

Date March 6, 2022

Scripture/Bible Story/Theme

Acts of the Apostles 21-23, 27-28 – The Adventures of Paul

Children's Illustrated Bible – p. 302 - 305

God can change and transform lives

Workshop Name

Ancient Roman Ship Mosaic

For the teachers:

The meaning of the story in a nutshell:

When Saul, later known as Paul, met Jesus on the Road to Damascus, his life was dramatically changed.

Encountering Jesus can transform our lives as well, if we are willing to have our eyes opened and become one of his disciples.

The following notes from the Workshop Rotation site are lengthy, but they do give a deeper understanding of Paul and that in turn may be helpful to the teachers as they teach the lessons in this unit.

Bible Background Notes for Teachers

It is easy to understand why Jesus chose to appear to Saul.

Saul was a man immersed in three cultures - Greek, Roman, and Jewish. He was trained in the scriptures as Pharisee (Acts 22). And he could support himself as a tentmaker wherever he went (Acts 18). This made Saul uniquely equipped for taking Christ's message beyond the Jewish world, and into the Greek and Roman world.

What this says to us is that our gifts, however mis-used or undeveloped, can be re-directed by Christ for his purposes, and that none of us is so damaged or "wrong" as to be beyond Christ's transformative reach.

What do we know about Saul?

Saul was born around the year 3 AD in Tarsus in southern Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. Tarsus was a bustling commercial center brimming with Greek culture, education, and philosophy. It is believed that Saul came from a relatively wealthy family because he had Roman citizenship (which could be purchased), and because his letters reveal him to be well-educated.

In Acts 22, Luke tells us that Saul was a student of Gamaliel, a famed Jewish scholar in Jerusalem. In Philippians 3, Paul describes himself as a Pharisee. Pharisees were not priests, they were students of scripture who tried to enforce their strict interpretations and practices on others, believing that their salvation came through their own right-ness ("righteousness") of belief and practice.

It is questionable how closely Saul followed Gamaliel's teachings. In Acts 5:38-39, Luke describes Gamaliel as convincing the Sanhedrin not to kill the followers of Jesus, but instead, warning them that "*If their plans and actions only come from people, they will fail. But if their plans come from God, you won't be able to stop them.*" Yet, according to Acts 7, the men who stoned Stephen "laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul."

Using a term from today's headlines, we could say that **at some point Saul became "radicalized."** By Acts 9, he is on his way with authority to persecute Jesus' followers in Damascus.

What this says to us is that no one, however, wrong or evil, is out of Jesus' reach.

Paul's Point of View on his Past and Transformation

In Philippians 3, Paul makes his case that his former point of view as a "faultless" Pharisee is now to be counted as "garbage" (waste, useless). **This theme of his world and perspective on his Jewish faith being turned upside down**, would be revisited by Paul many times. But rather than rejecting the past, he simply described it as something that was to be put in the past, The Old Testament and old ways simply prepared us for the transformation of God.

"this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

This theme should not be lost in our teaching. Saul was very religious, but that was not enough. Paul does not convert from one religion to another. He does not exchange one set of rules for another. **Paul's encounter with Christ transformed his entire understanding of "religion."** Instead of thinking we are saved by religious rules and practices, Paul repeatedly speaks about grace and love, forgiveness and tolerance. Paul's Good News finds its fullest expression in 1 Corinthians 13 where he describes "a more excellent way" —the way of Love.

Saul to Paul: What's in a name?

"Saul" literally means "**the one you prayed for**" or "the one you asked for" —which is reference to the people's demand for a king in 1 Samuel 8. But Saul always refers to himself by the Greek (Gentile) name of "Paul," which can be translated as "**small**" or "**humble.**" And in numerous letters, he refers to his "weakness" and "humility." So while some commentators simply ascribe the name change to a common custom among Jewish families living in the Gentile world to have both a Hebrew and a Gentile name, we can be sure that to Paul, his Gentile name was a perspective as well.

