

Bible Stories for Adults

Journey to Rome & Shipwreck

Acts 27-28

Opening

Gathering: How can difficult times serve as effective outreach opportunities?

Today's Focus: Paul made it to Rome as he hoped, but as a prisoner and through a life threatening storm at sea. He saw and used his situations as outreach opportunities.

Key Verses: *Boldly & without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about Jesus. Acts 28:31*

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. It has become clear to everyone that I am in chains for Christ. Philippians 1:12-13

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Finish the Race (Acts 20-21)

Did Paul have any idea that going to Jerusalem would bring prison and hardship?

Acts 20:22-24 = Yes, but he felt he must *finish the race and complete the task*

How certain was he that this would happen?

Acts 20:25 = Told his Ephesian friends that he knew they would never see him again

How did Christians respond to the fate that awaited Paul in Jerusalem?

Acts 21:10-12 = They pleaded with Paul not to go, others could take gifts

Did all of this change Paul's mind?

Acts 21:13-14 = No, he needed to follow the Spirit's lead and do the Lord's will

Arrested (Acts 21-24)

What caused Paul to be arrested? = Commander arrested him to protect from lynch mob

Acts 21:27-29, 31, 35 = Jews from Ephesus recognized and identified him in temple to others

What did the Jerusalem commander do when he couldn't decide what to do with Paul?

Acts 23:25-30 = Sent Paul with a letter explaining situation to Governor Felix in Caesarea

With no basis to punish Paul, but in trouble with the Jews for other reasons, what did Felix do?

Acts 24:22-23, 27 = Kept Paul loosely guarded for 2 years

With Paul tied up in prison these two years, what did Luke likely do?

Luke 1:1-4 = Likely spent time in Jerusalem interviewing and researching the Gospel

Trial Before Festus (Acts 25:1-12)

How long did it take for the new governor to learn about Paul's case?

Acts 25:1-2 = Right away, Diplomatically spent his first days in Jerusalem

What did the Jewish leaders ask Festus to do?

Acts 25:3-5 = Bring Paul to Jerusalem for trial, Festus told them to come to Caesarea

How did the prosecution and defense arguments go during this trial?

Acts 25:7-8 = Prosecution couldn't prove anything, defense pointed this out

Faced with upsetting his new constituency with an inevitable acquittal, what did Festus do?

Acts 25:9 = Tried to have a trial in Jerusalem as the Jews had originally requested

What did Paul think of this idea? = I'm already standing trial! Why should I go to Jerusalem?

Acts 25:10-12 = Frustrated at lack of just decisions, he appealed to Caesar

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Festus Consults King Agrippa (Acts 25-26)

Who came to visit the new governor just a few weeks after Festus took office?

Acts 25:13 = Herod Agrippa II (4th generation from Herod the Great) and sister Bernice

Why was Paul brought to trial before King Agrippa?

Acts 25:24-27 = Needed help finding a charge with which to send Paul to Caesar

How did King Agrippa reply after Paul told his story?

Acts 26:28-29 = Asked if Paul was defending himself or trying to make him a Christian

What did King Agrippa think about everything he had heard?

Acts 26:30-32 = Paul was innocent, could have been freed if he hadn't appealed to Caesar

With Nero as Caesar, why would Paul have been so quick to appeal to Caesar?

Emperor Nero was too young to rule at this time, so his tutor, Seneca, led in his place

Seneca was a positive and just leader, Paul would have stood trial before Seneca

Seneca's brother was Gallio, Achaia proconsul who sided with Paul (Acts 18:12-17)

Besides acquitting Paul, winning the appeal would recognize Christianity distinct from Judaism

Paul Sails for Rome (Acts 27:1-5)

How was Paul to get to Rome for trial before Caesar? = Luke as doctor & Aristarchus as attendant (?)

Acts 27:1-2 = Imperial Regiment was special police and escort unit; first available ship

Being shipped with other prisoners (Greek means other types), was Paul treated as a criminal?

Acts 27:3 = No, Julius gave him shore leave to visit Christians in Sidon; Roman citizen

Why didn't the ship sail directly across the sea to its destination at Myra?

Acts 27:4-5 = Seasonal westerly winds were against it, sailed long way around Cyprus

Note: Mediterranean sailing was difficult after mid-September and impossible after mid-November

On a Huge Grain Ship (Acts 27:6-12)

What did Julius do in Myra to keep from being stuck by winter weather on a puddle-jumper ship?

Acts 27:6 = Found a huge grain ship headed for Italy, Up to 180' L x 45' W x 40' D

Was this large ship able to make better headway? = Crete would protect some from NE wind

Acts 27:7-8 = No, hugged coast until Cnidus, NE wind pushed to south side of Crete

What insight did Paul share with the others on the ship? = After Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

Acts 27:9-10 = Now late-October, it was too late to sail without disaster

Why should Julius and the ship's crew listen to a land-based tent maker? = 2 Cor written in 3rd Journey

2 Corinthians 11:25 = Experienced with sea disasters - 3 shipwrecks, once on open sea

Did they take Paul's advice and decide to stay the winter in Fair Havens? = Few hours with S wind

Acts 27:11-12 = No, decided to go to a better harbor only 40 miles away, Phoenix

The Storm (Acts 27:13-26)

How well did this short journey up the coast go? = Raised dinghy, strapped ship, drug anchors

Acts 27:13-17 = Started nice, soon fought gale winds from NE, unable to fight, drifted

Did things improve the next day? = Storm hid stars and sun, no way to know where they were

Acts 27:18-20 = Winds never let up, threw over cargo and even extra tackle

What did Paul think about all of this? = Not I told you so, but I knew before so trust me now

Acts 27:21-26 = Knew God would protect and save everyone though ship be destroyed

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Shipwreck (Acts 27:27-44)

How much longer did the storm last?

