



God Keeps His Promise to Protect Paul

Acts 27



LESSON GOAL

The child will trust God to keep His promises.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- Paul sailed on a ship that was to take him to Rome.
- The ship was in a great storm and the crew was afraid.
- An angel, sent from God, encouraged Paul not to fear and that all the men would be safe.
- God kept His promise and all the men were safe.

KEY VERSE

“For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.’”
—Acts 27:23–24

APPLICATION

- Thank God that He keeps His promises.
- Don’t worry because God is in charge.
- Remember what promises God has given to those who love Him.

NEXT WEEK

Paul Testifies to the Gospel in Rome
Acts 28:16–31

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

While Paul was imprisoned in Jerusalem, the Lord encouraged him saying, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome” (Acts 23:11). Although Paul would eventually go to Rome, the Lord had more testifying for Paul to do in Judea. Before leaving Judea, Paul would testify before two governors and one king, none of whom found Paul guilty of any crime.

Because of a plot in Jerusalem to kill Paul (23:12–22), Paul was sent to Caesarea where Felix, the Roman appointed governor of Judea, would listen to charges brought by the Jews (23:23–35). After hearing both the Jews’ charges and Paul’s testimony (24:1–21), Felix kept Paul in jail for two years, not because Paul had done anything wrong, but because Felix was hoping to receive a bribe for his release (24:22–26). After two years, Felix was replaced by Festus as governor of Judea (24:27). When Festus began to rule, the Jews again brought charges against Paul (25:1–7). Although Paul denied the charges (25:8), Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor by handing Paul over to be tried in Jerusalem (25:9). Paul prevented Festus from unjustly handing him over to the Jews by appealing to Caesar (25:10–11). In doing so, Paul declared his right to have a trial in Rome. A few days later, Paul had an opportunity to testify before both Festus and King Agrippa, the son of King Herod who had killed the apostle James (Acts 12:1–2). Paul boldly proclaimed Christ before both the governor and king (Acts 26). Like both Felix and Festus (25:25), Agrippa determined that Paul was “doing nothing deserving of death or chains” (26:31). But because Paul had appealed to Caesar, Paul could not be freed until he appeared before Caesar in Rome (26:32).

After two years in Caesarea, Paul was finally on his way to Rome. The Lord could have given Paul an easy journey, but instead He glorified Himself as a powerful and promise-keeping God. On the way to Rome, Paul and his companions went through a terrible storm and dangerous shipwreck. The Lord was faithful to His promises and powerfully protected not only Paul but also all on board.

Heading toward Rome (Acts 27:1–6)

The first stage of Paul’s journey to Rome brought him from Caesarea to Myra, an important port in Asia Minor. Paul and “some other prisoners” (about whom nothing is known) were assigned to a centurion named Julius (27:1). Two of Paul’s companions, Luke (the author of Acts) and Aristarchus, accompanied Paul on his journey, presumably paying their own way (27:2). Julius, Paul, Luke, Aristarchus and the prisoners boarded a ship at Caesarea and proceeded north up the coast until landing at Sidon the next day (27:3). The centurion Julius “treated Paul kindly” and allowed him to leave the ship to be cared for by the church in Sidon

(27:3). After leaving Sidon, the ship continued to sail along the coast, first going north along the coast of Syria and then west along the coast of Asia Minor. Instead of going into the open ocean, the ship sailed between Asia Minor and Cyprus until finally reaching Myra, the southern tip of Asia Minor. At Myra, the centurion and prisoners changed ships and boarded “an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy.” The ship was an Egyptian grain ship headed to Rome.

Wintering in Crete (Acts 27:7–12)

After leaving Myra, Paul and his companions first faced difficult weather. The trip to Cnidus, the southwest tip of Asia Minor, took “many days,” much longer than the 130 mile trip should have (27:7). From Cnidus, the contrary winds forced the crew to change course and maneuver their way to a “place called Fair Havens,” a harbor on the south side of Crete (27:7–8). The crew only reached the south side of the island “with difficulty” (27:8).

After “much time had been spent” waiting for better weather, the centurion was faced with a difficult decision (27:9). The Fast, a reference to the Day of Atonement (which occurred either in later September or early October), had already passed and “sailing was now dangerous.” Sailing on the Mediterranean was risky from mid–September to mid–November and deadly from mid–November to February. During the winter, no ships attempted to brave the Mediterranean storms. Paul, who had already experienced three shipwrecks (2 Corinthians 11:25), was convinced that attempting to sail would end “with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives” (Acts 27:10). For that reason, he advocated that the ship stay at Fair Havens until winter had passed. The centurion disregarded Paul’s opinion and was persuaded by the helmsman (the ship’s captain), the ship’s owner, and the majority of the sailors who argued that Fair Haven was an inappropriate harbor to winter in (27:11–12). Instead, the men wanted to try to navigate to Phoenix, a port on the west coast of Crete which was more protected from winter winds. The centurion decided to attempt to reach Phoenix.

