Paul Goes to Jerusalem



Scripture Reference: Acts 20:13 through 22:29

Suggested Theme: The Holy Spirit is trustworthy. Listen to and obey Him even when challenges arise.

Memory Verse: “But when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you into all truth. He will not speak his own words. He will speak only what he hears and will tell you what is to come.” John 16:13, ICB

Story Overview:

In this last part of his third missionary journey, Paul followed the direction of the Holy Spirit and made his way to Jerusalem. As he stopped along the way, many Christians warned him of the dangers awaiting him. In Caesarea, a man named Agabus prophesied that the Jews in Jerusalem would harm Paul if he went there. Despite these warnings, Paul was determined to obey the Holy Spirit. In Jerusalem, Paul met with an angry crowd and was arrested. None of these events stopped Paul from preaching about Jesus.

Background Study:

Click here for an overview of the Book of Acts

> “But now I must obey the Holy Spirit and go to Jerusalem. I don’t know what will happen to me there.” Acts 20:22, ICB

Today’s lesson centres around Paul’s determination to obey the Holy Spirit’s guidance to go to Jerusalem and what happened once he arrived. These verses are full of many people and places, so it can be helpful to break the story into two main parts.

Part 1: Paul Makes His Way to Jerusalem (Acts 20:13-21:14)

1. Farewell to Ephesian Elders in Miletus (20:17-28)
2. Other stops and farewells along the way (21:1-6)
3. In Caesarea with Philip and Agabus (21:7-14)

Part 2: In Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-22:29)

1. Taking advice from James and others (21:15-25)
2. An angry mob, the arrest and Paul’s sermon (21:26-22:22)
3. Paul’s treatment as a prisoner (22:23-29)

On the Way to Jerusalem:

The first part of Acts 20 describes Paul’s journey from southern Greece to Troas. It was in Troas that Paul brought Eutychus back to life.

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After leaving Troas, Paul and his companions travelled through a number of ports and places. Sometimes they travelled together and sometimes separately. Quickly travelling through Assos, Mitylene, Kios, and Samos and sailing past Ephesus, Paul arrived in Miletus. From there, he sent for the Ephesian elders. In this emotional meeting, he encouraged these “shepherds” to watch over their “flock” (people in their churches). He told them he would not see them again and was compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem.



Other stops along the way were Cos, Rhodes, Patara, and Phoenicia. The ship sailed by Cyprus and stopped in Tyre before landing in Ptolemais. There were many “goodbyes” at these stops. Many children can relate to what it is like to say goodbye. Acts 21:5-6 specifically mentions children standing on the beach saying goodbye to Paul.

> “When we finished our visit, we left and continued our trip. All the followers, even the women and children, came outside the city with us. We all knelt down on the beach and prayed. Then we said good-bye and got on the ship. The followers went back home.“ Acts 21:5-6, ICB

Paul’s group travelled overland to the Gentile city of Caesarea, the capital of Roman Judea, where the first Gentile, Cornelius, had become a Christian.

They stayed in the house of Philip, the evangelist. Philip was the one who baptised the Ethiopian Eunuch, and the last verse of Acts 8 might indicate that he had stayed in the area of Caesarea since that time.

Here at Philip’s house, a prophet named Agabus came from Judea and prophesied to Paul both in words and by acting it out. This was not the first time they had met. Fifteen years earlier, while at the Antioch church, Agabus’ prophecy of a famine resulted in Paul and Barnabas being sent by the Antioch church to take a gift to the Christians living in Judea (Acts 11:27-30).

Now, here they are together again in Judea with Agabus prophesying. Agabus used Paul’s belt to tie up his hands and feet. The prophecy was that the Jews in Jerusalem would also tie Paul up.

In Jerusalem:

Despite their pleading, Paul continued. Some disciples from Caesarea accompanied Paul on the 100-kilometre (62-mile) trek to Jerusalem and took him to stay in the home of a man called Mnason (from Cyprus).

The day after arriving in Jerusalem, Paul saw James and met with all the elders. This James is the brother of Jesus and the author of the New Testament book of James, not one of the original 12 Apostles.

Non-Christian Jews would often try to use Paul’s association with Gentiles against him. Even Christian Jews sometimes had a hard time accepting that Gentiles could become Christians without being Jews, too. This tension was felt throughout the years of Paul’s ministry. The elders asked Paul to join in a purification right

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at the Jewish temple to show all the Jews that he was not their enemy. Paul participated in the 7-day custom because he loved the Jewish people and wanted them to obey God and follow God's Son, Jesus. This vow was most likely a personal voluntary vow, as in Numbers 6:2-12 and not a requirement of the law.

False rumours by the Jewish leaders about Paul defiling the temple led to an angry mob beating him. A commander of Roman troops saw the crowd getting out of control and rushed in to see what was happening. After arresting him, the commander allowed Paul to address the crowd. Paul told the crowd about his conversion, but when he again brought up teaching Gentiles, the crowd became furious.

