

Paul Is Arrested In The Temple

Acts 21:26-22:29

MEMORY VERSE

MATTHEW 5:11-12

“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A large piece of construction paper, 1/2 sheets of black or brown construction paper, scissors, and glue sticks or scotch tape.

A deck of cards, some pennies and a cup, string, a jar with a screw on lid, a piece of paper with scissors.

Cardboard tubes (from toilet paper rolls), wax paper, and rubber bands.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Mudman

Draw a large gingerbread type man to fill up and 12”x18” piece of construction paper. On one side draw or paste on a big smile and happy eyes, or cut out a happy, rejoicing face from a magazine and paste it on. Attach him to the wall with his back facing out; do not let the kids see his happy face.

Give the children 1/2 sheets of black or brown construction paper, instructing them to cut out “mud splat” shapes. Give them glue sticks or little tape rolls to attach the mud splats to the man.

While the Children cut out the shapes, explain that mud slinging is saying all kinds of evil against someone. After they have put on the “mud” ask how they would feel if someone did that to them. Remove the man and ask why they think he is so happy.

LESSON TIME!

In today's lesson we are going to learn about prejudice and persecution. The apostle Paul will be our instructor as we read of his response to the angry crowd that wanted to kill him. In the face of terrible persecution, Paul was faithful to declare God's message of salvation to all mankind; red and yellow, black and white. **There is no room for prejudice in the Christian life; Jesus died for all men.**

ACTS 21:26-29

Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him,

crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."

(For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

Our lesson begins with Paul being falsely accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple. Paul had gone to the temple as part of an agreement he had made to walk four young men through a seven-day purification ceremony. He had gone past the outer court into the inner court.

When anyone went through the door to the inner court they would observe a sign. The sign said that no foreigner could enter without taking his life into his own hands. The punishment for doing so would be execution. The Jews believed that this polluted the holy place of the temple. Anyone who brought a foreigner into the holy place would also be put to death.

The attitude of the religious Jew was that God would only save the Jews and not the Gentiles. Paul would write in his letter to the Romans, chapter 3, verse 29 "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." Paul did not believe that God loved one man more than another. He knew that God loves all men equally. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever (anyone, regardless of race or creed) believes in Him would have everlasting life."(John 3:16).

Discussion

Are there people who are prejudice today? Explain prejudice. Discuss with the class why God is not like men who are racist or bigoted. **There is no room for prejudice in the Christian life; Jesus died for all men.**

Thumbs? Yup!

You will need a deck of cards, some pennies and a cup, string, a jar with a screw on lid, a piece of paper with scissors, and a card with each set with simple instructions or pictures of what to do such as: stack the cards neatly, put the pennies in the cup, tie a bow, put the lid on, cut the paper.

Before class, set the items on the table and cover with a tablecloth. Seat the kids in a circle and choose five at a time to go up and view the items. Ask them not to touch the items on the table until you tell them to. Ask them to look closely at the things.

Tell them after everyone has seen the items you will take a vote on whether they think they can do the tasks with their fingers or not. After they vote (hopefully the "yes" vote wins), instruct them to go up, a group at a time, while the rest of the class sings songs. Each person in the group should try one of the tasks and may use only their eight fingers...No thumbs allowed! After this, take a vote on whether thumbs may be counted as fingers or not (hopefully the "yes" votes will win). Explain how the Gentiles were different from the Jews, but God had chose to extend His grace to them as well as the Jews!

ACTS 21:30-36

And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.

Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done.

And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. And when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks.

And when he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.

For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

Even though the accusations against Paul were completely false, the crowd did not want to hear the truth. The people were in such a furious frenzy, that all they wanted was for Paul to be put to death. The real reason Paul was suffering this persecution was because he was not afraid to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, that Jesus is the Messiah.

This made the people so angry that if the Roman soldiers had not broken up the mob, Paul would have been killed right there outside the temple! Paul was being persecuted for the sake of Christ. He was being beaten for being a follower of Christ. This was not the first time Paul had been beaten and persecuted, nor would it be the last. Nevertheless he was faithful to the truth of God's message.

Discussion

What kind of persecution do you face for being a Christian? How do you handle it? What are some other forms of religious persecution Christians experience today?

ACTS 21:37 - 22:1

Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek?"

“Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?”

But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."

So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,

"Brethren, and fathers, hear my defense before you now."

