

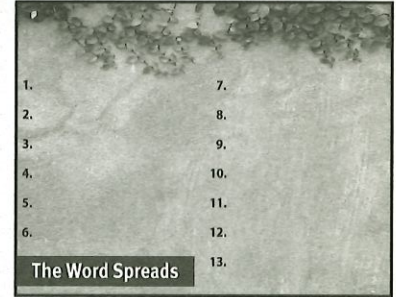
Change in Response

ASK: How could you be more steadfast when facing unfair treatment. List two or three changes to your attitude or actions. (Q17) *Change in attitude from feeling to a helpless victim to living as a protected child of God. Change from a sense of hopelessness to a true hope in God. Change in action from ungodly behavior to a godly witness to those who know not God. Change in using the tongue as an instrument of hate and vengeance to one of praise and prayer.*

Encourage your learners to include specific tasks, dates, individuals, or perspectives that make these changes observable and measurable. Further encourage your learners to share their responses with someone who can help hold them accountable for the desired changes.

Review Resource

Use resource 1 to review the response for this lesson: Trust God steadfastly in all circumstances.



Paul's Voyage to Rome



Topic

God's faithfulness

Theme

God's faithfulness to His church as seen in Acts extends to believers today.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will rejoice in God's faithfulness.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 16

Scripture Focus

Acts 27; 28

Summary

Lesson 13 focuses attention on Paul's journey to Rome and his ministry there. Special attention is given to his meeting with the Jews and their reaction to Paul's words. The lesson concludes with a brief summary of Acts.

Outline

- I. Paul's Voyage to Rome (27:1–28:12)
 - A. Voyage to Fair Haven (27:1–8)
 - B. The storm at sea (27:9–26)
 - C. The shipwreck at Malta (27:27–44)
 - D. Paul's ministry at Malta and trip to Rome (28:1–12)
- II. Paul in Rome (28:13–31)
 - A. Paul's arrival at Rome (28:13–16)
 - B. Paul's ministry at Rome (28:17–31)
- III. Paul's Ministry after His Release (2 Timothy; Titus)
- IV. Conclusion

Memory Verses

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (Acts 1:8; 28:28).

GETTING STARTED

God's Faithfulness

ASK: What are some instances of God's faithfulness in your life? (Q1)

ASK: When, if ever, did you doubt if God would remain faithful? (Q2)

This lesson brings the book of Acts to a close. God's faithfulness is apparent through the entire book. He guided and sustained His servants as they worked to establish Christ's church. God's faithfulness to His church as seen in Acts extends to believers today.

Memory Verses; Theme

Have your learners read in unison the key verses, Acts 1:8 and 28:28, and read together the theme of this lesson: God's faithfulness to His church as seen in Acts extends to believers today.

Share with your learners that this concluding lesson in the study of The Acts of the Apostles will reveal the initial success of the church just as God had promised. Share also that, having studied Acts, we are now obliged to appropriately respond to the study as a church and as individuals. God's mission then is His mission now!

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. Paul's Voyage to Rome (27:1–28:12)

MAP: Display resource 16 to show the stops along Paul's voyage to Rome.

Luke described Paul's voyage to Rome with great detail. He set sail from Asia in late summer of AD 59 and arrived in Rome perhaps in the middle of winter of AD 60. The voyage itself was filled with danger and destruction. The over-arching theme of God's faithfulness and sovereign providence emerges from Luke's record. Clearly Luke wanted to demonstrate God's protection of Paul and the expansion of the gospel into Rome. Again and again Luke portrayed Paul as the confident one. Paul even helped to rescue his captors.



A. Voyage to Fair Haven (27:1–8)

Paul departed with a centurion of the Augustus band, or cohort, named Julius. After traveling about seventy miles, Paul's ship docked at Sidon, and Julius allowed Paul to visit friends at the seaport (27:3). Eventually Paul arrived at Fair Haven (27:8).

