

Paul Is Shipwrecked

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: When every other hope is gone, God's word still stands. Paul belonged to God and believed God, and God kept every word He had said.

Bible passage: Acts 27:1–28:16. Students read Acts 27:9–26 and Acts 27:33–44 out loud themselves.

Memory verse: "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." *Acts 27:25 (KJV)*

You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.

Before class: read Acts 27:1–28:16. Write the memory verse on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Who Would You Believe? (5–10 minutes)

Write on the board: "Is it safe to sail today?" List four people who could answer: a weather app, the captain who owns the ship, the crew who want to get somewhere better for the winter, and a prisoner named Paul who warns that the trip will bring harm and loss. Each student writes who they would believe and why. Compare answers. Say: "In Acts 27 the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship more than Paul (27:11). Let's see how that turned out, and who turned out to be the one worth listening to."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Tell the start in your own words: Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:33). The rulers who heard him agreed he had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds, but he had appealed to Caesar, so he was sent to Rome (25:11–12; 26:31–32). A centurion named Julius took charge of Paul and other prisoners (27:1), and Julius treated Paul kindly (27:3).

Read out loud: Acts 27:9–26. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **the fast was now already past** (27:9): it was late in the year, when storms made sailing dangerous
- **admonished** (27:9): warned; **lading** (27:10): the cargo
- **the haven was not commodious to winter in** (27:12): the harbor was not a good place to stay for the winter
- **tempestuous wind** (27:14): a violent storm wind; **let her drive**: let the wind carry the ship
- **undergirding the ship** (27:17): wrapping ropes under it to hold it together; **strake sail**: lowered the sails
- **tackling** (27:19): the ship's gear; **no small tempest** (27:20): a very great storm
- **long abstinence** (27:21): a long time without eating; **exhort** (27:22): strongly urge; **be of good cheer**: take heart



Tell the middle in your own words: on the fourteenth night, the sailors **sounded**, measured the depth of the water, and found it twenty fathoms and then fifteen: the water was getting shallow (27:27–28). Afraid of rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern and wished for the day (27:29). Some sailors tried to escape in the ship's small boat, but Paul told the centurion, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved," and the soldiers cut the boat loose (27:30–32).

Read out loud: Acts 27:33–44. Old words in this passage:

- **take meat** (27:33): eat some food; **for your health** (27:34): to keep you alive
- **two hundred threescore and sixteen souls** (27:37): a score is twenty, so $200 + 60 + 16 = 276$ people
- **a certain creek with a shore** (27:39): an inlet with a beach
- **hoised up the mainsail** (27:40): raised a sail to catch the wind
- **ran the ship aground** (27:41): drove it onto the bottom near shore; **forepart**: the front; **hinder part**: the back
- **willing to save Paul** (27:43): wanting to keep Paul alive

Talk it through: God had said, "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee" (27:24), and "they escaped all safe to land" (27:44). The island was called Melita (28:1); today it is Malta. The island people showed "no little kindness" and made a fire for them in the rain and cold (28:2). A viper fastened on Paul's hand, but he shook it off into the fire and felt no harm (28:3–5). Paul prayed for the father of Publius, laid his hands on him and healed him, and others on the island came and were healed (28:8–9). After three months they sailed on (28:11). When believers came out to meet him on the road, Paul "thanked God, and took courage" (28:15). In Rome he lived two years in his own rented house, preaching and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ to all who came (28:16, 28:30–31).



3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Paul warned them before they sailed (27:10), and they didn't listen (27:11). How did Paul speak to them later (27:21–22)? What can we learn from how he did it?
2. "All hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (27:20). Then Paul said, "Be of good cheer" (27:22). Where did Paul's hope come from, when everyone else had none?
3. Paul called God the One "whose I am, and whom I serve" (27:23). What does it mean to belong to God? What does it mean to serve Him?
4. Paul said the ship would be lost but every life saved (27:22), because God promised it (27:24). Why do you think people matter more to God than things?
5. Paul gave thanks for bread in front of 275 hungry people (27:35–37). How did one person's faith change everyone else on the ship?
6. Paul trusted God's word before he saw the shore (27:25). What has God said in His Word that you can hold on to before you see how things turn out?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **wherefore** means so, **sirs** means men, **be of good cheer** means take heart and don't be afraid, and **even as it was told me** means exactly the way God said it.

Read the verse together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Challenge: also learn Acts 27:24 this week, the promise Paul's faith stood on.



5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Paul could say of God, 'whose I am, and whom I serve' (Acts 27:23). Everyone can belong to God the way Paul did. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."

Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. What is a "storm" in my life right now, big or small?
2. What has God said in His Word that I can hold on to in it, the way Paul held on to "I believe God"?
3. Write a short prayer giving that storm to God, and thanking Him before you see the shore.

If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: give thanks to God before every meal, even in front of others, the way Paul did (27:35).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that Your word never fails. Make us people who belong to You and serve You. When all hope seems gone, help us say, 'I believe God,' and help us encourage the people around us. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: as the ship broke up, the soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so none would escape, but the centurion, "willing to save Paul," stopped them (Acts 27:42–43). It is in the passage students read; if they ask, answer simply and keep the focus on God keeping His word to every person on board. The viper is told simply; God kept Paul from harm (28:5). This is not a lesson about snakes, and we never handle snakes.