Paul was in a life-threatening situation. The mob of Jews wanted to kill him. This was no time to be thinking about others, yet Paul did not care what happened to him at this point. All he wanted was an opportunity to share with his own people the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul asked the guard for an opportunity to speak to the crowd. He wanted to share with them his personal testimony. There are three parts to his testimony: 1) his life before accepting Jesus as Lord; 2) his salvation experience; and 3) his new life.

ACTS 22:2-5

And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:

"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.

“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,

“as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.”

Paul was a Jew. He was born in a Roman city called Tarsus, but he was raised with the strict teachers of the Jewish Pharisees. He moved to Jerusalem where he studied under one of the great teachers of the law, Gamaliel, who was honored by all the people.

Paul was a very privileged young man. He was also a very religious and zealous young man. He had lived his life doing the best he could to do all things right before God and man. Yet he was as lost as lost could be. Why? Because he never gave his heart to Jesus! He tried to please God by doing things for Him, but found that would never work. He did not need a religion, he did not need the approval of men, what Paul needed was salvation. He needed a Savior who could forgive him of his sins.

Discussion

What is your background? What was your life before salvation?

Please emphasize the importance of keeping background comments of our testimony brief and always pointing toward the need of a savior. We do not want to glorify our sin.

ACTS 22:6-10

"Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.

“And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

“So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

“Now those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.

“So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.'”

Paul was on an assignment to persecute some more Christians when the Lord intervened in his life and asked him why he was persecuting Him. Paul thought he was persecuting "Christians" but actually He was persecuting the Lord Jesus. The lesson to be learned here is that when you are being persecuted as a Christian, do not take it personal; they are really persecuting Jesus.

Paul was at the brink of death or at least a good beating, but he knew it was really directed toward his Lord and Savior, Jesus. So he responded in love for them by telling them who the true savior is. When Paul found out on the road to Damascus who God was, he immediately accepted him as Lord of his life. He said, "Who are you Lord?" and the voice responded, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting." Without Jesus there is no salvation.

ACTS 22:11-23

"And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

"Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me;

"and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.

"Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.

"'For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.'

"So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You.

"And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'

"Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.' "

And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"

Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air...

Paul explained that God directed him to the Gentiles to preach salvation through Jesus. God had called him to take the good news to the Gentiles. What is a Gentile? A Gentile is basically anyone that is not a Jew.

What is wrong with sharing the good news of Jesus as Savior with the Gentiles? The problem was that the Jewish people (excluding Christians), for the most part, thought that salvation was only for the Jews, that God would send a Savior (Messiah) to the Jewish nation for the purpose of saving them from the Gentiles. The Jews believed the gentiles were their enemies.

When Paul stood up at the temple to say that the Savior (Messiah) had sent him to preach salvation to the Gentiles, the crowd went crazy. They wanted to kill Paul on the spot, but the Roman (Gentile) guards were there to rescue Paul. **There is no room for prejudice in the Christian life; Jesus died for all men.**

God is extremely disappointed with people who are prejudiced against other people, just because a person is of a different color, or nationality, or even gender. All people are the same to God. Jesus is the salvation of all men. Paul would gladly take a beating to share this message to his people. They, too, needed Jesus. **There is no room for prejudice in the Christian life; Jesus died for all men.**

ACTS 22:24-29

...the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.

And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?"

When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman."

Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes."

The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen."

Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

The Romans were not without prejudice either. They were now going to beat Paul so he would tell them what he had done. When Paul told them he was a Roman citizen they were afraid to beat him. Roman law forbids the beating of fellow Romans without having been condemned of a crime, but they would gladly beat a Jew or any other nationality. **There is no room for prejudice in the Christian life; Jesus died for all men.**

The Romans beat Jesus for doing nothing wrong. Paul used to persecute Christians before he met the Savior of the world, Jesus! Jesus told him to tell the world that God is not prejudiced against any man. All men need salvation and Jesus died for the salvation of all men. **There is no room for prejudice in the Christian life; Jesus died for all men.**

Rejoice! And Be Exceedingly Glad!

Make a kazoo for rejoicing. You need cardboard tubes (from toilet paper rolls), wax paper, and rubber bands. Each tube will make two kazoos if you are desperate, but it is better to use one for each.

Cut a 6"x6" wax paper square, place on the end of the tube then smooth the edges of the paper down and secure on the tube with a rubber band. keeping the part over the end of the tube wrinkle free, show the kids how to sing into the tube (not blow) leaving a little space around the opening for air to escape. If time allows you can use markers to decorate them.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to love all men with the love of Christ. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity to do so.