



10/27/2019
Acts 27-28

BIG IDEA

Let God's promises guide your perspective.

LOOKING BACK

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Invite members to share any questions or points that came up in their family discussions regarding last week's study. Invite them to share ways God continued to speak to them as they sought to apply those truths throughout the week.

- Tell about a time you went into a situation with a positive perspective, but then when you actually were in the situation realized you were wrong (i.e. a restaurant you heard was great that you ended up not liking at all, a book someone suggested that you didn't even want to finish, a new job you were excited about that you ended up quitting after a short time)?
- What would you say is your usual perspective on life—glass is half -full or glass is half-empty? Why?

Life sometimes presents us with seemingly hopeless situations. Paul encountered many circumstances that were out of his control, but because he knew that God and His promises remained constant, Paul's perspective never changed. Paul's example encourages us to see seemingly hopeless situations in a new light, as opportunities to point people to the hope we have in Christ.

LOOKING IN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| *Ask a volunteer to read Acts 27:13-26.*

- Does it seem like Paul was being petty in verse 21, effectively saying, "I told you so"? Or did he have another purpose?
- Would you most likely have felt hopeless or hopeful in this situation? Explain.

As the storm continued to rage, the sailors began to lose all hope. Clouds obscured the sky. They could see neither sun by day nor stars by night. They depended on the heavenly bodies to get their bearings; the compass had not yet been invented. Unable to view the sky, they did not even know where they were. The situation was desperate. They gave up all hope of being saved from the storm.

- Why didn't Paul consider the situation hopeless? What kinds of things must Paul have believed to be true about God in order to respond like this?
- Paul didn't allow the crew to fall into despair but rather spoke up in order to inspire hope in them. How could you speak up in order to inspire hope in the lives of those around you who are facing difficult situations?

In the midst of a seemingly hopeless situation, Paul offered a word of encouragement. He began by reminding them that he had previously warned against making this voyage (27:9-12). Had his advice been followed, they would not have been in the middle of the storm and would have avoided the damage to their vessel and the loss of their cargo. Paul wasn't gloating with a smug "I told you so." He was pointing out the wisdom of his former advice.

- What are practical ways we can maintain our courage when facing difficulties?
- Why are hopeless situations important opportunities to share the gospel?

Paul did not give into the despair of those around him but instead looked to the Lord for hope and direction. Furthermore, Paul did not allow the fact that he was a prisoner to keep him silent. In the midst of the storm, Paul used this trial as an opportunity to share the hope of the gospel with his captors. The gospel not only gives us the hope and strength needed to weather any storm, but it also equips us to encourage and empower the people around us.

- In this week's message, we learned that God's promises are not dependent on us, people are not obstacles in the way of God's promises, and we need to live our lives according to the promises of God. Which of these three truths do you struggle with the most? How is God speaking to you about that?

| *Ask a volunteer to read Acts 27:27-44.*

Paul's predictions soon came true. After 14 days of storm, the crew could hear waves crashing on rocks and knew that they were near land.

- Compare verse 31 with verse 11. How did the centurion's feelings about Paul change? About the God Paul served?
- How did Paul's words and his example serve to encourage the others? How have you been encouraged by other people's trust in God's promises while facing difficulties?

Read Acts 27:44 again. This verse fulfills the promise God made to Paul that no one would die in the storm, and Paul was one journey closer to Rome. God keeps His promises. He has promised never to leave or to forsake us (Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5). When we are faithful to His direction, He stays by us. God gives us these promises not only so that we might endure our storms but also so that we might point others to Christ.

| *Ask a volunteer to read Acts 28:1-16.*

Paul's predictions soon came true. After 14 days of storm, the crew could hear waves crashing on rocks and knew that they were near land.

- Of the following, which do you think was expected or unexpected to Paul: arriving in Rome? Arriving in Rome several years after God told him he'd go there? All the struggles he faced on the ship to Rome? That he got to Rome but was under house arrest? That the brothers traveled there to meet him upon his arrival?
- In this week's message, we learned, "The only way to see people with the right perspective is to have Jesus open our eyes." Why is this true? Can you relate? Explain.

Throughout the Book of Acts, we see that God used a variety of circumstances to bring about His promises. That's why we can't trust our reason over trusting God! He is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine (Eph. 3:20).

LOOKING FORWARD

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- What is a situation where you need to let God's promises guide your perspective? How can this group help you with that?
- What are the biggest obstacles that keep you from keeping the right perspective and being a source of hope in the lives of other people? What is one step you might take this week to trust God to help you overcome these obstacles?

FAMILIES

Use the following questions and truths to disciple your children throughout the week.

Read Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 6:31-33, Philippians 4:6-7, and John 14:1-3.

- What promises do you find in these verses?
- As you discuss each promise, discuss a situation in your life where the promise should change your perspective.

PRAY

Thank God that His promises are an unchanging foundation for right perspective in every circumstance. Ask Him for the opportunity to be a source of hope in people's lives by sharing and demonstrating His promise in Christ.

COMMENTARY

| Acts 27-28

27:1-12 Paul was sent to Rome under the custody of a Roman centurion named Julius. Luke accompanied them, as is indicated by the "we" that runs throughout Acts 27. They sailed from Caesarea to Myra on the southern coast of modern Turkey. There they transferred to a larger vessel bound for Rome, probably a grain carrier under lease to the Roman emperor. The ship encountered difficult winds and was unable to follow the usual route that ran north of Crete to Sicily. Instead, they were blown to the south side of Crete to a small harbor named Fair Havens. Against Paul's advice, the crew decided to make for Phoenix, a larger harbor 30 miles west on the Crete coast (27:1-12).

