

# Lesson 5

## God Keeps Me

**Bible Lesson:** Acts 24:1-44

**Memory Verse:** You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. *Psalm 32:7*

**Enrichment Memory Verse:** God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. *Psalm 46:1-3*

**Catechism Memory Work:** I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. *What does this mean?* I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that He has given and still preserves to me my body and soul, my eyes and ears, and all my members, ...

### TEACHER PREPARATION

#### Prepare to Teach...

- ✝ That God graciously preserves His children
- ✝ That the Apostle Paul experienced great sufferings and difficulties on his journey to Rome but God preserved him through it all
- ✝ That no matter what difficulties we face, God is always with us

#### Prepare Materials:

*Along with the regular materials needed for class, you will need the following items for this lesson:*

12 cut-out ships. (See pattern at the end of the lesson.)

Write the lesson's review questions on the ships—one question per ship. Number the questions/ships so the questions can be asked in order of the story's events. Place ships in the "Surprise Sack" and use them to review the lesson. Ask the questions in numerical order so they are asked in the order of the story's events.

### BIBLE BACKGROUND

1. Prayer Preparation
  1. Pray that God would inspire and challenge you as you prepare this lesson.
  2. Ask God to prepare the heart of each student to learn His truth from this lesson. Pray that he or she will understand that God is always available no matter what the circumstance.

2. Bible Study

The Old Testament records for us the amazing and miraculous salvation and preservation of the children of Israel. The book of Exodus shows us the Lord saving the people out of slavery in Egypt. They are protected from the 10 Plagues and saved by passing through the parted waters of the Red Sea. Then the Lord provided for them for 40 years in their desert wanderings. They were given food from heaven (manna and quail), they were given water to drink, and even their sandals and clothes did not wear out (Deut. 29:5).

The Lord delivered them and preserved them. This same God, who cared so much for the nation of Israel, cares for you and your students. Think of the amazing way in which we are created. In waking hours, our heart beats and beats pumping blood through our bodies; our lungs keep drawing in breath without us consciously thinking about it. Other times we dive into a pool or lake and we can hold our breath until we break through the surface and resume breathing. As we mentioned in the last lesson, "we are fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14).

In Acts, we have the record of Paul being cast about at sea and the ship being run into a reef. Paul was also in a shipwreck in which he was left floating in the water for a day and a night (2 Cor. 11:24-31). Paul was not only preserved from shipwrecks but also from snake bites and stoning (Acts 28:3, Acts 14:19). We might not have been preserved through such dire situations as Paul but we can look back on when friends and family were preserved from some sickness or other types of harm.

When we speak of God as Creator and Preserver we are making clear that we believe in God's intervention in history. In the Creed, we are stating not that God "got things started and now will not intervene." This is the teaching of Deism which denies the reality of God's revealed Word and also the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14). Our God preserves us body and soul. His provision is comprehensive and more than sufficient. As Scripture says, we have received "grace upon grace." This is clearly evident in His continual care for us; preserving us body and soul.

This picture of God guarding us or keeping us brings to mind the watchful care of a soldier on duty protecting his fellow soldiers. The soldiers can rest knowing someone is protecting *them* from danger and attack. We who believe and confess the Creed are watched over by God, He guards and keeps us safe from all things that might cause us harm. As you have perhaps heard used as a Benediction, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless 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).

### 3. Background to Acts 27

When Paul was arrested by Jewish leaders for preaching the gospel, he was eventually imprisoned in Caesarea (Acts 23:23-24). When Festus became governor of Judea, Jewish leaders asked to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem for trial, intending to have Paul killed in an ambush along the way. Paul knew he would not receive a fair trial in the Jewish religious court; as a Roman citizen, he appealed to Caesar to be tried in Rome.

#### Paul Under Julius' Care—Acts 27:3

A Roman centurion, Julius, was put in charge of Paul during the journey to Rome. He was also in charge of a group of criminals who were being sent to Rome where they would very likely be contestants against wild animals in the Roman arenas. Julius was a fine man and, if he was not already acquainted with Paul, he learned quickly that Paul could be trusted. He did not treat Paul as an ordinary criminal.