B. The storm at sea (27:9–26)

Paul warned the sailors not to attempt to sail any more until winter had passed (27:10). He perceived that once they launched the ship, they would end up in a storm. But with a nice gentle breeze blowing, the sailors launched out anyway hoping to sail to Phoenix, a winter harbor on Crete (27:12, 13). Just as Paul warned,

a fierce storm came up during the short trip. The *Euroclydon*, or the *Euraquilo*, winds were a severe seasonal northeastern wind (27:14). The boat was at the mercy of the wind. The sailors were able to find temporary shelter near an island called Clauda where they undergirded the ship to keep it from breaking apart. Fearing they would run aground, the sailors struck sail and let the wind drive them.

ASK: Who was actually driving the ship? (Q3) *God was controlling the wind that drove the ship. The ship was exactly where God wanted it to be.*

READ: Acts 27:13. ASK: Why might we become unfaithful to God when the soft winds of life are blowing and we seem to be moving through life problem free? (Q4) *We don't feel a need for God. We think we can control our life just fine. We like to take charge of our lives.*

READ: Acts 27:14. ASK: What might we wrongly conclude about God's faithfulness when the strong winds of life blow? (Q5) *We might conclude that He is incompetent to run our lives, that He doesn't care about us, or that He has selfish reasons for bringing trouble into our lives.*

Paul knew that God brought both the gentle breeze and the tempest. And he also knew that God was faithful and would not allow him to die in the storm. The sailors, however, had no such assurance. They tried to control the ship by throwing tackle overboard to lighten it. After many days of no sun or stars, the sailors were lost and hopeless. They concluded they would die at sea.

Paul, knowing the sailors had given up hope in their own abilities to save themselves, intervened and encouraged the sailors to take heart. An angel of God had appeared to Paul and promised that none of the people on board the ship would die (27:22–24).

READ: Acts 27:23. ASK: How did Paul describe his relationship with God? (Q6) *Paul said he belonged to God and served God.*

READ: Acts 27:25. ASK: What did Paul believe about God? (Q7) *That God is faithful to His promises.*

Paul clung to God's faithfulness knowing that God was moving and directing in his life. Paul also gave the sailors some instructions about needing to run the ship aground (27:26). Apparently the plan came from God.

C. The shipwreck at Malta (27:27–44)

Unlike Paul, the sailors worried. Some planned to abandon ship using the skiff, but Paul warned the centurion and soldiers that whoever left the ship would not be saved alive. Perhaps recognizing Paul's calm trust in God, the soldiers cut away the skiff and put themselves in God's hands (27:27–32). Realizing the end of the ordeal was near, Paul encouraged the sailors to eat and regain their strength so they could survive the process of getting to land (27:34).

READ: Acts 27:34. **ASK:** How does this incident demonstrate the combination of God's sovereignty and human responsibility? (Q8) *Paul asserted God's full control by saying that not one hair would fall from their heads (27:34). Paul also expected the sailors to do their part in keeping up their strength.*

READ: Acts 27:35. **ASK:** What could Paul thank God for in the midst of the storm? (Q9) *His faithfulness, His promise of safety, His provision of food, and the strong sailors who had worked tirelessly to keep the boat afloat.*

All 267 persons on board the ship drew encouragement from Paul and joined him in eating a meal (27:36–38).

The next day the sailors spotted a bay and tried to reach it. But the ship struck a reef before they could get to the bay. Realizing the ship was not going to go any farther, the soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners including Paul. The centurion intervened and changed their minds (27:42, 43). Obviously God was active behind the scenes. He used the centurion to spare Paul's life. Everyone on board survived as they floated or swam to the coast of Malta (27:43, 44).

D. Paul's ministry at Malta and trip to Rome (28:1–12)

The island of Malta lies about sixty miles south of Sicily and around five hundred miles west of Crete. The islanders showed the castaways unusual kindness and made them feel welcome (28:2). Obviously God was again faithfully working behind the scenes.