27:13-17 When a gentle south wind arose, they started out for Phoenix. That was a mistake. Suddenly the ship was shaken by a violent storm, the dreaded "northeaster." They were blown south to a small island called Cauda in the middle of the Mediterranean. As the ship came under the shelter of the island, the sailors began to take elaborate measures to ride out the storm. They tied down the lifeboat and ran cables underneath the ship to hold the timbers together. Apparently, they put out drift anchors from the stern to slow the progress of the ship as the wind propelled it along. In any event, they knew that to the south lay the treacherous shoals of the North African coast known as the Syrtis. They had to avoid those at all costs (27:13-17).

27:18 On the second day of the storm, as it intensified, the crew took even more desperate measures. They began to throw the cargo overboard. In all likelihood their cargo was grain. Egypt was the bread-basket of the Roman empire. Alexandrian ships such as theirs usually carried cargoes of grain. If water leaked into a full hold, the grain could swell and burst the timbers of the ship. Dumping the grain would both eliminate that hazard and lighten the ship.

27:19-21 On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard, which probably refers to the main yard, the huge beam that carried the ship's mainsail. This was a desperate measure. Without a main yard, the ship would not be able to sail. Still, it was better to have no sail than to sink. The storm continued. Everyone went without food. They had no appetite in the tossing seas, especially since they assumed they soon would be drowned. In the midst of the seemingly hopeless situation, Paul offered a word of encouragement.

27:22 Paul was about to give them even more explicit words from God. They would be well-advised to heed them. He assured his fellow voyagers that they would be delivered. Not a soul would perish. The ship would be lost, he said, but none of them would be harmed.

27:23 Paul explained that an angel of the God to whom He belonged and whom he served had given him a special message in a night vision. God earlier had directed Paul by means of such visions. At Troas, the Lord had called him to a new field of witness through the vision of a Macedonian (16:10). At Corinth, in a night vision, the Lord assured Paul that He would protect his ministry there (18:9). The Lord again had spoken to Paul as he lay imprisoned in Jerusalem, assuring him that he would be delivered to testify in Rome (23:11).

27:24-25 In the middle of the storm's turmoil, the Lord again assured Paul he would live to appear before Caesar. God was preserving him for that special witness. Also, everyone aboard the ship would be saved. Paul had trusted the Lord's promises before. The Lord had never failed him. He had no reason to believe He would fail him now. Paul told his fellow travelers that he had placed his faith in God; he was sure things would turn out just as God had told him. Therefore, they should keep up their courage as well. Paul's faith was key to his effective ministry.

27:26 A final detail from his vision would soon be confirmed by the actual events: They would run aground on some island. The details about the location of the shipwreck were not revealed to Paul. The certainty of it was.

27:27-32 Paul's predictions soon came true. After 14 days of storm, the crew could hear waves crashing on rocks and knew that they were near land. As they took soundings and realized they were sailing into ever more shallow waters, they put out four anchors from the stern to hold the ship and direct it toward the shore. The sailors recognized that the waters were treacherous and decided to abandon ship and make for land in the small lifeboat. They pretended that they were going to put out an anchor from the bow. Paul saw through their ruse and reported it to the centurion, who by then fully trusted Paul. The centurion made sure that the sailors would remain on board to help in the beaching operations; he had his soldiers set the lifeboat adrift.

27:33-34 After two weeks without a decent meal, Paul urged everyone on board to eat some food. God had already warned him that the ship would be lost (27:22); so he knew that no easy course lay ahead and that all on board would need their strength. Paul reminded them of his earlier vision—none of them would be lost. Now Paul gave an even stronger assurance—none would suffer any harm, not even the loss of a hair from his head.

27:35-36 Paul was confident that they would be delivered. He set the example himself, being the first to take food. He gave thanks over the food, following the same pattern of blessing so often exemplified by Jesus. He took bread, gave thanks, and broke it before them all. It was the familiar pattern that Jews followed in giving thanks before each meal. Thanking God before the pagans aboard ship was a means for Paul to remind them of the God who was delivering them. When everyone saw Paul's confidence and hope in God, they all joined in and ate to strengthen themselves.

27:37-38 A large party was on board ship, 276 people in all. Not all were crew. Probably, most were passengers. The Roman world had no passenger vessels. Travelers depended on merchant vessels. Ships such as this cargo vessel often carried large groups of passengers. They obviously had not thrown all the grain overboard on the second day of the storm (27:18). Now they did so, in order to lighten the ship as much as possible for the attempt to beach it.

27:39-43 Spotting a sandy beach, the crew prepared to run aground there, but the ship ran onto a sandbar and stuck fast. Everyone had to abandon ship and proceed to the land in the water. Fearing for their own lives if they lost their prisoners, the soldiers decided to kill them rather than risk their escape.

Completely confident in Paul, the centurion kept them from doing so. Everyone reached land safely. God had kept His promises to Paul.

Paul would live to make his defense before Caesar. God also had preserved the lives of all on board, just as He had said He would.

28:1-16 The ship on which Paul was traveling as a prisoner wrecked on the island of Malta, which is south of Sicily. Paul immediately impressed the island's inhabitants when God delivered him unharmed from a viper's bite. Paul carried out a ministry of healing among the islanders. In turn, they honored him in many ways (Acts 28:1-10).

After the winter had passed and the seas were again safe for travel, Paul's party secured passage to Italy on another Alexandrian ship that had wintered on Malta. They sailed from Malta to Syracuse, the capital of Sicily, and from there to Puteoli, the main Italian port for the large grain ships. From Puteoli, Paul's party proceeded on foot the 130 miles to Rome. South of the city, he was met by two separate groups of Roman Christians who had come out to greet him. Once in the city, Paul was allowed to live in an apartment rented at his own expense. He remained under military guard (vv. 11-16).