Perhaps not so coincidentally, our students are "small" in age and stature, and their talents are only beginning to be revealed. In a world that encourages them to "be big," "be the answer to prayer" or be #1 (literally: "be Saul"), "be gifted." Paul's name change and experience points us in a different direction. **It is the upward call that humble-Paul now values, and calls us to strive for** (Philippians 3).

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord,

We pray that you will bless and protect us and that you will show you mercy and kindness. May the LORD be good to us and give us peace. Amen.

Objectives

1. Locate the story of Paul in the Book of Acts.
2. Outline the basics of Paul's story, who's in it, what happened.
3. Describe how Saul/Paul was transformed by meeting and believing in Jesus.
4. Children will locate the following places on the map: Tarsus, Damascus, Jerusalem
5. Know that Jesus' "amazing grace" reaches out even to those who resist him or hate him.
6. Discuss ways Jesus encounters us and changes us, and steps we can take to help others "see" Jesus and become his disciple.

Supplies – see pictures below of Ancient Roman ships

white paper to glue the rest of the boat on

wavy cuts of blue and black construction paper

straight 2 x ¼ inch cuts of black construction paper to be used as the planks of the ship

zig-zags of yellow construction paper

straws

white paper cut in 4" x 4" squares – for the sail

scissors

glue sticks

pencils

Activity

The following vocabulary will be helpful to go over before beginning the activity.

Pharisee – Jewish leaders who were very careful to follow all of God’s laws and rules that they made up.

Gentile – someone who is not Jewish

Temple – the center of worship and religious life in Jerusalem

Synagogue – Jewish places of worship and study in cities and towns

Jerusalem – center of Jewish religious life

Damascus – one of the oldest cities in Paul’s time, where he was going when he was blinded and heard Jesus speak

Tarsus – capital city of Cilicia, in modern day Turkey, where Saul was born

Persecution – causing other people to suffer because of what they believe

For discussion prior to the activity:

What are some of the problems that Paul had in this story? He was a prisoner; terrible storm, ship wrecked; soldiers were going to kill the prisoners to keep them from escaping; bitten by a poisonous snake

How did God take care of Paul by what He said? God told him that he would survive the storm.

How did God take care for Paul by what He did? Paul didn’t die in the storm or when the ship wrecked; kept the soldiers from killing all the prisoners; kept Paul from dying from the snake bite.

Explain that they will be making a mosaic picture of a large Roman sailing ship similar to the one on which Paul was shipwrecked on his trip to Rome. Show them several pictures of this style sailing ship (see end of lesson). The ships were pointed on both ends and had one large, square sail. The stern (back end) of the ship was taller and thinner than the bow (front end). They were steered by two large paddles on either side of the stern. The ship could have been as large as 140 feet long and 36 feet wide, and we know from Acts 27:37 that there were 276 people aboard. The main power for these ships was the wind. The sailors arranged the angle of the sail to catch the wind; that’s all they could do to obtain power. Then they steered the ship according to the captain’s orders.

Actual Directions to make the mosaic

Looking at the pictures of the ancient Roman ships ask the children to draw the basic outline of the ship in pencil on the white paper. Try to make the sail in the picture be the central focus. The kids can make it three-dimensional if you punch a hole at the top and the bottom of the square white paper sail and pass the straw through the holes so the sail is bowed out. Cut the straw so that it isn’t too long. Then tape the bottom of the sail to the ship picture. Next fill the ship in with the black “planks”. They can add the curvy cut waves to show the storm surrounding the ship. They can also show the storm with the yellow zig-zags of lightning and use black ripped edges to make them look like storm clouds.

Main Point - God wants to fill us and empower us with the Holy Spirit to enable us to glorify Him even in the storms of life, just as the wind filled the ship’s sail and caused it to travel across the sea.

Reflection/Evaluation

What was the source or reason for Paul's willingness to travel and speak about Jesus in dangerous places?

Why was Paul traveling to such dangerous places to speak and teach about Jesus? Where would you be willing to go to share your faith in Jesus?

Lord's Prayer