While warming by the fire the islanders had built, Paul was bitten by a viper (28:3). Normally a viper would bite its victim and then retreat. In Paul's case, the viper did not release its hold, meaning that Paul was severely bitten (28:4). God, being faithful to His promise to Paul, protected him (28:5, 6). This caused the islanders to conclude that Paul must be a god.

Publius, a magistrate on the island, invited Paul and his companions to his estate. Perhaps he too thought Paul was a god. Publius would not want to pass up an opportunity to entertain, and perhaps benefit from, a god. Paul enjoyed a little bit of luxury for three days. No doubt he greatly rejoiced in this reprieve God had brought his way (28:7).

TESTIMONY: Describe a time when God brought you a reprieve in the midst of a stormy trial? (Q10)

While Paul was staying with Publius, God used him to heal the magistrate's father. That led to a healing ministry for all the residents on the island. They responded by honoring Paul and his companions and sending them off three months later with the provisions they needed for their trip to Rome (28:8–10).

Luke described the voyage to Rome and made special reference to the ship, which had the sign *Castor and Pollux* (28:11). These names referred to the sons of Zeus and Leda. Castor and Pollux were supposed to bring good luck. Perhaps Luke initially mentioned these gods to contrast the true God, Who had faithfully protected their voyage. Sometime around February AD 60 Paul finally arrived in Rome.

II. Paul in Rome (28:13–31)

A. Paul's arrival at Rome (28:13–16)

From Malta Paul arrived first at Rhegium and then sailed about 180 miles to Puteoli, located approximately 150 miles from the city of Rome. A traveler could reach Rome from Puteoli by foot in about five days. Some regarded Puteoli as the chief seaport of Rome before the creation of several artificial harbors. During the time of the events in Acts, the city had about 100,000 people.

Puteoli had a local fellowship of believers (28:14). Apparently the church in Rome had learned about Paul's impending arrival and, in turn, notified the fellowship at Puteoli. Paul spent seven days with the believers there.

In the meantime, some other believers traveled from Rome to the *Appii forum* (market) and *the three taverns* to meet and fellowship with Paul (28:15). Both of these locations were well-known resting places on the famous Appian Way, a road that led to Rome. Three years earlier Paul had written to the Roman believers to share his plans to visit them. Finally, God had brought Paul to Rome (28:16). Paul desired to eventually launch a mission expedition from Rome into areas of the world that did not have a clear gospel witness, namely into Spain.

Notice some of Paul's comments from when he had written three years earlier to the Roman believers.

READ: Romans 1:1, 7, 11–15; 15:20–25. **ASK:** What did Paul want to do for the Roman believers (v. 11)? (Q11) *To establish them, or build them up, by imparting a spiritual gift to them.*

ASK: What did he want from them (vv. 12, 13)? (Q12) *To be comforted by their mutual faith and to win lost Romans to Christ.*

God finally fulfilled Paul's desire regarding the Romans. Though he probably did not think he would be arriving in Rome as a prisoner.

B. Paul's ministry at Rome (28:17–31)

Luke recorded nothing about Paul's being exonerated through the process of his appeal to Caesar. Instead he concentrated on Paul's ministry at Rome. Certainly Paul had gained the respect of his Roman centurion (28:16). Hence he was able to stay in rented quarters while he was under house arrest (28:30). He spent two years under house arrest while he went through the appeals process.

Following his normal procedure, Paul met with the Jews first. Amazingly he cared about meeting them more than he did about his own protection and appeal process. He met with the Jews primarily for two reasons: to share the gospel and to deny any wrong-doing (28:17–28). Paul concluded that he was *bound with this chain*, meaning under Roman imprisonment, for the hope and salvation of the Jewish people (28:20).

During a second meeting, Paul shared the gospel with the Jewish leadership. Notice how he used the Old Testament law and prophets to show how Jesus is the

Messiah (28:23). The Jews in Rome responded similarly to the Jews in other cities (28:24; cf. 13:46; 18:6).