The Commander ordered Paul flogged (whipped), but everything stopped when Paul revealed his Roman citizenship. Roman citizens had special rights, and the commander did not want to get in trouble with the Roman government. He wanted to find out exactly why the Jews were accusing Paul, so he arranged a meeting the next day with the Jewish leaders.

These transitional events marked the end of Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey. Paul had completed his visits to churches. From this time through the rest of the Book of Acts, Paul is headed toward one destination, Rome.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Imagine that you are playing a game of soccer. How would you feel if the other team scored three goals in a row? Perhaps you would feel like quitting. Would it be right to quit and leave your teammates before the game was over?

Today, we are going to learn about someone who did not quit even though bad things were happening. Even though it was hard, he was determined to obey the Holy Spirit and do what He asked him to do.

The Story:

(Teacher Note: This story is long and could be divided into two lessons. Part one could cover Paul's trip to Jerusalem, and part two could be about what happened in Jerusalem. In particular, if you are teaching younger children, I would suggest choosing only one part of the story to concentrate on.)

Paul was a missionary who travelled to many places teaching people about Jesus. Paul wanted everyone to know that Jesus had died on the cross for them and had risen from the dead.

Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey had started in Antioch. He had travelled to Greece and even Corinth, telling people about God and Jesus.

But God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit always agreed, and they had a plan for where Paul would go next. Paul knew it was time to go to Jerusalem and began the long trip.

As he travelled, the Holy Spirit also warned Paul that going to Jerusalem meant he would have many hardships and even go to prison. Paul knew obeying God sometimes meant doing very difficult things. But, even though it would be difficult, Paul listened to the Holy Spirit and obeyed His plans.

Paul wanted to get to Jerusalem before the special celebration called Pentecost, so he travelled quickly. Sometimes he walked, but he often sailed with his friends on a ship.

Even though he was in a hurry, he sent word for some of his friends from Ephesus to meet him in a place along the way called Miletus.

These friends were elders, and Paul told them to always care for the church in Ephesus. It was their responsibility to be leaders and always help people follow Jesus. They were like shepherds taking care of their sheep.

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After they had prayed together, Paul said goodbye to them. The elders did not want Paul to leave and go to Jerusalem, especially when he told them there would be dangers and that they would never see him again.

But Paul continued on his journey. He trusted the Holy Spirit and would go where the Spirit guided him. When the ship stopped in Tyre, Paul visited the disciples there. As he left, the church's men, women and children walked with Paul all the way to the beach and prayed with him before he got back on the ship.

Eventually, Paul's ship docked in the city of Caesarea. Paul met with the Christians there and stayed in the home of Philip, the evangelist.

A prophet called Agabus also lived in Caesarea. When Agabus heard that Paul wanted to go to Jerusalem, he acted out a prophecy to show Paul the future. He took Paul's belt and tied it around his hands and feet.

Then he said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

When the others heard this, they tried to persuade Paul to not go to Jerusalem. But Paul knew what he had to do. Even though there was danger, he would go where the Holy Spirit guided him.

Paul had obeyed God, and now God would use Paul in amazing new ways. Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey had taken him to faraway places, but now it was time to go to Jerusalem and talk about Jesus to the people there.

In Jerusalem, James, the brother of Jesus, was a leader in the church. Paul told James and others in the church about his Missionary Journeys and how both Jews and Gentiles had become followers of Jesus. James was happy to hear about Paul's missionary work.

But there were many arguments and angry people in Jerusalem. James and the other Christians advised Paul that he should be careful to show that he respected the Jewish people, so Paul went to the temple and participated in a ceremony.

But some of the Jews got very angry and told lies about Paul. They said he had shown disrespect in the temple and falsely accused him of bringing a Gentile into the Temple area where only Jews were allowed to go. A crowd gathered, and they became so angry that they dragged Paul out of the temple area and began to beat him.

When news reached the Roman commander that Jerusalem was in an uproar, he and his soldiers rushed in to stop the riot. The commander arrested Paul and put chains on him. The crowd was so angry and loud that the commander could not hear Paul answer the questions. Finally, Paul was taken up the steps to the military barracks.

On the way into the barracks, the commander allowed Paul to speak to the crowd again. At first, everyone calmed down and listened. Paul told them about how a miracle had happened to him and that he had become a follower of Jesus.

But when Paul said that Jesus had told him to go and teach the Gentiles about Jesus, the crowd became angry again. They thought Jews were better than Gentiles. Some thought that Gentiles had to become Jews before they could follow God.

So Paul was taken into the barracks away from the crowd. The Roman soldiers were about to whip Paul, but he said something that stopped them. Paul said, "I am a Roman citizen."

Everyone stopped what they were doing. There were very important laws about Roman citizens. Roman citizens were not supposed to be put in chains and beaten unless they had first had a fair trial. Soldiers could get in a lot of trouble if they did not obey the rules.

So the soldiers told the commander, who decided that Paul must have a chance to tell his side of the story. A time to meet was set up for the very next day.

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Paul had shared the news of Jesus when he was a free man. Now, he would tell about Jesus when he was in prison. Paul dared to go where the Holy Spirit led him no matter how dangerous or difficult. He would share the good news of Jesus no matter where he was or who he was with.

