

## Bible Story 14: PAUL, A PRISONER GOING TO ROME

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 21:17-40; 22:1-29; 23:11-35; 24:1-27; 25:1-13; 26:1-32; 27:1-42; 28:1-30  
**MEMORY VERSE(S):** Philippians 4:13 or 1 Peter 5:7

### BIBLE STORY

After finishing his third missionary journey, Paul arrived in Jerusalem. He was well received by the believers. Paul met with James and the leaders from the church. Paul reported all God had done through him as he preached to non-Jews. Everyone gave thanks to God. They warned Paul that some people were making complaints, saying he was teaching the Jews to not observe the Law of Moses and to not respect the Jewish traditions. The church leaders suggested that Paul go to the Temple on the Jewish religious Ceremony of the Purification to show he was faithful to the Law of Moses. Paul agreed.

Paul participated in the Ceremony of the Purification. Some non-Jews entered the Temple, which was not permitted. Some Jews thought Paul brought the non-Jews into the Temple. A riot started. They shouted, dragged Paul out of the Temple and tried to kill him. When the commander of the Roman troops heard the riot, he ordered his soldiers to secure Paul with two chains and take him to the barracks. Before entering the barracks, the commander gave Paul permission to speak to the crowd. Paul shared his testimony about his encounter with Jesus. When Paul said that God wanted him to share Jesus to non-Jews, the crowd became angry. They shouted, *"He shouldn't live!"* Paul was taken inside the barracks. When the soldiers went to whip him, Paul said, *"Is it lawful to punish me, a Roman citizen, before I am judged and found guilty?"* The commander heard of a plot that more than forty men planned to kill Paul. So the commander had his soldiers secretly take Paul northwest to the seaport Caesarea to be judged by Governor Feliz.

Jewish leaders brought charges against Paul to Governor Feliz, but they could not prove them. In defense, Paul shared his testimony about Jesus, saying, *"I do worship God and I am a follower of Jesus. I try to always keep my conscience clear concerning God and man. My faith is in Jesus Christ."*

After two years, a new governor was appointed, Governor Festus. The new governor wanted to make the Jews happy. So he asked if Paul would go back to Jerusalem to be judged. Hearing that some men were planning to kill him on his way to Jerusalem, Paul responded, *"I appeal to Caesar, the Roman Emperor."* Governor Festus replied, *"Then you will be taken to Rome to be judged by Emperor Caesar."* Before leaving, Paul was able to share his testimony of Jesus to King Agrippa who was visiting the governor.

As a prisoner, Paul boarded a ship headed west toward Rome. They arrived at Fair Havens, a seaport on the island of Crete. Paul said, *"Don't travel further. God has revealed to me that our lives and cargo are at risk."* The pilot and owner of the ship did not want to spend the winter at this seaport. So the centurion (*guard*) decided to continue on their journey. A powerful hurricane-like storm began and lasted for two weeks. Cargo was thrown overboard, but still the ship was about to sink. Paul said, *"An angel of my God has told me that no lives will be taken. I have faith that God will fulfill His promise."* Later Paul said, *"Eat some food."* Paul blessed the bread and ate it. Others aboard the ship took courage and ate too. On the ship were 276 people. Although the ship was destroyed, everyone reached land safely on an island.

People living on the island of Malta were very kind to them. It was cold and raining. Paul was gathering wood and putting it on the fire to warm them. Suddenly, a snake came out of the heat and attached itself to Paul's hand. The islanders thought Paul was being punished. When nothing happened, they changed their minds. Paul heard that the chief official's father was sick in bed. Paul healed him. He also healed other sick people on the island. After three months, they set sail and eventually arrived in Rome, the capital city of the Roman Empire.

For two years, Paul was under house arrest in Rome. A soldier guarded him at all times. Paul boldly shared his testimony about Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

#### Luke

was a medical doctor and traveled with Paul, helping him with his needs (Acts 27:1 - "we").

#### Paul

remained a prisoner in Rome for two years. While in prison, Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians in the New Testament. It is believed that Paul was released after two years and later Emperor Nero executed Paul because of his belief in Jesus.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Ask questions appropriate for your group of listeners.)

