



ACTS

Of All the Apostles

You Will Be My Witnesses:

Running the Race

Lesson 41



Paul's Testimony

Acts 21:37-22:30

Supplemental Scripture

Hebrews 12:1-3
John 4:44

Memory Verse

But make sure in your hearts that Christ is Lord. Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you about the hope you have. Be ready to give the reason for it. But do it gently and with respect.
1 Peter 3:15 (NirV)

Lesson Goals

Understand that Paul was arrested just as Agabus had prophesied

Understand that Paul shared his testimony with the angry crowd

Understand that orders were given for Paul to be beaten and questioned

Understand that, as a Roman citizen, Paul was not to be beaten with being found guilty of a crime

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Study the supplemental Scripture and make notes on, but do NOT read from, these pages. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

What do you focus on when you run a race? Do you focus on who is behind you? Do you focus on those around you? Those who run best, do so by focusing on the finish line. What does that mean for this “race of faith” we are running? Let’s see what we can learn from Paul and his arrest.

In our last lesson, we saw that Paul was arrested and handed over to the Romans just as Agabus had said. The roman soldiers were about to take Paul into the fort when he spoke to the commander. As much as the people appeared to hate Paul, the commander thought that he must be the Egyptian who had caused trouble some time back, but when the commander heard Paul speak the Greek language, he was unsure of who Paul was. Paul told the commander that he was a “Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia. I am a citizen of an important city.” (Acts 21:39 NirV) Then, Paul asked permission to speak to the crowd. The commander granted him permission.

“So Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When all of them were quiet, he spoke to them in the Aramaic language.” (Acts 21:40 NirV) This is the language most of them first learned to speak, and when Paul addressed them this way they became very quiet and listened.

Then Paul took the opportunity, not to plead his case, but to share his testimony (or the story of how he came to know Jesus). Paul started with an account of his life before he knew Jesus. Paul told the people that he was a Jew. He told them where he had been born, but that Jerusalem was like home because he had grown up there. He talked about the important Jewish training he had received from the well known teacher Gamaliel. “I wanted to serve God as much as any of you do today,” Paul told them. (Acts 22:3b NirV) Paul told them how he had hurt people who followed Jesus. He had many of them arrested and sent to their death. And when letters were discovered between the believers in Jerusalem and Damascus, Paul went to bring back prisoners.

Application

We began with the question, “What do you focus on when you run a race?”

Those who run best, do so by focusing on the finish line. Paul knew who he was serving, and it wasn't the people.

Paul's return to Jerusalem was much like Jesus' time in Nazareth. Sometimes the people who have known you the longest can't see God at work when you give your life to Him. (John 4:44)

Do you know Jesus, not just by name, but by a saving relationship with Him? If not, you need to make sure in your heart that Christ is Lord. (1 Peter 3:15a NlrV) “What are you waiting for? Get up and call on His name.

Be baptized. Have your sins washed away.” (Acts 22:16 NlrV)

And if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, are you always ready to tell people about the hope that you have, your story?

The circumstances may not be pleasant, just as they weren't for Paul, but is there ever a bad time to tell someone about the God who loves them?

Paul continued with how he met the Lord. He shared that, when he had almost reached Damascus, a bright light blinded him and he heard a voice saying, “Why are you opposing me?” (Acts 22:7 NlrV) Paul asked, “Who are you?” “I am Jesus of Nazareth . . . I am the one you are opposing.” (Acts 22:8 NlrV) Paul wondered what he should do next and Jesus directed him to “go into Damascus. There you will be told everything you have been given to do,” Jesus replied. (Acts 22:10b NlrV) Once in Damascus, God sent a man named Ananias to see Paul. Ananias helped Paul receive his sight. Ananias assured Paul that it was actually Jesus, the “Blameless One,” that Paul had seen while he was on his way to Damascus and it was His voice that he heard. Then Ananias told Paul that he has been chosen by God to tell everyone, not just Jews, about what he had seen and heard. Ananias also said, “So what are you waiting for? Get up and call on His name. Be baptized. Have your sins washed away.” (Acts 22:16 NlrV) And that is exactly what Paul had done.

Finally, Paul shared about his life after accepting Christ. He told the crowd that he had returned to Jerusalem after giving his life to Christ. As he was praying in the temple one day and, almost as if in a dream, Paul heard Jesus speaking to him again. “‘Quick!’ He said. ‘Leave Jerusalem at once. These people will not accept your witness about me.’” (Acts 22:18 NlrV) Paul had a hard time believing this. The people in Jerusalem knew what Paul had been like. They had seen him arresting believers and carrying them off to jail, even beating them. They knew he had been at Stephen's stoning, agreeing that Stephen should die. He couldn't understand why they wouldn't believe that God had changed his life. Then Jesus encouraged Paul with words much like Ananias', “Go. I will send you far away to people who are not Jews.” (Acts 22:21 NlrV)

The crowd had been quiet until that moment. When Paul said this, they shouted for his death. Paul was taken into the fort then. As Paul was being stretched out to be whipped and then questioned, Paul informed the soldiers that Rome was the important city he was a citizen of. When they heard this they were scared. They knew that the law didn't allow them to “whip a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty.” (Acts 22:25 NlrV) The commanding officer wanted to find out what was going on, why the Jews were so angry with Paul. So, a meeting of the Sanhedrin was called and Paul was taken there.