#### Paul Preserved at Sea—Acts 27:4-29

Sailing in the Mediterranean Sea in Paul's day was dangerous. The prevailing wind from the west prevented a straight voyage from Caesarea to Italy. The ship Paul was on sailed up the coast of Palestine and made a short stop at Sidon. From there, the ship continued north and rounded the island of Cyprus before sailing west along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, where a westward current in the sea helped the ship make headway against the wind. This journey from Sidon to Myra, where they landed, would take between 10-15 days.

At Myra, they boarded a larger cargo ship that had stopped there on its way from Alexandria (Egypt) to Rome. The ship's cargo was grain. They sailed west, following the protection offered by the coast, but eventually progress was so slow that they sailed south toward the island of Crete, hoping to find protection from the wind on Crete's south side. The sailing was difficult there too, and they stopped at a harbor called Fair Havens about midway down the southern coast of Crete.

Sailing the Mediterranean Sea became dangerous from mid-September through October. All sailing ceased from mid-November to March. The trip recorded in Acts 27 took longer than expected making it necessary to navigate the Mediterranean in early October. Paul advised the centurion not to continue the trip but to spend the winter on Crete and to complete the trip to Rome the next year. But, because the ship's pilot and captain, along with the centurion, decided to sail along the coast to Phoenix where a more sheltered harbor was located. Paul warned them that disaster would come on them if they left Fair Havens, but when a gentle south wind began blowing, they struck out on the short voyage.

They sailed only a short time when suddenly a hurricane-like wind hit the ship and carried it away from Crete. It passed a small island about 25 miles from Crete. The island offered protection from the wind only long enough for the crew to bring aboard a small boat they had been towing and to make the ship as secure against the storm as they could. Soon the storm caught them again and carried them southwest toward the coast of Africa where they knew they would run aground on sandbars. The ship would be torn apart and

their lives lost. They were at the mercy of the storm, but were probably able to put up a small sail which they set so the ship would be driven a little northwest.

On the first day after the storm began, they threw overboard any easy-to-reach cargo and freight. On the third day, they threw over what was probably the ship's furniture. (Since the ship's tackle—anchors, rudders, and sail are used in verse 40, that is not what was thrown overboard.) For days the clouds which accompanied the fierce storm hid the stars and sun. It was impossible to chart their position or direction.

Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus (if he sailed with them from Myra) were probably the only Christians on the ship. Even they began to lose hope that they would be saved from the storm. Everyone was weak and exhausted. Then, one morning, Paul announced to them all, "Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss. Yet now, I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only the ship." Paul continued, "For, this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'" Then Paul concluded, "Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told." Though the ship would run aground, all those on board would survive.

At midnight on the 14<sup>th</sup> night of the storm, the sailors could tell by the sound of breakers that they were near land. After taking two measurements of the water's depth, they knew that they were entering shallower water. In an attempt to protect the ship, they dropped four anchors from the ship's stern. This served to turn the ship so that the stronger end (bow) would hit land first, and also slowed the ship's progress toward shore.

#### Paul is Preserved from Deceivers

In the darkness, the sailors let down the lifeboat, pretending they were going to place more anchors from the ship's bow. Their real plan was to escape from the doomed ship. Paul warned the centurion that if the sailors escaped, the passengers would be unable to land the ship and would be killed. And so the soldiers cut loose the lifeboat and it fell into the sea.

Before dawn the next morning, Paul encouraged all the men to eat and be strengthened, since they had not eaten regular meals during the two weeks while the storm raged. He also assured them again that no one would be harmed. After the 276 people on board had eaten, they threw the remaining cargo overboard so that the ship, lightened, would sail farther in to shore.

At daylight they cut the anchor ropes, put up a sail, and attempted to run the ship aground on a sandy beach. But the ship hit a sandbar and the bow stuck while the ship's stern, beaten by the vicious waves, broke apart.

#### Paul Preserved by the Centurion

The soldiers, afraid the prisoners would escape in the confusion of the shipwreck, intended to kill them instead. (If a prisoner escaped the life of his guard would be taken in his place.) The centurion wanted to keep Paul alive and so he stopped the soldiers. He ordered those who could, to swim to shore. The others were to float ashore on wreckage from the ship. Everyone reached shore safely. It was late October or early November.

