

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 38: "Thou Hast Testified of Me"

(Acts 21-28)

LESSON GOAL: Follow Paul's example and be faithful witnesses of Christ even in trials and tribulation.

Joseph Smith described Paul in this way: "He is about five feet high; very dark hair, dark complexion; dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small black eyes, penetrating as eternity; round shoulders; a whining voice, except when elevated, and then it almost resembled the roaring of a lion. He was a good orator, active and diligent, always employing himself in doing good to his fellow man" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 1839-42, 180).

We can briefly tell the storyline of Paul's final experiences by reading the CHAPTER HEADINGS to Acts 21-28:

"Paul journeys to Jerusalem. He is **persecuted, arrested, and bound**. Paul recounts the story of his **conversion** and also tells of **seeing Jesus** in a vision. He is accorded some privileges as a Roman citizen. Paul [is] smitten at Ananias' order. **The Lord again appears to Paul**. Forty Jews plot his death. He is delivered over to Felix. Paul is **accused of sedition**. He answers in defense of his life and doctrine. **He teaches Felix of righteousness, temperance**, and the judgment to come. Paul, before Festus, appeals unto Caesar. Agrippa desires to hear Paul. **Paul recounts his former persecution of the Saints** as a Pharisee. He testifies of the **appearance of Jesus** on the Damascus road. Paul bears his testimony to King Agrippa. **Paul, in a perilous voyage, travels toward Rome**. An angel comforts him. He uses the gift of seership. **He is shipwrecked. Paul is unharmed by a viper's bite**. He heals the sick in Melita. **He preaches in Rome**, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles."

1. Paul reports on his journeys and faces an angry mob in Jerusalem.

Like the people of Tyre, **the saints of Caesarea pled with Paul not to complete this journey**.

Acts 21:12: "And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem."

But Paul knew that he was supposed to go to Jerusalem.

Acts 20:22: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there."

And so Paul, who wanted his life and his words to stand as witnesses, answered,

Acts 21:12,13: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

APPLICATION: Learning about Paul's actions will help us have more courage to share our testimonies

2. Paul is taken before the Sanhedrin.

The next day Paul was arraigned before the Roman representatives and the Jewish Sanhedrin. Look at his courage.

Acts 23:1-6: "And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. "Then said Paul unto him, **God shall smite thee, thou whited wall**: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

Though Paul was put into prison, he was not alone. His Savior, Jesus Christ, appeared to him as he was in prison.

Acts 23:11-13: "And the night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, **Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome**. And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that **they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul**. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy."

Joe. J. Christensen: "Your level of spirituality is...directly related to how well you fill the Lord's commandments to 'Be of good cheer' and 'Lift up your heart and rejoice' (D&C 31:3). How many times in the scriptures did the Lord command us to be of good cheer? He didn't say, 'Be of good cheer if everything is going well, if you have enough money to pay all your bills, if your biorhythms are up,' or whatever. No. **For us to be of good cheer is a commandment and not merely a suggestion**" ("Ten Ideas to Increase Your Spirituality," *Ensign*, March 1999).

Neal A. Maxwell: "It remains for us, therefore, **to be of good cheer even when...current circumstances seem hopeless**... It may seem to some of us so very hard to cling to...reassuring and renewing realities when tribulations and difficulties press in upon us from all sides. But these are the realities to which we will—and should—finally cling in the moments of truth. Why not, therefore, said Jesus, **profit from good cheer at the outset and throughout each day**, rather than finally relying upon it—but only after unneeded anxiety?" (*Even As I Am*, 100-101).

APPLICATION: Identify how the Lord helped you “be of good cheer” during difficult times.

Felix kept Paul in prison for two years, hoping for bribe money to free him. Felix was replaced by Festus.

Acts 25:7-8: And when he [Festus] was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. While he answered for himself: Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.”

3. Paul testifies to Agrippa, but his testimony is rejected.

Paul, for the third time, shared his conversion story to convert the listeners.

Acts 26:19-23: Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Paul's testimony was so powerful that even King Agrippa was nearly persuaded to be a Christian.

Acts 26:27-31: King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, **Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.** And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, **This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.**

Harold B. Lee: “We were back East a short time ago and a good bishop made an interesting comment about what he called the saddest words that he knows of a man in high station. He read when Paul before King Agrippa had borne his powerful testimony of his conversion. King Agrippa's reply was, **“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian”** (Acts 26:28). The bishop said, “The king knew the truth but he lacked the courage to do that which would be required.

