

Lesson 33 – Acts 27:1-44

Shipwreck!

Good leadership is an admired ability that has prevented untold disasters. Whether doing a science lab project or constructing a skyscraper, good leadership can save the day.

Acts 27 details how Paul exercised leadership, even though he was not the ship's captain or even an experienced sailor. Paul was just a prisoner on a ship carrying 276 passengers, yet he was willing to speak up. His faith, practical advice, and contagious courage would make him a leader during a perilous adventure. It was a time for Paul to keep his head when those around him were losing theirs.

Mediterranean Sea Travel

Nautical and meteorological details recorded in Acts 27 are verified by historical data.

- Fall westerly winds prevented ships from sailing directly westward from Caesarea to Rome. Instead ships would sail north along the coastline to get above Cyprus where currents and the Turkish land breezes aided the ships.
- Mediterranean Sea travel was dangerous in the fall and completely inadvisable in the winter due to intense fog and severe storms.
- Straight north of Alexandria, Egyptian grain ships would stop in Myra (v.5) before turning west to Rome.
- Soundings were taken to determine how close a ship was to land (v.28). Archaeologists have found lead weights used in ancient ships when performing a sounding. These hollowed out weights were attached to the end of lines at incremental lengths and filled with grease. When the weights touched the floor they would collect rocks and debris.

[TM note: We know it was fall because the Day of Atonement was over (v.9).]

Into the Word: Acts 27:1-44

The final stage of Paul's journey to Rome is about to begin.

1. The passengers listed in verses 1-3 are:
 - *Paul* and some *other prisoners*
 - *Luke*, believed to be the author of Acts, includes himself
 - *Aristarchus*, Macedonian of Thessalonica [TM note: The same man we met in the theater in Ephesus in Acts 19:29]
 - *Julius*, a centurion of the Augustan cohort

Julius was a Roman centurion. He was under no obligation to be kind to a prisoner like Paul. However, he treated Paul well and allowed him to be cared for by his companions. Since we know that Luke was a doctor, this may have included medical care.

2. Describe what the trip was like:
 - v.4 *The wind was contrary, so they sailed close to land, "under the shelter of Cyprus."*
 - vv.7-8 *They had to sail slowly, the wind made things difficult for them, and they still had to stay close to land for protection against the weather.*

Paul and his shipmates landed in Myra where they transferred to a larger Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy. This was probably a grain transporter as grain was typically what was hauled from Egypt.

Verse 9 tells us that “the fast was already over,” that is, the Day of Atonement which is celebrated late in the year. The season for sailing was over, and Paul warned the crew that danger awaited. He was concerned about the great loss of property and that some of them would die. The centurion ignored Paul’s counsel and listened to the pilot and the ship’s captain.

3. Describe the progression of their journey:

- vv.14-15 *There was a violent wind (the word used is the root of our word “typhoon”) so strong the ship could do nothing but be blown along.*
- vv.16-17 *They were barely able to land the ship safely because of the wind, and they stopped in port to run cables under the ship in order to help hold it together. Once they were back under sail, they still were driven by the wind rather than being able to navigate the ship.*
- v.18 *They were forced to throw cargo overboard in order to lighten the ship in the heavy seas.*
- v.19 *After three days in the storm, they started throwing the ship’s tackle overboard, giving up the ability to control the ship in exchange for a better chance to stay afloat.*
- v.20 *Gradually, all hope of being saved was lost.*

Even though they had not followed Paul’s advice, he assured them no one on board would lose their lives, but that only the ship would be lost. He told them an angel from God had visited him that night and assured him that he would stand before Caesar in Rome and that all with him would survive the voyage (vv.21-24).