Next Week
Threats
Acts 23:1-11

Preschool Lesson

In our last lesson, we saw that Paul was arrested and handed over to the Romans. The Roman soldiers were about to take Paul into their fort when Paul spoke to the commander. He asked for permission to speak to the crowd. The commander gave him permission. Paul stood on the steps. He started speaking to the crowd in their first language and they became quiet.

Then Paul told them a story, his story—the story of how he came to know Jesus. Paul started off with what his life was like before he knew Jesus. Paul told the people that he was a Jew. He told them where he had been born, but that Jerusalem was like home because he had grown up there. He went to school with the important teacher Gamaliel. Paul wanted to serve God as much as any of them. Thinking that he was making God happy, Paul had hurt people who followed Jesus. He had many of them arrested and sent to their death. And then he went to the city of Damascus to bring back more prisoners.

Paul kept talking and shared how he met the Lord. Paul had almost reached Damascus. A bright light blinded him and he heard a voice saying, “Why are you opposing me?” (Acts 22:7 NlrV) Paul asked, “Who are you?” “I am Jesus of Nazareth . . . I am the one you are opposing.” (Acts 22:8 NlrV) Paul wondered what he should do next. Jesus told him to go into Damascus. Paul would find out what to do there. In Damascus, God sent a man named Ananias to see Paul. Ananias helped Paul receive his sight. Ananias told Paul that Jesus had spoken to Paul on the way. Then Ananias told Paul that God had chosen him to tell everyone, not just Jews, about what he had seen and heard. Ananias also said, “So what are you waiting for? Get up and call on His name. Be baptized. Have your sins washed away.” (Acts 22:16 NlrV) And that is exactly what Paul had done.

Finally, Paul shared about his life after he decided to follow Jesus. He told the crowd that he went back to Jerusalem after deciding to follow Jesus. But God told him to leave Jerusalem because the people didn’t want to hear about Jesus. Paul had a hard time believing this. The people in Jerusalem knew what Paul had been like. They saw him arrest believers and carry them off to jail. They saw Paul at Stephen’s stoning. He agreed that Stephen should die. Paul couldn’t understand why the people wouldn’t believe that God had changed his life. Then Jesus told Paul, “Go. I will send you far away to people who are not Jews.” (Acts 22:21 NlrV)

Are you ready to talk to other people about Jesus the way Paul did? Who can you talk to today?

Activities

Memory Verse Activity - Write the memory verse in large letters on poster board. Cut the poster board into large puzzle pieces. As your students are putting the Puzzle verse together, repeat the verse over and over.

Sing “Take My Life,” “Take My Life, Lead Me Lord,” “I Will Run the Race,” “I Have Decided to Follow Jesus,” “We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations,” “I Love to Tell the Story,” “At Calvary,” “He Lives,” “How Great Thou Art,” “Now I Belong to Jesus,” “Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It,” or “Victory in Jesus.”

Provide pictures from Saul’s conversion and Stephen’s stoning.

Help your students prepare their testimonies. (Be sensitive to those who do not yet have a testimony. Separate them into a smaller group and share your testimony and the plan of salvation. A testimony should consist of a brief account of what life was like before meeting Jesus. A testimony continues with how one decided to follow Jesus and conclude with what difference following Jesus has made in one’s life since. Encourage your students to share with the class or with a small group.

As you continue memorizing Hebrews 12:1-3, talk about the focus of our race, our lives. Discuss this in the light of Paul’s life.



But make sure in your hearts
that Christ is Lord.

Always be ready to give an answer
to anyone who asks you
about the hope you have.

Be ready to give the reason for it.
But do it gently and with respect.

1 Peter 3:15

Racing Riddles

When arrested, Paul took the opportunity, not to plead his case, but to share his testimony (or the story of how he came to know Jesus). Each testimony has three main parts. Fill in the blank with the letter that follows to find out what those three parts are.

y o u r l i f e b e f o r e J e s u s

x n t q k h e d a d e n q d i d r t r

h o w y o u m e t J e s u s

g n v x n t l d s i d r t r

l i f e a f t e r a c c e p t i n g J e s u s

k h e d z e s d q z b b d o s h m f i d r t r

Word Search

w i s t r a e h r u o y n i h
r n s w t a i p p a l o r o c
e y s a d s h b w t s a o o e
w o n l r i j s l a a a s o a
s u e w o e g n e h y a o a t
n r c a l s r r e a l t s t c
a h t y s i e n t d t l a g e
n m o s i h s a r g n o e r p
a i r b t r p h m n e s r o s
e w o e s i e s n e g b h n e
v r v r i d c u h r t l r o r
i i d e r a l w a y i o o h h
g e v a h u o y e p o h e h t
e i o d c p a i i l d s e p i
n a c y s a g p h i l e f e w

But make sure _____ that _____.

_____ to _____ to anyone who asks you
about _____.

Be ready to _____ for it.

But _____ and _____.

1 Peter 3:15

Word Search

w i s t r a e h r u o y n i h
r n s w t a i p p a l o r o c
e y s a d s h b w t s a o o e
w o n l r i j s l a a a s o a
s u e w o e g n e h y a o a t
n r c a l s r r e a l t s t c
a h t y s i e n t d t l a g e
n m o s i h s a r g n o e r p
a i r b t r p h m n e s r o s
e w o e s i e s n e g b h n e
v r v r i d c u h r t l r o r
i i d e r a l w a y i o o h h
g e v a h u o y e p o h e h t
e i o d c p a i i l d s e p i
n a c y s a g p h i l e f e w

But make sure in your hearts that Christ is Lord.

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