“And then he characterized some things that he discovered in his own ward in a short but powerful sermon. “In response to the Master, ‘Come . . . follow me’ (Mark 10:21), some members **almost,**” he said, “but not quite, say, ‘thou persuadest me almost to be honest **but I need extra help to pass a test’** . . . **Almost** thou persuadest me to keep the Sabbath day holy, **but it's fun to play ball on Sunday.**

“**Almost** thou persuadest me to love my neighbor, **but he is a rascal;** to be tolerant of others' views, but they are dead wrong; **to be kind to sister,** but she hit me first; **to go home teaching** but it's so cold and damp outside tonight; **to pay tithes and offerings,** but we do need a new color TV set; **to find the owner of a lost watch,** but no one returned the watch I lost; **to pass the Sacrament,** but I've graduated from the deacons now, **almost thou persuadest me to be reverent,** but I had to tell my pal about my date last night; **almost thou persuadest me to attend stake leadership meeting,** but I know more than the leader on that subject, so why should I go. Thou persuadest me **almost** to go to Sacrament meeting but there is going to be such an uninteresting speaker tonight. **Almost! Almost! Almost! but not quite, not able quite to reach”** (Conference Report, April 1964, 23 -24).

Robert D. Hales: “Be willing to endure the test of time. **Do not think that it is easy to maintain a testimony.** Others will test you. Sometimes they will point the finger of mockery and scorn. Sometimes they may persecute you openly. Be prepared. Know in advance that **the best of God's children have had the courage of true conviction and were willing to suffer ridicule, deprivation, and even death for the sake of true testimony.** Is each of us willing to do likewise?” (“The Importance of Receiving a Personal Testimony,” Ensign, Nov 1994, 20).

APPLICATION: Know that nothing less than complete devotion is acceptable to the Lord.

4. Paul is shipwrecked on his way to Rome.

Paul was to preach the gospel in Rome, but the ship was threatened by a storm. He was promised no one would die.

Acts 27:19, 22-25: And we were exceedingly tossed with a tempest. . . [But] now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. **Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.**

Sterling W. Sill: "Before the end of his ministry, Paul wrote to Timothy... After exhorting Timothy to the utmost of diligence, he expressed the realization that his own mission had been completed. He said, 'For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. **I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith**'" (2Tim. 4:6-7).

"How inspiring are these words, for he was soon to go to Rome to be beheaded. **But even in his death, his determination never faltered.** On that day, when the axe of the executioner granted him the final release from his earthly labors, he will stand before his Maker and rejoice. And when we come to that point in our lives, and have cause to reflect on the fight we have fought and the course we have run, how insignificant will be the money we have made or the ease we have enjoyed or the affluence we have attained.

"Life was never intended to be only a pleasure trip. It is also a mission, a conquest, a testing, and how bitter must be the final remorse of any wasted life. May God help us to develop the courage, the industry and dedication to live his answers to the great Apostle's question 'Lord what wilt thou have me do?'" ("Dedication," *Church News*, Apr. 22, 1967).

Harold B. Lee: "The rewards that come from a life of sacrifice and service are also illustrated in an incident in [Paul's] life. You recall, he was now a prisoner on his way to Rome. As they put out from an island in the Mediterranean Sea, he had the impression that all would not be well, and **they were hardly out of sight of land until a furious storm broke,** and for fourteen days that frail ship was tossed about, and when, as the scriptures say, '... neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.' (Acts 27:20).

"Then it was that the Apostle Paul went down into a place by himself and **prayed,** and here are the words that are recorded in the scriptures which describe his experience:

'...after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said,...And now I exhort you **to be of good cheer:** for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.' (Acts 27:21-24).

"Then the Apostle Paul quieted his shipmates with this testimony: **'Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.'** (Acts 27:25.)

"There we might find illustrated the essential steps toward the abundant life, of which the Master spoke. The first step is **to live the kind of life that permits up to receive the light of heaven, and a testimony that Jesus is a living reality,** and that he can speak to us. One possessed of such testimony, then, from the depths of his heart, will say, as did the Apostle Paul: **'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'**

"All our selfish motives, then and all our personal desires, and expediency, would be subordinated to a desire to know the will of the Lord, one could have the companionship of heavenly vision. If your problems be too great for human intelligence or too much for human strength, you too, if you are faithful and appeal rightly unto the source of divine power, might have standing by you in your hour of peril or great need an angel of God, whose you are and whom you serve. **One who lives thus worthy of a testimony** that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, and who is willing to reach out to him in constant inquiry to know if his course is approved **is the one who is living life to its full abundance here, and is preparing for the celestial world, which is to live eternally with his Heavenly Father"** (*CR, October 1946, 144-6*).

APPLICATION: When we follow Paul's example by being faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ in all situations, He will give us the strength to endure our trials.