Weathering the Storm (Acts 27:13–20)

Although the journey should have only taken a few hours, Paul and his companions were caught in a storm that would last two weeks. The crew put out to sea when a favorable wind began to blow from the south (27:13). But before long, a dangerous wind called Euraquilon arose from the northeast (27:14). The sailors, who knew the reputation of the Euraquilon, could do nothing to stop the hurricane force winds from driving the ship away from Crete (27:15).

After being blown off–course by the winds, the ship was sheltered enough by the island of Clauda (twenty–three miles southwest of Crete) that the crew had time to prepare for the storm (27:16). They pulled up the lifeboat and “used cables to undergird the ship” and prevent it from breaking in the storm (27:17). The sailors were concerned the wind might even drive the ship into the “Syrtis sands,” dangerous sandbars off the coast of Africa. Although the shoals were still four–hundred miles away, the men let down an anchor to detour the ship from its dangerous course. (The Greek is difficult to translate but “struck sail” in Acts 27:17 would be better translated as “let down the sea anchor.”) The next day the crew threw overboard cargo to lighten the ship (27:18) and on the third day, they “threw the ship’s tackle overboard” (27:19). Apparently the tackle was so heavy that Paul and his companions needed to help.

Eventually, there was nothing left for human hands to do. The storm was so intense and the clouds so dark that “neither sun nor stars appeared for many days” (27:20).

Without sun and stars, the ship's captain had no way to navigate. Luke describes how those on the ship responded to the unrelenting storm: "All hope that we would be saved was finally given up" (27:20).

Trusting in God (Acts 27:21–26)

After the ship had been tossed about for many days and the men had not eaten, Paul proclaimed the good news that the men would be saved from the storm. No doubt straining to keep his balance, Paul stood up and addressed the men (27:21). Perhaps to persuade Julius and the sailors to heed him now, Paul reminded the men that they were in this predicament because they had failed to listen to him on Crete (27:21). He then encouraged the men to "take heart." Even though the ship would be destroyed, none of the men were going to die (27:22). Paul explained to the men why he was so confident: "For there stood by me in the night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you'" (27:23–24). God had revealed that He would save Paul's life and bring him to Rome where he would testify before Caesar. But Paul was not the only one whom God would save: all the men on the boat would escape the storm. Because Paul trusted his powerful and faithful God, he encouraged the men saying, "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me" (27:25). Before the men could be saved, Paul told them that they had to "run aground on a certain island" (27:26).

Approaching the Coast (Acts 27:27–32)

On the fourteenth night of being "driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea" (the central Mediterranean Sea), the sailors "sensed that they were drawing near some land" (27:27). Perhaps hearing the crashing of the surf on the distant shore, the men were afraid that they would be dashed upon the rocks (27:29). After taking soundings of the water's depth, the crew knew that they were quickly heading toward land. The first sounding revealed a depth of 120 feet ("twenty fathoms") and the second of 90 feet ("fifteen fathoms") (27:28). Because it was around midnight (27:27), the men couldn't see the shore and started to pray for daylight (27:29). They tried to slow down the ship by dropping four anchors from the back ("stern") of the ship (27:29). Some of the sailors became so frightened that they pretended to let down an anchor from the front of the ship ("prow") but really let down the lifeboat (27:30). When Paul saw the men trying to escape, he warned the centurion that any men leaving would result in the destruction of all (27:31). God would keep His word but He required all of the men to stay on board. The soldiers cut the ropes attached to the lifeboat and let it fall (27:32).

Encouraging the Crew (Acts 27:33–38)

Just before dawn, Paul encouraged the weary men. Because the men had not eaten for fourteen days, Paul begged the men to eat, knowing that they would need strength to survive the dangerous shipwreck (27:33–34). He promised their safety, saying, "Not a hair will fall from the head of any of you" (27:34). Paul demonstrated his own dependence upon and trust in God by thanking God for the bread and eating it (27:35). Paul's confidence in God encouraged the men who followed Paul's example and ate (27:36). At this time Luke records that there were 276 people on board, all of whom God had promised to save (27:37). In final preparation for running aground on the beach, the men lightened the ship by throwing the wheat overboard (27:38).

