

## PAUL IN CHAINS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: ACTS 28:11-31



*Nothing can stop the advance of the gospel.*

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

### Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

**Paul was in chains because of the gospel.** Paul was arrested after sharing his testimony when the Jews began to riot in opposition (Acts 21:27-36). While in custody the Jews swore they would kill Paul (Acts 23:12-13). Rather than be handed over to the Jews, Paul appealed to Caesar. He knew that he was called to Rome by our Lord. After a difficult journey, Paul finally reached Rome.

**In spite of his chains, Paul continued to preach.** In Acts 23:11 Jesus appeared to Paul and told him he would proclaim the gospel in Rome. Once in Rome, Paul wasted no time. Paul explained the gospel, God's story, from the Old Testament from morning to evening. Some were convinced by what Paul shared, but others did not believe.

**Paul was not hindered by the unbelief of the Jews.** In spite of the fact that many did not believe Paul, Paul remained committed to spreading the message. For two years Paul welcomed all who came to see him and preached the gospel without hindrance. Paul knew that many of the Jews would reject Jesus, but he also remembered that the Lord had called him to proclaim the message to the Gentiles. Even while under house arrest, Paul continued the work God had assigned him.

## WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.*

Paul knew that he was being detained in a house arrest situation so that the gospel could be widely proclaimed. In Philippians 1:12 Paul said that the advancement of the gospel was the reason for his imprisonment in Rome.

For two years Paul stayed under house arrest, sharing with anyone who would come to listen. Acts 28:31 tells us that he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about Jesus with all boldness and without hindrance. Even when others were preaching with false motives (to make a name for themselves) and in competition with Paul, Paul rejoiced. To him, the most important thing was that the message was going forth.

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### ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

**Bible Passage: Psalm 22:22-31**

**Connecting the passage to Christ:**

The writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 22:22 attributing this verse to Christ (Hebrews 2:12). This passage speaks of the adoption we have as brothers of Christ because of the work of Christ. This passage also speaks of the advance of the gospel to all nations.

**Questions for reflection:**

- What is the message of righteousness future generations will be told about? (The gospel is the future message of righteousness that we proclaim.)
- Who are the future people Psalm 22:31 mentions? (We are a part of the future people who were, at that time, yet unborn. This prophetic psalm prophecies the future spread of the gospel to us, our children, and to those yet unborn until our Savior returns.)

### SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

**BE A DOER OF THE WORD**

*Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.*



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# ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

*Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?*

### NOT HINDERED BY UNBELIEF

**Supplies:**

Twenty sheets of paper  
wadded up into balls

Use this object lesson to demonstrate that although some may try to hinder the spread of the gospel, it can not be stopped.

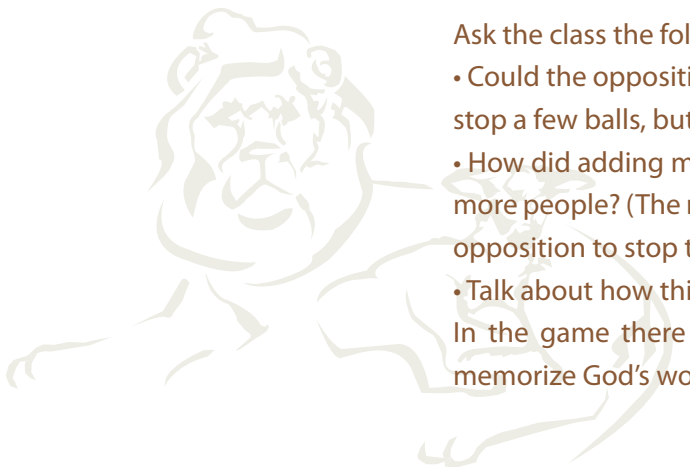
Divide your class up into two groups. The first group represents those open to the gospel. They should stand at one end of the classroom. The second group represents those hostile to the gospel. They should stand in the middle of the room. The twenty balls of wadded paper represent the gospel message. Explain to the class that you are going to be the only Christian in the room. Standing on the other side of the room opposite those open to the gospel.

You are to preach the gospel by throwing the wadded paper through the opposition to those open to the gospel. If a ball of paper makes it through the opposition to those open to the message and one of them catches it in the air, that person is "converted" and should join you in the work of evangelizing. They can bring back over any balls they can find from their side of the room.

The opposition can try to stop you by blocking your evangelism, knocking the paper balls down. They can not keep the balls. Any of the Christians may pick them up to be thrown again. Eventually you will have an increasing number of people helping you preach, or throw, the gospel to those who are ready to receive it.

Ask the class the following questions:

- Could the opposition stop the advance of the gospel? (No. They might be able to stop a few balls, but they could not stop all of them.)
- How did adding more converts (people throwing the balls) make it easier to save more people? (The more people there were throwing balls, the harder it was for the opposition to stop the balls.)
- Talk about how this exercise demonstrates the unstoppable nature of the gospel. In the game there were a limited number of balls. In real life, Christians who memorize God's word, have unlimited ammunition, the words they speak.