Paul stood as a witness in the face of personal hazard and continuing danger. He said of himself,

2 Cor. 11:24-28: "Of the Jews five times received I **forty stripes** save one. Thrice was I **beaten with rods,** once was I **stoned,** thrice I suffered **shipwreck,** a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in **perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;** In **weariness and painfulness,** in watchings often, in **hunger and thirst, in fastings** often, in **cold and nakedness.** Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

Michael W. Middleton: "Paul was a truly great example of what a Christian should be. **By learning more about Paul, we become more intimately acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ and with those men whom the Savior has called to be his prophets and apostles"** ("Paul Among the Prophets: Obtaining a Crown," *The Apostle Paul: His Life and His Testimony*, 112).

PAUL'S THIRD JOURNEY (Acts 21-28)

The third journey ends at Jerusalem in 58 AD. Paul is beaten by Jews, preaches to them (Acts 22:1-21), and is brought before Sanhedrin. Jesus Christ tells Paul that he will go to bear him witness in Rome. Many Jews vow to kill Paul (Acts 23:12).

In 58 AD, Paul is taken to Governor Felix (reigned 53-60) at Caesarea, "many years" (Acts 24:10) after 53 AD and 2 years before end Felix's reign. Paul then spends 2 years in prison in Caesarea in Judea.

In 60 AD, Governor Portius Festus reign begins. Paul appeals to Caesar (Acts 25:11).

Some days pass, then Herod Agrippa II hears Paul.

The voyage to Rome begins: Paul, still a prisoner, sails to Sidon with Luke and Aristarchus (Acts 27:1-2) on the way to Italy.

They sailed to Myra (now southern Turkey) and on to Lasea, on large island of Crete, 50 miles southeast of Greece, where much time was spent (Acts 27:7-13).

In the fall of 60 AD, they reached Melita, a small island south of Sicily. Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake but lived. Paul healed the father of Publius and others. Paul (still captive) spends the winter of 60-61 AD (Acts 28:11) on island with his captors .

In the spring, they sailed on to Syracuse (on island of Sicily), then to Rhegium (on the southern tip of Italy), then to Puteoli (on the western coast of Italy).

The voyage to Rome ends:

- Paul spends 2 years in his own hired house (Acts 28:30) as a prisoner in Rome from 61-63 AD.
- During this time he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.
- In about 62 AD, Paul wrote Ephesians before Timothy came to him (Ephesians 1:1) while in prison in Rome (Ephesians 3:1, 4:1, and 6:20).
- Also in about 62 AD, Paul wrote Philippians from prison (Philippians 1:7) in Rome (4:23) with Timothy (1:1).
- Paul wrote Colossians from prison (Colossians 4:18) in Rome in about 62 AD with Timothy (1:1) and fellow prisoner, Aristarchus (4:10).
- Paul, with Timothy, wrote Philemon from prison in 63 AD (Philemon 1:1).

Paul after the imprisonment in Rome:

- We know that Paul had further journeys after he was released from the prison in Rome in 63 AD.
- After his release, he wrote the epistles of Hebrews, Titus, First Timothy, and Second Timothy, not necessarily in that order, although Second Timothy was apparently his last.
- This took place after the events recorded in Acts, so all of our information comes from various statements that Paul makes in his letters. In them are clues that Paul may have traveled to some or all of the following places: Colosse, Spain, Corinth, Miletus, Troas, Crete, Nicopolis, Philippi, Italy, Judea, Ephesus, and Macedonia.
- This allows for the possibility that Paul traveled to about as many diverse places as in all of his previous journeys combined.