#### Paul Preserved on Malta

When the survivors reached shore the islanders made a fire to warm them. As Paul placed a pile of brush on the fire, a poisonous snake bit his hand. The islanders, familiar with the effects of such a bite, expected Paul to die. They were sure this was the gods' way of punishing a murderer who had escaped their wrath at sea. Paul's God kept him alive even now. Paul lived, performed miracles, and preached the gospel on Malta. Three months later, he sailed safely to Rome where he continued to preach the gospel.

## BEGINNING YOUR CLASS HOUR

### Welcome

As students enter the room, invite them to "Come On-Board" and tell them today's lesson is about sailing and ships and shipwrecks.

### Open with Prayer

1. Praise God for being everywhere present (omnipresent) so we know He is with us where ever we are.

2. Thank God for creating such a beautiful world and using His creation to provide for our every need.
3. Pray that God would use today's lesson to teach each one something new about our great God.

## Recite Memory Work

Listen to students recite their memory work:

**From the Bible:** Psalm 139:14

And

**From the Catechism:**

The First Article of Creation

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.*

*What does this mean? I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that He has given and still preserves to me my body and soul, my eyes and ears, and all my members,...*

## Review

Review the last lesson by playing a game of “Ship Building”. Play the game like Hang Man but instead of “building” the body of a man, build five parts of a ship—mast, hull, two sails (draw each one separately), and a flag. (See sample ship below.) Have students discover the following truth from Lesson 4:



**Thank God that He was very wise in the way He made you**

Game Rules: One a chalk or marker board, draw a line for each letter of each word.

Leave a distinct gap between words. Students are to take turns calling out a letter of the alphabet. If the letter appears in the sentence, write the letter on the appropriate line. If the letter does not appear in the sentence, draw one part of the ship. The goal is for the students to complete the sentence before the ship is built.

If the students solve the puzzle before the ship is completely built, congratulate them, but finish drawing the parts of the boat and use it to introduce today's lesson.

## Introduce Wall Words

**Citizen**—A person who legally lives in a country. A person is a citizen of the United States if he or she was either born in the United State or passed a Naturalization Test which allows that person to legally live in the United States. Different countries might have different ways that a person can become a citizen.

**Decay**—Decay means to rot or spoil. When plants and animals die, they immediately begin to decay.

**Encouraged**—Encouraged can mean to urge or talk someone into doing something. In today's story, Paul encourages the sailors to eat—he talks them into taking time to eat so they can regain their strength.

**Graciously**—God's act of kindly giving us good things that we don't deserve.

**Preservation**—The act of taking care of or saving something. In today's lesson, Paul encourages the men on the ship to eat because the food would be their *preservation*. The food would strengthen their bodies and save them from starvation. It would take care of their physical hunger and save them from dying of starvation.

**Restore**—to return to its original. When Jesus returns, those who believe in Him will receive new bodies that are free from sin. They will be perfect like Adam and Eve's original bodies were before they fell into sin.

**Violent**—very strong and able to do great damage; fierce

## Introduce the Lesson

Draw the students' attention to the boat from the “Ship Building” review activity. Tell them that today's lesson is about sailing and ships and shipwrecks and how God preserved the Apostle Paul during a terrible storm on the Mediterranean Sea.

## Teach the Lesson

**REVIEW** the Wall Word before reading the lesson. **TELL** the students that today's Bible lesson about the Apostle Paul is recorded in Acts 27.

Have the students **TURN** in their Bibles to Acts 27. **REMIND** them that the Bible is a record of true events that happened in history.

This lesson is about some very exciting and dangerous events in Paul's life. It is recommended that the lesson be read without stopping for discussion or questions.

**READ** the lesson out loud together as a class.

## REVIEW

Cut-out 12 ships. (See pattern at the end of the lesson.)

Write the following questions on the ships—one question per ship. Number the questions/ships so the questions can be asked in order of the story's events.

