

THE CONTINUING ACTS OF THE CHRIST



Week Twenty-Four - Paul In Prison

A Note to the Parents/Teachers

This week covers a lot of text, from the second half of chapter 21 through chapter 26. However, the main plot here is that Paul is confronted in Jerusalem by the Jews, he is passed around from one prison to another, beaten, and threatened to be murdered. Through it all, he is given opportunity to share the story of how Jesus saved him and how he wants others to experience this too! This seemingly unfortunate turn of events is exactly what God uses to bring Paul to Rome and to bring many to Jesus.

- **Big Idea:** Glory outweighs suffering

Starter

Evidence of Grace

- Ask kids to share ways they've seen God at work lately. Anything, big or small, which is good is from God. Take time to thank God together.

Discussion:

- What is the worst thing that could happen to you?
- How could Jesus take that thing and make it work for good in the end?

Sing Together

Story - from Acts 21-26

While Paul was in Jerusalem, some of the Jewish leaders stirred up the crowd against him, saying he was teaching against their ways and had brought Greeks into the temple to worship — somewhere only certain Jews were allowed to be. They got a mob started and the crowd was so full of anger, fear, hatred, and violence that they were beating and trying to kill Paul. Most did not even know why they were so mad at him!

When Paul started speaking to them in their Hebrew language, they got silent because they realized he was also a Jew. He told them all about how he, too, was once part of their angry mob. He also went around trying to imprison and kill people following Jesus. But one day, Jesus appeared to Paul as a bright blinding light and spoke to him. Then God sent a man named Ananias, who touched Paul and he got his sight back. Ananias spoke to Paul about Jesus, baptized him, and helped him learn how to follow Jesus' ways. Jesus told Paul he would send him to all the nations to bring the news of salvation through Jesus.

When the crowd heard Paul talk about salvation through Jesus to all the nations, they were furious. They felt that only their nation should be rescued by God. They shouted, *"Get rid of him! He's not fit to live!"* Paul was taken from the crowd by Roman guards. They thought Paul was a troublemaker and an outsider at first, but then Paul told them he was not only a Jew, but also a Roman citizen! There really was no reason for him to be treated this way, other than the fact that he was a follower of Jesus.

So the Roman guards called the Sanhedrin, a council of the Jewish religious leaders. They brought Paul before them so he could plead his case, but the high priest, a different man named Ananias, ordered people to punch Paul in the mouth. Paul then used his mouth and words to strike back, by saying he was on trial because of the resurrection. Resurrection means coming back to life from death. There were two main religious thoughts in the Sanhedrin: the Pharisees who believed in resurrection, and the Sadducees who did not. Paul got them arguing with each other, which took the attention off of him for a moment.

Later, while in a cell, Jesus appeared to Paul to comfort him. He said, *"Take courage! Just as you're telling others about me in Jerusalem, you will tell others about me in Rome. I will get you there!"*

Paul was then brought to a Roman governor, Felix. Felix wanted Paul to pay him money in order to let him go. Paul ended up staying Felix's prisoner for two years! But Paul was able to see friends, write letters to the churches he had visited before, and share with people about Jesus. Finally, a man named Festus took over Felix's job. He brought the local Jewish king, Agrippa, to come see Paul and figure out what they should do with him. Paul got to share with them about Jesus too! Then, Paul appealed to try his case before Caesar himself — the emperor of Rome. They would have actually let Paul go if he hadn't done this, but he knew God's plan was for him to get to Rome to share Jesus with more people there. So, he was willing to suffer even more in prison in order to share the good news of Jesus.

He knew that Jesus had rescued him. He knew that Jesus had suffered more, even death on the cross, for Paul to have life. He knew Jesus wanted to give life to people of all nations, all over the world. He knew the Spirit of God would give him strength to share this news. He knew that suffering would come, but it would be temporary. He also knew that after the suffering was over, he would experience the glory of Jesus forever.

[Dialogue Questions - you may use some or all]

- ▶ Why were people so mad about what Paul was doing?
- ▶ Why didn't some of the Jewish leaders want other nations to have the message of salvation through Jesus?
- ▶ Why was Paul willing to suffer even more just to share the message of Jesus?
- ▶ How has Jesus' suffering brought us life and salvation?

Breakout Time

Pray:

God, thank you that Jesus suffered death in order to give us life. If we ever need to suffer just a little for others to know Jesus, help us to do it in your power, and give us joy to do it, so more of us may enjoy your goodness and glory forever. You are worth it. Amen.

Craft:

- You can use the following coloring page of Paul talking to the Roman guard

BLESS Activity

This week, ask your family how you can practice the **Bless** rhythm.

Sometimes it costs us something to bless others. We may need to give some of our time, money, resources, or comfort. How can you give of yourself in order to bless someone else this week? Could this create an opportunity to share the goodness of Jesus with them?