Year	The Life of Paul	
AD 4		Contention over John Mark; Barnabas and John Mark sail to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-39)
c. 5	Born—an Israelite—in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3; Phil 3:5)	Paul and Silas depart, going through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches (Acts 15:40-41)
	A Roman citizen by birthright (Acts 22:28)	50 Goes to Derbe and Lystra and picks up Timothy, strengthening the churches (Acts 16:1-5)
15-20	At the school of Gamaliel, Jerusalem (Acts 22:3)	They go to Troas and Paul sees a vision of a Macedonian man (Acts 16:6-10)
31(?)	A Pharisee (Phil 3:5)	
c. 32	Present at Stephen's stoning (Acts 7:58; 8:1)	51 They sail from Troas to Neapolis (Acts 16:11)
33-34	Persecutor of the church (Acts 8:1-3; Phil 3:6)	To Philippi where Paul meets Lydia (Acts 16:12-15)
34	Conversion on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9)	Paul and Silas imprisoned after casting out a demon from a slave girl (Acts 16:16-25)
	Goes to Damascus (Acts 9:10-19)	Prison doors opened miraculously and the jailer saved (Acts 16:25-34)
	Travels to Arabia and remains there (Gal 1:17)	Departs from Philippi (Acts 16:35-40)
35		They passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia (Acts 17:1)
36		At Thessalonica and preached Christ, but had to flee (Acts 17:1-10)
37	Returns to Damascus then exits the city for safety (Gal 1:17; Acts 9:20-25; 2 Cor 11:32-33)	At Berea where he leaves Silas and Timothy (Acts 17:10-14)
	Goes up to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-29; Gal 1:18)	At Corinth and rejoined with Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:1-17)
	Goes back to Tarsus for safety (Acts 9:30)	
38		52
46	Barnabas travels to Tarsus in order to seek Saul (Acts 11:25)	53 Paul returns to Antioch after stopping at Ephesus, Caesarea, and Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-22)
47	Goes to Antioch with Barnabas teaching and many people (Acts 11:26)	Travels through Galatia and Phrygia strengthening the disciples (Acts 18:23)
	Agabus prophesies a famine (Acts 11:27, 28)	Passes through the upper regions on his way to Ephesus (Acts 19:1)
	Aid sent to Jerusalem through Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:29, 30)	Ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41)
	Barnabas and Saul return with John Mark (Acts 12:25)	
	Barnabas and Saul "separated" and sent out (Acts 13:2, 3)	
	They travel from Antioch to Seleucia, then to Cyprus (Acts 13:4)	
48	While on Cyprus they go to Salamis and Paphos (Acts 13:5-12)	
	From Paphos they go to Perga of Pamphylia where John Mark departs for home (Acts 13:13)	
	Ministry in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14-50)	
	At Iconium (Acts 13:51 - 14:6)	
	Flees to Lystra and Derbe, preaching the gospel (Acts 14:6-7)	
	In Lystra Paul and Barnabas are mistaken for gods (Acts 14:8-18)	
	Stoned at Lystra, supposed to be dead, but re-enters the city (Acts 14:19-20)	
	Departs with Barnabas to Derbe, preaching the gospel (Acts 14:20-21)	
	They return to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to strengthen disciples and appoint elders (Acts 14:21-24)	
	From Pisidia they returned to Antioch of Syria and reported their journey to the church (Acts 14:24-28)	
49	Goes up to the Jerusalem Council with Barnabas (Acts 15:1-29; Galatians 2:1)	
	Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch of Syria, teaching and preaching (Acts 15:30-35; Galatians 2:11-14)	

To learn deeper insights into Paul and his missionary work, read the following entries in the Bible Dictionary:

- **Acts – p. 603-604**
The early part of Acts records some of the major missionary activities of the Twelve Apostles. The last half of the book outlines some of the travels and missionary work of Paul.
- **Paul – p. 742-743**
- **Pauline Epistles – p. 743-748**
- **Map 13: Missionary Journeys of the Apostle Paul**

Year	The Life of Paul
56	Goes to Macedonia (Acts 20:1)
	Travels to Greece (Acts 20:2)
	Goes back to Macedonia (Acts 20:3)
	At Troas (Acts 20:4-12)
	Assos. Mitylene. Chios. Samos. Togyllium. (Acts 20:13-15)
	Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:15-38)
	Cos. Rhodes. Patara. Phoenicia. (Acts 21:1, 2)
	At Tyre (Acts 21:3-6)
	At Ptolemais (Acts 21:7)
	At Caesarea (Acts 21:8-14)
57	At Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-25)
	Paul gets arrested in the temple and causes a mob (Acts 21:26-36)
	Addresses the mob (Acts 21:37 - 22:21)
	Paul's citizenship saves him from scourging (Acts 22:22-29)
	Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30 - 23:10)
	Jesus tells Paul that he will bear witness of him in Rome (Acts 23:11)
	The plot against Paul's life (Acts 23:12-22)
	Sent safely to Felix the governor (Acts 23:23-35)
59	Paul before Felix (Acts 24:1-27)
	Paul before Festus (Acts 25:1-12)
	Paul's appeal honored - turning point towards Rome (Acts 25:12)
	Paul before Agrippa (Acts 25:13 - 26:32)
	Paul departs for Rome and sails to Myra (Acts 27:1-5)
	They sail to Fair Havens on Crete (Acts 27:6-8)
	In spite of Paul's warning , they set sail again (Acts 27:9-12)
	In the midst of a terrible storm they get shipwrecked on the island of Malta (Acts 27:13 - 28:1)
At Malta (Acts 28:2-10)	
60	Sails to Syracuse (Acts 28:11, 12)
	Sails to Rhegium then Puteoli (Acts 28:13)
61	Arrives in Rome (Acts 28:14-16)
	Meets with the Jews (Acts 28:17-28)
62	Preaches the gospel without hindrance for two whole years in his rented house (Acts 28:30-31).
63	Released from Roman imprisonment
64	Further missionary work
65	
66	Second imprisonment and martyrdom under Nero