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### PROCLAIM AND SPREAD THE GOSPEL

**Supplies:**

Two balls of colored play  
dough of different colors

The object is to show just how the gospel spreads from just a few to many.

Pick two volunteers to be the Christians. Give each of them different colored play dough. They are to evangelize the class by going up to a person and saying:

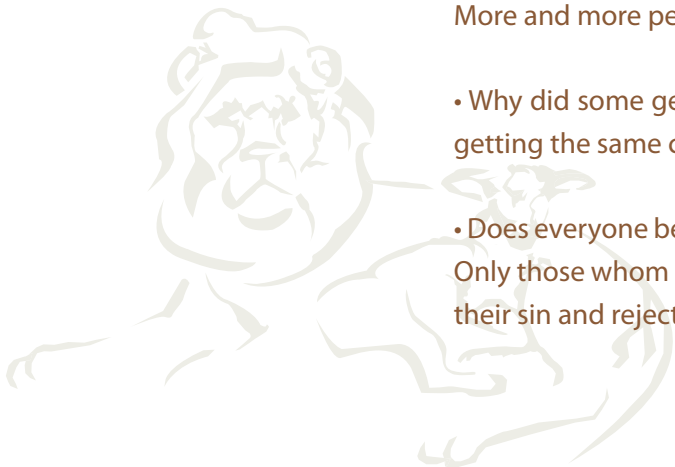
"I give you the gospel - Jesus Christ suffered and died and rose again for the forgiveness of sins for everyone who believes." (Take time to teach this to your class and help them memorize it.)

After sharing this they are to give the person a piece of their clay. The first time a person hears, they are to say thank you and remain seated. Then, if the second Christian shares the gospel with them as represented by the other color dough, they are "converted" and join in the work of evangelism. They can only give away a portion of one color each time. The unbelievers should keep the color they receive hidden. A Christian can only share with a person once and then must move on to the next person. Some might receive three portions of one color before receiving the second color which "converts" them. This helps to demonstrate how not everyone believes quickly.

What starts out as very quiet with two people sharing will soon become mayhem with dozens walking around the room.

Ask the class the following questions:

- What was amazing about this exercise? (Draw out their observations.)
- How is this exercise like sharing the message with others in real life? (Each person that we share with who is saved is added to our number and can share with others. More and more people can hear the message of the gospel and be saved.)
- Why did some get converted quickly while it took longer for others? (Some kept getting the same color dough while others got both colors quickly.)
- Does everyone believe when they hear and understand the gospel in real life? (No. Only those whom God touches by His Spirit receive the message. Others remain in their sin and reject it.)



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### THE STORY OF PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT

**Supplies:**

Paul costume (include chains and locks)

Have Paul explain the story of Acts 28. Bring in information from Philippians 1 as well.

Have Paul ask the children the following questions:

- What is the gospel? (Draw the children's understanding out here.)
- What do we call it when someone suffers for proclaiming the gospel? (Persecution.)
- Who helps us proclaim the gospel with boldness and courage? (The Holy Spirit.)

## PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

## IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a picture of Paul in chains sharing with others. Across the top of your paper write: Nothing can stop the gospel!



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### FOR THE OLDER GRADES

#### "HOW GOOD ARE YOU?"

Read the entire story of Paul's arrest and imprisonment to your class. It is a fascinating story. Read Acts 21:17 through chapter 28. Then ask the following questions:

What do you find most amazing in this story? (Draw out your students about how the story affected them personally.)

What do you think you would have done if you were Paul? (Help them put themselves into the story.)

What is the message we should take from this story? How should it affect our lives? (First, we need to ask if we believe and place our trust in Christ. Then, we need to ask ourselves if we are committed to the mission of spreading the message.)

Ask your class if any of them have a story to share where they shared the gospel with someone?

### A LITTLE BIT MORE

**Appealing to Caesar** – Roman citizens outside of Rome that were being charged with a crime could appeal to Caesar. This was an appeal to be tried in Rome. Nero was the current ruler and had not yet demonstrated hostility toward Christians. This is evidenced by the favor Paul had while imprisoned in Rome. He was allowed visitors and the freedom to talk about Christ right under the watching eyes of the Praetorian Guard.

Festus had taken over for Felix, the previous Roman official, and would have been tempted to do the Jews a favor. Paul was concerned that he might be handed over to the Jews who wanted to kill him (Acts 25:1-4). So Paul appealed to Caesar before Festus, the Roman official in the area. Once Paul appealed, the matter was out of Festus' control. Festus replied, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go."

The Lord had told Paul to have courage just before his arrest. The Lord also told Paul he would preach in Rome (Acts 23:11). Paul's appeal to Caesar was a free ticket to Rome where he would indeed preach the gospel!