### **PERSONAL QUESTIONS:**

1. What did you learn from this story?
2. How can you apply this story to your life?

### **GENERIC QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you like about the story?
2. Who are the main people in the story?
3. What problems did the people face? What happened?
4. Have you had any similar problems you would like to share? What happened?
5. What does the story tell about God?

### **SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:**

1. The church leaders gave thanks for God in how the Lord used Paul to preach to others about Jesus. What are you thankful for to God?
2. What happened when Paul went to participate in a religious ceremony at the Temple?
  - How did Paul react when false charges were made against him?
  - Share examples of how people say untruthful things about you or someone else.
  - What are some things that can be done to help mend misunderstandings?
3. What happened to the ship and those aboard when Paul was sailing toward Rome?
  - What happened on the island?
  - What did the angel of God tell Paul? How did Paul react?
  - What storms or difficulties do people go through today?
  - Who can help us face storms or difficulties in our life? How?
4. What happened when Paul arrived in Rome?
  - What did Paul do when he was under house arrest?
  - How should we react whenever we are restricted because of health issues, etc.?
  - How can we help people who have restrictions, such as bedridden, disabilities, families of someone in jail, etc.
5. Who are some people with whom Paul shared his testimony of Jesus?
  - Who are some people we can share the Good News of Jesus?

**LIFE LESSONS:** (Choose Life Lessons appropriate for your group of listeners.)

**1. Sometimes people intentionally hurt others.**

*Being angry with Paul, some Jews dragged Paul out of the Temple and tried to kill him. Then some men plotted to kill Paul. In order to help, the commander secretly had Paul taken to another town to be judged by the governor. Today, sometimes people intentionally hurt others. If you are hurt or being hurt, seek help.*

**2. God can turn a bad situation into something good.**

*Some people misunderstood Paul's actions and falsely accused him. Although Paul went to prison, he was able to share his personal testimony about Jesus with Jews, non-Jews, military commanders, governors and the ruling Roman Emperor. The Good News of Jesus spread. Have faith in God that He can bring something good out of a bad situation.*

**3. God is always present; nothing is hidden from God.**

*During the powerful hurricane-like storm, God knew where Paul was and what was happening. So God sent an angel to speak to Paul. Then Paul told the others aboard the ship that he had faith that God would fulfill His promise of protecting all their lives. Be assured that God knows what is happening to you at all times. Trust in God to be with you as you face all situations in your life.*

**PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES:** (Choose an activity or activities appropriate for your group of listeners.)

**ROLE-PLAYING DRAMAS:**

After the story, present four role-playing dramas.

**Drama 1:** Invite one individual to role-play the commander of the Roman troops.

- *The commander will explain why he arrested Paul, put him in the barracks like a prisoner, and secretly had Paul taken to the governor.*

**Drama 2:** Invite an individual to role-play the centurion (guard) aboard the ship.

- *The guard will explain what happened on the ship as they were sailing to Rome with his prisoner Paul.*

**Drama 3:** Invite one individual to role-play someone living on the island.

- *The islander will explain what happened when Paul and others arrived on his/her island after the shipwrecked because of the powerful storm.*

**Drama 4:** Invite one individual to role-play Paul.

- *Paul will explain what happened to him when he was arrested, sailed to Rome and his imprisonment in Rome.*

**SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY:**

Paul shared his personal testimony about Jesus to others everywhere he went.

**Option 1:** Sharing Jesus with one another.

- *Share in your group what Jesus means to you.*

**Option 2:** Sharing Jesus with others:

- *Ask the listeners how they can share Jesus with their family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, classmates in school, etc.*
- *Encourage the listeners to seek to share Jesus with someone during the week.*

**Option 3:** Sharing your personal testimony:

- *If it helps, encourage your listeners to go home and briefly write out their personal experience of when they came to know Jesus.*
- *Encourage each one to share their personal testimony of when they came to know Jesus to someone during the week.*

**Option 4:** Ask listeners, "What are some ways we can reflect Jesus by the way we talk? By the way we relate to others? By the way we respond to things that happen to us?"