As division arose within the Jewish community, Paul preached from Isaiah (28:25–27).

READ: Acts 28:25–27. ASK: How did the passage in Isaiah apply to Paul's Jewish hearers in Rome? (Q13) *It explained why some Jews rejected the gospel: they had hardened hearts.*

Even though the Jews' hearts were hardened, Paul wrote that Israel as a nation will one day respond to the gospel message and will once again serve as God's specially chosen people (Rom. 11:25–28). Therefore, Paul stated, *Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it* (Acts 28:28). Most likely Acts 28:28 forms the climax to the book of Acts. The gospel has indeed gone, and will continue to go, throughout the Gentile nations.

To end his narrative, Luke mentioned Paul's freedom to continue the spread of the gospel (28:30, 31). Paul's ministry was unhindered. Not even Rome could impede the gospel. During this time Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. We call those letters the Prison Epistles.

III. Paul's Ministry after His Release (2 Timothy; Titus)

Scholars debate what happened to Paul after the events written in Acts. Clearly Paul was released and continued his gospel ministry. Many scholars refer to Paul's post-Roman imprisonment ministry as the fourth missionary journey. During this time, he wrote 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus.

During this last imprisonment, the Roman government held Paul as a prisoner awaiting death (2 Tim. 1:8, 16; 4:6–8). Second Timothy, then, was Paul's last epistle. Tradition suggests that the Roman government executed Paul by decapitation around AD 67 or 68. While Paul was in prison awaiting death, he wrote a personal plea to Timothy.

READ: 2 Timothy 4:11–13. ASK: What note of bitterness or regret do you see in this note from Paul? (Q14) *None at all. Paul did not face death with any regrets about having trusted God's faithfulness over so many years of ministry.*

The great apostle Paul, who had spent his post-conversion life spreading the gospel, sat in Rome awaiting death. He did not even have the basic garments to keep warm. However, notice that Paul still wanted his books, probably a reference to various Hebrew study tools, and *the parchments*, most likely Old Testament Hebrew scrolls.

Paul's simple requests given to Timothy reflected no bitterness, anxiety, or frustration. He had, it would seem, reached to some measure the goal he had set for himself (Phil. 3:8–11). In fact, Paul's own testimony regarding the end of his days (2 Tim. 4:6, 7) affirmed his sense of completion and anticipation to be with the Savior he had served for so many years and through so many trials. As modern believers we should thank God for servants like the apostle Paul who had the courage to trust God's faithfulness.

IV. Conclusion

Acts illustrates the birth and growth of God's church and how Jesus preserves, protects, prospers, and provides for His church. The fiercest opposition could not hinder the spread of the gospel and growth of the church. Luke demonstrated time after time that Jewish, Gentile, political, and even demonic opposition could not impede the power of the gospel. The gospel penetrated and broke down all ethnic, social, and economic barriers.

God even used the pagan Roman Empire to promote the gospel. Truly Jesus' words in Matthew 16 were fulfilled: *I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (v. 18). Acts clearly demonstrates that the church penetrated into the very strongholds of Hell and prevailed.

As long as the church is true to God's Word and relies on the empowering ministry of the Spirit, the church will continue to penetrate the forces of darkness. Paul wrote, *The gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek* (Rom. 1:16, 17).

MAKING IT PERSONAL

God's Faithfulness in Acts

Have your learners browse Acts. You may want to assign them to groups and give each group a specific part of Acts to browse.

ASK: What evidence of God's faithfulness and care for His church do you see in Acts? (Q15)

God's Faithfulness Today

ASK: What aspects of God's faithfulness in Acts endure and apply to His relationship with us today? (Q16)

Growth through Acts

ASK: How has this study of Acts helped you think more clearly about the church? (Q17)

ASK: How has the study changed your thinking about being a witness? (Q18)

ASK: What have you learned from Acts that will help you be a better church member? (Q19)

Review Resource

Use resource 1 to review the response for this lesson: Rejoice in God's faithfulness.

