

Unit 35

Facing Adversity

Acts; Epistles

Memory Verses

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

—JUDE 24-25

Clinging to the Promises of God

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God calls on His people to trust His promises without wavering and to call on others to trust in them as well.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Acts 27–28

How likely are you to trust people in general?



I Don't Trust People

I Trust People Completely

How likely are you to trust God in the varying circumstances of your life?



I Don't Trust God

I Trust God Completely

Group Time

Point 1: Trust in God and boldly proclaim His truth (Acts 27:21-24).

²¹ Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. ²² Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³ For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, ²⁴ and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’

Paul finally was on his way to Rome after two years in Roman custody. He was put on a ship along with other prisoners and ferried from Caesarea to Crete and then into a storm (27:1-20). Earlier, Paul had shared his spiritual insight and warned the centurion in charge not to sail from Crete, but he was ignored. Now the storm was beating on the ship and the travelers’ hopes for survival. So Paul reminded everyone of his advice, not as an “I told you so” moment but so the people on-board would now listen to him.



Why should we consistently speak the truth, even though people won’t always listen?

Although Paul had shared the message from God, the people on-board still had to make the decision to believe Paul and to act accordingly. Likewise, we all must make the decision to believe God and to act on our faith. Paul was certain of what God had promised through the angel, and he encouraged everyone to take courage with him in the midst of the storm around them. Because he believed in God, he boldly declared God’s truth. Proper actions are dependent upon true beliefs.



How do our beliefs impact our evangelism?

Point 2: Encourage others to trust in God (Acts 27:30-38).

³⁰ And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow, ³¹ Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." ³² Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.

³³ As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing." ³⁴ Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." ³⁵ And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.) ³⁸ And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

Some of the crew were about to abandon ship. They had lost all hope. Most likely these men weren't worshipers of the one true God and instead prayed to other gods for rescue (27:29). But in this moment of crisis, their gods and their faith failed them. No rescue came, and they chose to flee. Yet God remained faithful to His promise.

Paul, a prisoner and passenger on his way to Rome, transcended his position on the ship and became a fearless leader and beacon of hope for everyone on-board. He intervened as the sailors looked for a way to escape, and the centurion listened to his warning this time. He also encouraged everyone to keep their strength up by taking some food. Why should the 275 other men on-board the ship listen to Paul, a political prisoner? Because of his confidence in God. Paul's faith was evident to all who encountered Him, and when all the other people had lost their faith, Paul was able to point them to his God.



Voices from Church History

"Little know we what sorrow may be upon the sea at this moment ... God help you, poor, drenched and wearied ones! My prayer goes up to the great Lord of sea and land, that he will make the storm a calm, and bring you to your desired haven! ... This is not our rest, and the restless billows tell us so. There is a land where there is no more sea—our faces are steadfastly set towards it; we are going to the place of which the Lord hath spoken. Till then, we cast our sorrows on the Lord, who trod the sea of old, and who maketh a way for his people through the depths thereof."¹

—Charles Spurgeon
(1834-1892)



What are some ways believers can encourage unbelievers to trust in God?

Point 3: Recognize the fulfillment of what God has promised (Acts 27:39-44).

³⁹ Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. ⁴⁰ So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach. ⁴¹ But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf. ⁴² The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. ⁴³ But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, ⁴⁴ and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

The ship struck land, but Paul and the people were not out of the waves yet. Should they survive to the shore, the soldiers did not want to lose their lives on account of losing prisoners, so they planned to kill them. Still some distance from the beach, some of the passengers could not swim and would never make it there on their own. God's promise seemed to be coming apart at the seams, but God remained in control of the circumstances and He fulfilled His promise—everyone reached the shore alive.

God's Plan and Human Action: God's _____ over all of life encompasses the free actions of human beings. In ways we are unable to comprehend fully, the Lord's plan goes forward through the _____ of human beings as moral agents. Knowing that God is working _____ things for the good of those who love Him, we trust in His promise to fulfill His plan, even when we do not understand our present circumstances.

God's promise to Paul and subsequent encouragement to all the people on the boat involved the promise of survival. But this declaration from God did not include all the frightening details everyone would have to endure: the storm, being lost, and a shipwreck. We are not promised ease in this life, but we are promised that God will be with us and will work all these things together for good (Matt. 28:20; Rom. 8:28).



How have you seen God work things together for good in your life?