Acts 27:27-29 = Lasted 2 weeks, sailors heard waves crashing as on a shore

How was the safety of the passengers threatened by this news?

Acts 27:30-32 = Sailors tried to sneak off on lifeboat, soldiers trusted Paul

How did this man who began the journey as a prisoner become the leader?

Acts 27:33-38 = Everyone followed his lead by eating to be strengthened

What happened at daylight?

Acts 27:39-41 = Cut anchors away, sailed towards shore, ship destroyed on sandbar

Did everyone on board reach land safely as Paul promised? = Killing prisoners was normal SOP

Acts 27:42-44 = Yes, though soldiers wanted to kill prisoners (get punishment of escapees)

Malta (Acts 28:1-10)

Where had they landed? = Supposed location is called St. Paul's Bay to this day

Acts 28:1-2 = Melita (now Malta), around 500 miles from Crete, 58 miles south of Sicily

How did these *unusually kind islanders* learn that Paul was someone special?

Acts 28:3-6 = He wasn't killed by an asp viper - same type snake that killed Cleopatra

How did this lead to further special treatment?

Acts 28:7 = Invited to home of the governor

How did this further open the door to a new effective ministry for Paul?

Acts 28:8-10 = Paul healed gov's father, others came to see him, 3 months of ministry

Off to Rome (Acts 28:11-16)

How did they get to Rome after the seas were safe again in February? = Castor & Pollux - Zeus' sons

Acts 28:11-14 = 3 days in Sicily, then Rhegium, good winds, 1 week in Puteoli

Note: Puteoli was on Bay of Naples, near Herculaneum and Pompeii

Herc. and Pompeii were buried under lava by eruption of Mt. Vesuvius around 20 years later

Digging in Herculaneum found home with outline of a metal cross in wall over small altar

Did the Christians in Rome know that Paul was on his way? = Walked on Great Appian Way

Acts 28:15 = Yes, came to meet him on road 43 (AF) and 33 (TT) miles from Rome

Was Paul treated as a common criminal in Rome?

Acts 28:16 = No, he was kept under house arrest

A Missionary's Work is Never Done (Acts 28:17-29)

Finally in Rome, did Paul start working with the Roman Christians he had longed to see?

Acts 28:17-20 = No, as always he started working on the Jews

Were these Jews ready to kill Paul as the Jews in Jerusalem had been?

Acts 28:21-22 = No, they heard Christianity was bad, but wanted to hear themselves

How interested were they in hearing what Paul had to say?

Acts 28:23-24 = Standing room only for day-long seminar, some believed, most didn't

What happened as a result of this day-long seminar?

Acts 28:25-28 = Paul said their unbelief fulfilled Isaiah, now going to the Gentiles

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A Speedy Trial? (*Acts 28:30-31*)

How long did Paul have to wait to get his day in court before Nero?

Acts 28:30 = Two years

How did God use this to further His purpose?

Acts 28:31 = Paul continued to preach and others became Christians

Did Paul recognize that God was using his situation to spread His Gospel further?

Philippians 1:12-14 = Even guards were becoming Christians, others given courage

Questions Luke Didn't Answer: = Luke showed the Gospel spread from Jer. to Judea to Samaria to ends (1:8)

Why might it have taken two years for Paul to have his day in court?

Claudius had been poisoned 5 yrs earlier by his wife, Agrippina II (Caligula's sister)

As Paul arrived in Puteoli, Nero and his mother, Agrippina II, were vying for power

Nero sent her across the bay on a boat designed to sink, levers didn't work

She escaped by swimming, but was clubbed to death in bed by Nero's marines

Nero stayed out of Rome (in southern Italy) for 18 months after this

Was Paul convicted or acquitted?

Jewish accusers might not have bothered to testify against Paul in Rome

Ananias had been deposed, his successor might not have been interested

Filmsy charges were okay in Caesarea, but were penalized in Rome

Paul likely met Nero in court and was acquitted on lack of grounds

Then what happened to Paul after being released?

After release, Paul returned to the East via Crete, leaving Titus in Crete - *Titus 1:5*

Paul stopped in Ephesus and left Timothy while he went to Macedonia - *1 Timothy 1:3*

Paul planned to visit Colossae and Philippi - *Philemon 22, Philippians 2:24*

Paul proceeded to Nicopolis in Epirus (Western Greece) - *Titus 3:12*

According to tradition, Paul next may have visited Spain as he planned - *Romans 15:28*

Paul circled back through Miletus, Troas and Corinth - *2 Timothy 4:13, 20*

Paul was imprisoned and tried again in Rome - *2 Timothy 1:17, 4:16-18*

Paul expected death and was later executed under Nero - *2 Timothy 4:6-8*

Tradition says Paul was decapitated by sword, buried by friends along the Ostian Way

Marble slab from time of Constantine (300 AD) covers Paul's presumed sepulcher

Possible Route: Rome, Spain, Crete, Miletus, Colossae, Ephesus, Philippi, Nicopolis, Rome

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I ignored good advice and followed bad advice?
(*Acts 27:9-11; 1 Kings 12:1-24; 22:1-28; Proverbs 12:5*)
2. When have I had discernment to recognize and follow good advice?
(*Acts 27:21-26, 30-32, 33-38; Proverbs 9:7-9; 12:15; 19:20*)
3. When has God given me peace during difficult times?
(*Acts 27:21-25; Psalm 85:8; Mark 6:47-51; John 14:27; 16:33; Philippians 4:6-7*)
4. How have I welcomed or helped strangers in need?
(*Acts 28:2, 7, 10; Job 31:32; Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2*)
5. In what ways have I boldly told others about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ?
(*Acts 28:31; 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27; 14:3; Ephesians 6:19-20; Philippians 1:14*)