4. The ship neared land, and they feared they would strike the rocks. What happened in verses 30-32? *The sailors were trying to sneak away from the ship in the lifeboat. Paul spoke to Julius and his soldiers, assuring them they would die if the sailors tried to escape the ship, so Julius had his men cut the ropes and let the lifeboat fall away from the ship.*

Being on watch constantly and having gone without food for fourteen days, Paul encouraged everyone to eat and be strengthened. When daylight came, they saw land and attempted to guide the ship to shore. But the ship struck a reef and ran aground. The prow of the ship stuck firmly, and the stern began to break up from the force of the waves.

5. The Roman soldiers knew that they would be executed if the prisoners escaped, so what was their plan? v.42 *They prepared to execute all the prisoners to prevent them from escaping.*

Julius, the Roman centurion, thwarted their plan because he was determined to bring Paul safely to Rome. All who could swim jumped and swam to safety. The rest found things to keep them afloat, and every person on the ship was brought safely to land.

New Ideas: The Roman Road of Salvation

Paul was on his way to Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. Paul had never visited Rome, despite there being a congregation of Christians there, but he had written to them several years earlier. That letter is in the Bible as the Book of Romans.

The Roman Road of Salvation is a simple yet powerful way of explaining the good news of salvation using verses from the Book of Romans.

- What is our problem? Romans 3:23
For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- What is the consequence of our problem? Romans 6:23a
For the wages of sin is death
- What is God's solution to our problem? Romans 6:23b
but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- How do I receive salvation? Romans 10:13
for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."
- What is the result of God's salvation? Romans 5:1
Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

Memory Verse

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
Romans 5:1

Extra Memory Challenge

Isaiah 26:3-4

*"The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You.
Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock."*

Discussion Questions

Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.

1. In Acts 27:3, 31-32, and 42-43, we read how Julius the centurion treated Paul with kindness and respect. Note in verse 11 that Julius did not agree with Paul's advice, but in verses 31-32 he did. What may have caused this change? Read Matthew 5:16 and discuss how people may react when they see the Holy Spirit working through you, and how their reaction may change over time.

Julius may have grown in respect for Paul as he witnessed God working through him. He clearly trusted Paul enough to give him some freedom. Teachers may also discuss the possibility that Julius was required to bring Paul to Rome alive, although that responsibility wouldn't necessarily require Julius to treat him kindly. When reading Matthew 5:16, teachers may want to emphasize that the good works we do will bring glory to God rather than to ourselves.

2. According to Acts 23:11, the trip to Rome was God's will for Paul. Throughout Acts 27, we see the hand of God protecting Paul and all who were with him on the dangerous journey. How can we have confidence that God will care for us even in difficult times when we are in His will? Deuteronomy 31:8 and Nahum 1:7.

Many Bible verses teach us of God's promise to care for His own. The Psalms are full of those promises (e.g. Psalm 27, 46, 121). Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 3:3 "But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one." There's a saying: "The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you."

Daily Devotions

Sunday:	Psalm 18:1-6
Monday:	Psalm 18:7-15
Tuesday:	Psalm 18:16-24
Wednesday:	Psalm 18:25-29
Thursday:	Psalm 18:30-36
Friday:	Psalm 18:37-42
Saturday:	Psalm 18:43-50

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CHURCH YEAR

* What is the victory that we celebrate at Easter?

Early on the first day of the week, an angel told the women who came to the tomb of Jesus: “He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay” (Mathew 28:6). As a result of His resurrection from the dead, we have the assurance that He will give us victory over death too.

The origin of the name “Easter” is really not known for sure. Some accept the conclusion of St. Bede, who believed it probably is derived from *Eastre*, the name of a so-called goddess of spring and fertility. Christians, however, base their celebration on the historical resurrection. That’s what truly makes Easter Sunday a celebration of victory.

1. What did Jesus say about the meaning of His resurrection even before it happened? See John 11:25-26.

Jesus declared that whoever believes in Him will live again after death, or if they are still alive when He returns they will never die.

2. How did Paul express the victory of Christ’s resurrection in I Corinthians 15:55-57?

Our resurrected Lord gives us victory over the sting of death and the power of sin.