Wrecking on Malta (Acts 27:39–44)

When morning came, those on board could see the coast of the island of Malta but none of them recognized it (27:39). Even though they were not far from land, the crew and passengers faced more dangers before finally reaching safety. Trying for as safe a landing as possible, the men tried to ground the ship on a beach. In a last ditch effort, they let go the anchors, lowered the rudder back into the water (which had tied up), and “hoisted the mainsail” (27:40). But before reaching the beach, the ship struck a reef. While the front of the ship was jammed in the reef, the back was being torn apart by waves (27:41). It was clear that the ship had to be abandoned. But even before jumping overboard, Paul faced another danger. The centurion Julius had to stop his soldiers from killing Paul and the other prisoners because they were afraid the prisoners would escape (27:42–43). Finally, Julius commanded those on board to jump ship and swim to shore. God preserved both those who could swim and those who had to hold on to boards or parts of the ship. Each of the 276 men made it safely to the land.

Conclusion

The Lord promised Paul that he would testify to His name in Rome (Acts 23:11). In the midst of the storm, the Lord reaffirmed that promise and added that all on board would be saved (27:24). Because the Lord had said it, Paul believed it (27:24). God only makes promises He is willing and powerful enough to keep. Like Paul, both the repentant sinner and the believer can affirm, “I believe God that it will be just as it was told me” (27:25). Although discernment must be exercised in determining who God’s promises are addressed to, every person can trust God to keep His promises.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

What did Paul tell the elders when he arrived in Miletus?

Paul reminded the elders that he had faithfully to serve the Lord in the past and that he was committed to serve in the future.

What did the Ephesian elders do when they thought that Paul would be leaving and might never return?

They were sad and wept because they would miss Paul.

Where did Paul travel to next?

Caesarea

What did the Holy Spirit, through the prophet Agabus, tell Paul?

Agabus tied up his hands and feet with Paul’s belt then told Paul that he would be tied up and turned over to the Gentiles.

What did Paul do because there would be persecution in the future?
Paul didn't change what he was doing because there would be persecutions. Instead he continued to be faithful and obedient to the job of sharing the gospel.

What happened to Paul when he arrived to the temple in Jerusalem?
The Jews became very upset with Paul and they began to beat him. They stopped when they saw the many soldiers come and take Paul away.

What did Paul tell the Jews who were trying to hurt him?
Paul told the Jews about his life and God's good news of salvation.



Boats

Bring in pictures of different kinds of boats from different eras. Ask the children if they have even been on a boat. Have the children share what kind of boat they had been on and whether they enjoyed the experience. Tell the children that today's lesson is going to be about Paul's dangerous journey to Rome on a boat.



God's Promises

In today's lesson, God keeps his promises to bring Paul safely to Rome. Help the children think about God's faithfulness. From previous Bible lessons, tell the children about times when God made promises. These can be promises that God made to all people (like not to flood the whole earth again), to His people (to answer prayers that are in accordance with His will), or to specific individuals (like His promise of a son to Abraham). To help the children think about how God gives different promises to different people at different times, describe the promise and have the children describe who that promise was given to and whether God has already kept that promise or will keep it in the future.



Tossed To and Fro

One of the vivid pictures in today's lesson is that of the ship being tossed by the wave of the storm. To illustrate this, take a huge sheet and lay it across the middle of the classroom. Place a soft ship in the middle of the sheet, and instruct the students to gather around and place both hands upon the sheet. As the class slowly begins to wave the sheet up and down, the ship will begin to be tossed back and forth. As the tossing of the sheet intensifies, explain to the students the nature of what was happening to Paul and his ship in today's lesson.



Throw It Overboard

One of the ways the crew in today's lesson tried to spare the ship was by throwing all their cargo overboard. To illustrate this, fill a large tub with various objects (i.e., bean bags, paper wads, marbles, etc.) After dividing the class up into various teams, take turns to see who can empty the tub the fastest.



Build A Boat

Before today's lesson, have the children build small boats out of popsicle sticks. Once completed, these boats can then be used during the teaching time of today's lesson.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done." —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

God had great plans for Paul, even though Paul was stuck in a prison in Jerusalem. He told Paul that he would be going to Rome to tell the Romans the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's trip to Rome would not be an easy one though. While being transported by ship under the watchful eyes of the soldiers guarding him, the ship was tossed and turned by a terrible storm, and the ship was eventually wrecked. But of course, God was working through Paul even during that terrible time.