So what about you and I? Do we follow the Holy Spirit? Do we have the courage to tell people about Jesus?

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.

Click here to download the slideshow, or click here to download the pictures to print.
Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson. As mentioned earlier, this lesson is long enough to be divided into two parts, so you may show only some of the illustrations each time.

Another option would be to show the following video.

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

Review:

1. Even though people told Paul there was much danger there, what city did Paul want to go to? (Jerusalem)
2. Why did the prophet Agabus use Paul's belt to tie his hands and feet? (He was acting out the message: "the Holy Spirit says that the owner of the belt will be tied up by the Jews")
3. What did the Jews in Jerusalem say Paul was doing wrong? (They said he was bringing Gentiles into the temple area where only Jews could go)
4. Who does God want to be part of His family and to follow Him- Jews or Gentiles? (Both)
5. Why did the Roman soldiers carry Paul to their barracks? (To arrest him and save him from the angry mob of Jews who were trying to kill him)
6. What did Paul do when he was on the steps of the soldiers' barracks? (He preached about Jesus)
7. What does this story show you about God (Father, Son, or Holy Spirit)?
8. What does this story show you about people?

Reflection:

1. Many believers walked with Paul to the beach to tell him goodbye, including children. What do you think it smelled, looked, or felt like at this beach?
2. Why did Paul decide to go to Jerusalem even though he knew there would be hardships there?
3. If God asked you to do something or go somewhere and He said that you would have hardships there, would you obey Him?
4. When has the Holy Spirit guided you or someone you know? Has He ever asked you to do or say something?

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5. What do you think helped Paul obey the Holy Spirit and be brave by going to Jerusalem and preaching the gospel even to angry people?
6. Do you have any fears about sharing the good news with people? What are your fears?
7. God sees all of our actions, whether good or bad. How do you feel when you do something good, but only God knows that you did it?
8. Have you ever had to go through something hard because you obeyed God? When was it hard for you or others to obey God (this could include examples from the Bible)?
9. How do you think Paul felt about going to Jerusalem?
10. What part of this story do you find most interesting?
11. What is something you wonder about in this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- ABC: Jesus Died for You and Me Song
- J-E-S-U-S Song
- I've Got Peace Like a River Song
- Booster Song
- Potato Chip Song
- I Can Be a Missionary
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more options.

Activities and Crafts:

(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation)

Activities:

- Have the children role-play, wake up, and prepare to attend the Sunday morning worship assembly. The phone rings, and the child answers it. The teacher or another child speaks as if on the other end of the line. This person tries to convince the first child that he should do something else instead of attending worship. The first child chooses to do right in spite of opposition. Act this out a few times using different situations (friend, cousin, coach, or anyone could be ringing them.)
- To review, you or the children can draw a large outline of Paul on a whiteboard or piece of paper (even drawing with a stick in the sand works fine if you are outside). Then, after you have taught the lesson, ask the children to think about what they have just learned from the Bible. Have them write descriptive words and/or draw pictures inside and around the outlined illustration of Paul. When you see what the children are writing or drawing, you may be surprised or encouraged by what insights they have picked

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up from the story. This is also a good opportunity to correct or add to anything you might not have covered as well as you could have when you were teaching.



If you prefer, you can download and print the illustration of Paul provided here and then have the children write and draw on it for the review.

- Alternatively, if you are teaching a series of lessons about Paul, you might draw an outline of his body shape on a large poster or paper and then add descriptive words about him each time you study a new lesson.
- Click here for the 16 lessons about the Life of Paul grouped as a set.
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Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- ‘Listen to God’ Craft: Use painter’s tape (or another tape that is not too sticky) to form the letters G-O-D on the centre of a piece of paper. Guide children in colouring the paper using crayons, markers or chalk. This can be done in a “messy” way, and the colours should pass over the tape. As they fill out the paper, they lead the conversation on how many things happen in our lives that need our attention, and we are sometimes confused about our decisions. To conclude the craft, ask the children to pull the tape away from the paper carefully. The tape will have protected these areas, so the letters should stand out clearly. Talk about how asking God for wisdom is so important. He is not confused and always knows the best decisions for us. We can be like Paul and listen to God.
- Make a relief map of Paul’s Journeys featuring the place in today’s story. If you are studying Paul’s journeys over a few lessons, you could add more details to the map each time you learn about another stop on the journey. Instructions on how to make a relief map at https://www.weirdunsocializedhomeschoolers.com/step-by-step-to-making-salt-dough-map/

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  Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines (printable pages).
- Visit the Teaching Ideas page for additional activities and crafts.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page and puzzle worksheets (Calvary Curriculum)
- Craft: Doorknob hanger (sundayschoolcrafts.net)
- Review: Create a “passport” that covers Paul’s life. Good visual ideas and activities. It could be split up to go with several lessons or taught all together as a review of previous lessons concerning Paul (kidsbibledebjackson.blogspot.co.nz)

The map above is by Sweet Publishing and can be accessed through Free Bible Images.
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