*Read and carefully observe Acts 27:13-28:1.*)

A good start was made from Crete, but the ship quickly encountered great difficulty in a storm.

11. a. List all the factors that made the situation desperate (verses 14-20). (Note the descriptive adjectives and verbs.)
  - b. What frantic measures were taken to save the ship?
  - c. How deep was the crew's despair? Note how many men were on the ship (verse 37).
12. When all hope was lost Paul urged his fellow travelers to take courage. On what does Paul base his appeal to keep up their bravery (verses 21-26)?

13. What was confirmed to Paul through the angel of God? (Compare Acts 23:11.)

14. How does God's plan for Paul benefit the other passengers?

15. How has God used a disaster in your life for ministry?

**Personal Reflection:** God's Word contains scores of promises of His comfort and care for us in desperate times—when we feel like our life has been shipwrecked. But they only benefit us if we *believe* them. Does your faith in God remain steadfast and strong when confronted by life's tragedies? Do you *believe* God in the darkest hours, as Paul did?

16. What happened on the fourteenth night about midnight as they continued to be blown across the Adriatic Sea (Acts 27:27)?

17. Fearing, in the darkness, that they would soon be wrecked upon the unavoidable approaching rocks—what did the crew do (verses 28-29)?

**Note:** *Dropping the anchors of the ship would halt their momentum until they could get their bearings at daylight.*

Paul then notices (when the captain does not) an attempt by some of the sailors to flee the ship. The thought of remaining on a sinking ship seemed like sheer madness to them.

18. How was Paul's third intervention on this voyage received? What was the outcome in verses 31-32)?

**Life Lesson:** No matter how desperate our situation seems, ultimate safety is found in remaining in God's will. It is far better to be with God in the midst of danger than to be without God in a place of apparent safety. Do you believe this in your heart of hearts? Please comment below.

19. Picture the scene in verses 33-38. How did Paul's status change during the course of the voyage?

When daylight came an unfamiliar land mass appeared. Luke gives us a detailed account of the way in which the ship was beached. **Reread** verses 39-44.

With the front of the ship stuck fast in the mud and clay—the rear of the ship began to disintegrate in the pounding force of the waves.

20. a. As the ship was breaking apart beneath them, what did the soldiers who were charged with the responsibility for the prisoners plan to do? And why?

- b. For what reason were the soldiers prevented from carrying out their plan?

At this point it was every man for himself—but the evacuation plan worked—all 276 men on board reached land safely, just as God had promised!

*From the moment they boarded the doomed ship, to that cold wild morning when it broke up on the shore there was no miracle. No divine power calmed the sea, as some years previously Galilee's tempest had subsided in recognition of her Master's voice. No angelic powers conveyed the ship unscathed into port. All the passengers and crew were saved, but only after two weeks and more of agonized suffering and a final inglorious, hair-raising scramble from the wreck through the surf to the shore. -D.Thomas*

But in the midst of the storm there was the faithful voice of the apostle—a prisoner who could have sought a way to escape his captors but instead yielded to the providence of God that unfolded before him. *Paul's presence on the ill-fated ship made a difference in the lives of many people!*

21. As you make your own journey through life what have you gleaned from this chapter that arouses in you a desire to pour your life out for others—for the glory of God?!