Because Paul had appealed the charges by King Agrippa, the law required that he be sent to Rome to be heard by Caesar. He was placed under the guard of a soldier named Julius, and he and a few other prisoners began the long journey to the city of Rome. Under the best conditions with perfect weather, it would take them weeks on board a ship to arrive in Rome. The conditions however, were not the best. The ship he was on ran into some very windy weather, and were not able to stop at one of the places where they were supposed to stop. Instead, they had to stop the boat at a smaller town called Fair Havens. It took them some time to prepare the ship to set sail again, and by the time they were ready to go, it was late in the season and dangerous for ships to sail. Paul, who had sailed many times in his life and had even been in shipwrecks before, said to the centurion and the sailors, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives" (27:10). Paul thought it would be best to stay in the town of Fair Havens until the winter was over. The sailors disagreed; they wanted to continue on, and the centurion decided that he would listen to the sailors instead of Paul, and continue on in the ship.

When the weather appeared to be the most suitable for sailing, they boarded the ship and set sail. It was not long, though, before they came into a storm with winds that were strong, like in a hurricane. The sailors were not able to steer the ship, and the waves were beating the ship so hard that they were afraid the ship would fall apart. They started throwing heavy things overboard to make the ship lighter. All of the men, including Paul, the other prisoners, and their guard, were working all day and all night just to keep the ship from sinking. They were not even able to stop working to eat.

The situation looked very bad, and many of them were sure that they were going to die. But God told Paul that they would not die, and Paul told this to the sailors. He said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all

those who sail with you.' Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island" (27:21-26).

Paul had told the men that they would all survive, but the ship was going to be wrecked, so the men still were worried. Even though God had promised them they would live, they still had to make sure that when they crashed, it would be the best way possible. They continued to throw things overboard, and they dropped several anchors into the water, hoping that it would slow the ship down. The sailors sensed that they were drawing close to land, which scared them because they could not control the ship, and they could end up being thrown into the rocks on the shore or getting stuck in the sand. They had done everything they could though, and Paul urged them to finally eat something. It had been two weeks since they had eaten!

The sun finally came up and they were able to see the land, and a good beach that they would try to get the ship to land on if possible. They started the ship toward to shore, but got stuck in a shallow part of water, and the waves were beating on the ship so hard that the ship started to break apart. The men who could swim jumped overboard first, and started the long and difficult swim toward land. The other men jumped in last and held on tight to boards and other things that were floating and headed toward the shore as well. All two hundred seventy six men that were on the ship arrived safely on the beach, just as God had promised.

God had a great plan for Paul in Rome, but He also had great plans for his journey getting there. Paul was able to testify to the men aboard that ship about His great faith in the Lord, and the men saw God's promise fulfilled in the miraculous way in which their lives were spared during the terrible storm and shipwreck. Paul demonstrated that when God promises something, no matter how bad things look, he knew that he could believe God.



Lesson Questions

Where were they trying to take Paul?

They were trying to take Paul to Rome.

What happened as they sailed to find a good place to spend the winter?

There was a great storm and instead of it taking a few hours to arrive it took a couple weeks.

What did the crew do with all the things on the boat?

They wanted to make the boat light so they threw everything off the boat.

Were the men on the ship worried?

Yes, they were very worried that they would be killed in the storm.

Who came to Paul with a message one night?

An angel came to Paul and told him not to be afraid because all of the people on the boat would be safe.

What did Paul tell the sailors to do?

He told them to run the boat into the ground of an island.

What happened when the boat crashed onto the beach?

The sailors swam to shore and all were safe as God had promised.



Presentation Ideas

A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



Trust Walk

To illustrate what it is to trust take the kids on a trust walk. Select one of the students to be blindfolded and instruct him that his job is to trust you as the teacher. Then in front of the class, promise the student that you will take them safely from one place in the classroom to another. As you lead the student through the classroom, the rest of the class watches on as you begin to fulfill your promise of taking the student safely from one place to the other. Once you faithfully reach the desired destination, ask the students whether or not you were faithful to keep your promise.



Promise Box

Before coming to class, construct a box that is elaborately decorated with the materials of your choosing. This will be labeled the promise box throughout today's class time. Then comprise a variety of promises, some true ones and others outrageous ones, and write each one on a piece of paper. Before coming to class, have those promises which are Scripturally true laminated. Go over each of those promises with class, putting each one in the promise box as it sits in front of the class. To illustrate God's faithfulness to His promises, take the promises out the box and begin dunking each of them into a clear vase of water. Those that are not laminated will be ruined (thus proving faulty) while those which are laminated will uphold in the water (thus proving to be true). By posing this experiment, the child will be able to understand the difference between those promises which are true and those which are false.