**PLACE** ships in the “Surprise Sack” and use them to review the lesson.

1. Why is there pain, disease, decay, and death in this world? (*Sin brought these troubles into the world.*)
2. What is God’s remedy for the troubles sin has brought into this world? (*Jesus paid the price for sin when He died on the cross. Those who have Jesus as their savior have their sins forgiven and will live forever with Him.*)
3. Who does God **preserve**? (*Those who are His children.*)
4. In today’s lesson, who did God preserve? (*The Apostle Paul and all those on the ship.*)
5. Why was Paul arrested? (*for preaching the gospel*)
6. Why was Paul able to go to Rome for his trial? (*All Roman citizens had the right to ask for their case to be brought before the Emperor. Since Paul was a Roman citizen, he asked for his case to be heard by the Emperor who ruled from Rome. NOTE: Rome was, and still is, a city in the country of Italy.*)
7. Describe the weather while Paul was at sea. (*fiercely stormy*)
8. What was the feeling of those on board the ship? (*They had lost all hope of surviving.*)
9. How did God encourage Paul and everyone else? (*An angel spoke to Paul and told him not to be afraid. The angel also reassured Paul that everyone would survive the trip. And, he would safely get to Rome.*)
10. Once the ship neared land, what were the sailors afraid would happen? (*They were afraid the ship would crash.*)
11. The sailors hadn’t eaten well for many days. What did Paul tell them to do? (*take some food; eat. Eating would help them survive.*)
12. Did the angel’s message come true? (*Yes! Though the ship was destroyed, all the people on the ship survived.*) **EXPLAIN** to the students that Paul experienced great suffering and difficulty on his journey to Rome but God was with him through it all. **REMIN**d students that sometimes in this life they may experience suffering and difficulties. **ASK** Who is always with you, no matter what the suffering or difficulty? (*God*) God the Heavenly Father always cares for you!

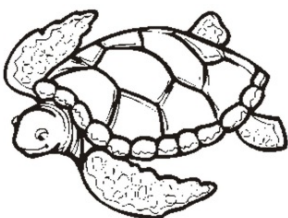
## APPLYING THE BIBLE LESSON

### Memory Work

**BIBLE VERSE**—Introduce Psalm 32:7 to the students.

*“You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance.”*

Since much of this lesson revolves around Paul’s dangerous adventure at sea, a sea turtle might be an appropriate object to help students remember this verse. Just like the turtle can pull its head and legs into the shell and hide there; God is our hiding place. Just like the turtle’s shell is always present to protect or preserve the turtle from harm; God is always present for His children when they experience difficulties or troubles. If the turtle could, it would probably sing songs of thankfulness for the hard shell that surrounds its soft body and delivers it from danger. God’s children, too, can sing songs of deliverance for the many times He surrounds them and protects them from danger.



**CATECHISM**—There are no new phrases to add to the First Article puzzle.

Students are to review The First Article and the meaning, through the phrase “...that He has given and still preserves to me my body and soul, my eyes and ears, and all my members...”

### Activity Pages

#### Activity 1—Shipwreck

The following descriptions can be used to assist in identifying the event illustrated in each frame:

1. In the spring, Paul arrives in Rome (28:14)
2. The ship strikes a reef and is destroyed. All the men survived. (27:41)
3. Soldiers cut the ropes to the small boat (27:32)
4. Paul tells the men to eat (27:34)
5. Fierce storms toss the ship (27:18)
6. Paul boarding a ship to Rome (27:1-2)
7. Paul arrested (Acts 21)
8. Paul receives a message of encouragement from God (Acts 27:22)

(order: 7, 6, 5, 8, 3, 4, 2, 1)

## Activity 2—Spell a Word

## ANSWERS

1. A
2. Y
3. I

4. L

5. T

The name of the country is *Italy*.

## CLOSING THE LESSON

### Closing Prayer

*Dear Heavenly Father,  
Thank you for Your Word, the Bible, that tells us about how You worked in the lives of people that lived years ago. Thank you, too, that You are still at work in our world and in our lives. Help us to see your hand at work in our lives as You protect us and preserve so we may serve You.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

### Assignment

1. Send the Apostles' Creed puzzle home with the students and encourage them to put their puzzle together at least once a day, review it, and memorize any sections they haven't committed to memory yet.
2. Send Activity sheets home with students. Encourage them to use these pages to tell their parents what they learned today in class. If there wasn't sufficient time to finish the Activity sheets in class, encourage students to complete them at home and bring them to class next week.
3. Remind students to memorize Psalm 32:7. The turtle shell can remind them of the key words/phrases: *hiding place, preserve, and surround.*
4. Advanced students can also memorize: Psalm 46:1-3

<sup>1</sup>*"God is our refuge and strength,*

*A very present help in trouble.*

<sup>2</sup>*Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change*

*And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;*

<sup>3</sup>*Though its waters roar and foam,*

*Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride."*

Pattern for ship cut-out to be used with Review Questions.