Trusting or Doubting

Prepare two faces that the teacher can hold up during the teaching of the lesson. The two faces are a smiling face and a worrying face. For the doubting face, simply change the classic smile curve into a horizontal squiggly line. Before beginning the lesson explain that the two faces represent two responses to difficult situations. The smiley face represents the response that trusts God's character and promises. The worrying face represents the response that doubts God. Before teaching the lesson, describe a couple times in your life when you had to respond to a difficult situation. After describing your response, ask the children whether your response was a trusting response (smiley face) or a doubting response (worrying face). Hold up the appropriate picture. When you teach the lesson, ask the children what kind of response the characters (Paul, his companions, centurions, soldiers, sailors) had to each new difficulty on their journey to Rome. Hold up the appropriate picture.

Praise and Worship

Trust and Obey

Create In Me A Clean Heart

Humble Thyself In The Sight Of The Lord

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



5

"God's Promises"

Materials: copies of "God's Promise" worksheet, scissors

Directions: Give each student a copy of the "God's Promises" worksheet with the verse references and a set of "blocks" with the words "Forgiveness," "Home in Heaven," "Salvation," "Answered Prayer," "Jesus' Return," and "Peace." Have the students cut out the blocks and match them to the appropriate verses. Then have students glue each box to the right of the verse reference. You can read each verse reference out loud to the class and then have the students say which of the blocks is the appropriate one. Explain whether that promise is to all people or only the saved.



"Promise Basket"

Materials: paper plate, "Promise Basket" craft page, scissors, tape, crayons

Directions: Cut a half-circle slit in the paper plate. Fold the half circle down and tape around the bottom to make a pocket. Cut a slit in the top part of the pocket. Glue on the message: "In the past...now...and in the future, God keeps His promises." Color a rainbow around the top of the paper plate. Color the flowers and insert them into the pocket. Talk about how God keeps His promises.



"God's Promise to Paul"

Materials: copies of "God's Promise to Paul" craft pages, scissors, glue, crayons

Directions: Cut out the footprints and numbers and glue them to the verse page.



Blown This Way and That

Have the students place, one at a time, their constructed boat into a large tub of water. By using either water guns or fans, the students are to try to see who can get their boat to the other side of the tub the fastest.

Coloring Pages

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



MEMORY VERSE

"...for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me." — Acts 27:25b

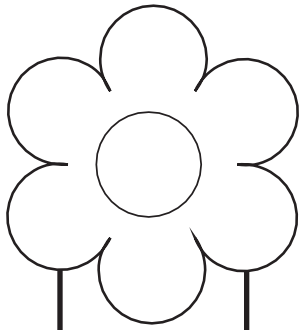
God's Promises

Acts 16:31	
John 14:2	
John 14:3	
John 14:27	
1 John 1:9	
1 John 5:14–15	

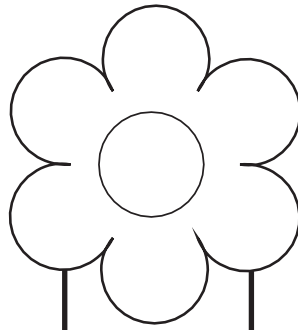
God's Promises

Forgiveness	Forgiveness
Home in Heaven	Home in Heaven
Salvation	Salvation
Answered Prayer	Answered Prayer
Jesus' Return	Jesus' Return
Peace	Peace

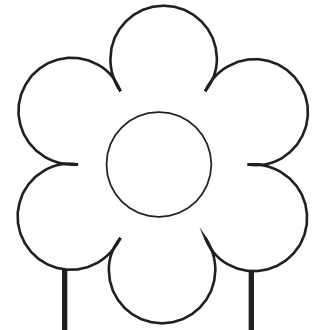
Promise Basket



"Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel.
All came to pass."
—*Joshua 21:43, 45*



"God has granted you all those who sail with you... And so it was that they all escaped safely to land."
—*Acts 28:24b, 44b*



"...God made a promise to Abraham... And so after he patiently endured, he obtained the promise"
—*Hebrews 6:13a, 15*

In the past,...now,...and in
the future,
**God keeps His
promises!**

God's Promise to Paul

Acts 27:24

“Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar;

and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.”

God's Promise to Paul

Acts 27:24



276



“But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, ‘Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heed, for there will be no loss among you, but only of the ship.’” —Acts 27:21–22



