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A Key Witness

Key References: Acts 21:17-22:29; *The Acts of the Apostles,* chap. 38, pp. 399-418; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 106-113; Our Beliefs, nos. 13, 11, 4















power**text**

"I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace" (Acts 20:24).

power**point**

We serve others by telling them what Jesus means to us.

Sabbath

DO Do this week's activity on page 74.

Have you ever had to give a talk in front of your class or read something in church? Imagine that you had to stand in front of an angry mob and tell them why you loved Jesus. How do you think you would feel? Would you trust that God would let you know what to say?

Paul's last missionary trip had come to an end. He had reached Jerusalem at Passover time. The first morning, Paul and his fellow travelers reported to James and the other elders. They wanted to share the news of God's blessings on their work in the many cities they had visited. They also had offerings from the believers in those cities to help the work in Jerusalem.

One day as Paul was visiting in the Temple, some Jews from another city recognized him. "Men of Israel!" they shouted. "Help! This is the man who talks against the people of Israel, the law, and the Temple. He does it everywhere he goes. He has even brought Gentiles into the Temple to defile it." A crowd gathered quickly. Angry hands dragged Paul out of the Temple.

The crowd grew angrier and angrier as they hauled Paul away as if to stone him. They drew the attention of Roman guards, who rushed to find out what was happening. As the Roman soldiers got close to Paul, the people drew back from him. The captain ordered the soldiers to carry Paul to the Roman headquarters until he could figure out what was going on.

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Sunday

READ Read Acts 21:17-36 and this week's story, "A Key Witness."

REPORT Write or record the story of Paul's arrest as if you were a news reporter.

LEARN Begin to learn the power text, Acts 20:24.

PRAY Pray that you will be willing to witness in difficult circumstances.

Monday

READ Read Acts 21:37-40.

THINK Why did Paul want to address the crowd? Why did he ask permission first? Why did he speak to the soldiers in Greek and to the crowd in Aramaic?

DISCOVER Find out ways to say "Praise the Lord" in more than one language.

PRAY Pray for opportunities to witness.

Tuesday

READ Read Acts 22:1-5.

THINK Why did Paul talk about his background first? Why is Gamaliel important?

CREATE Read Philippians 3:20. Create a passport to reflect your heavenly citizenship.

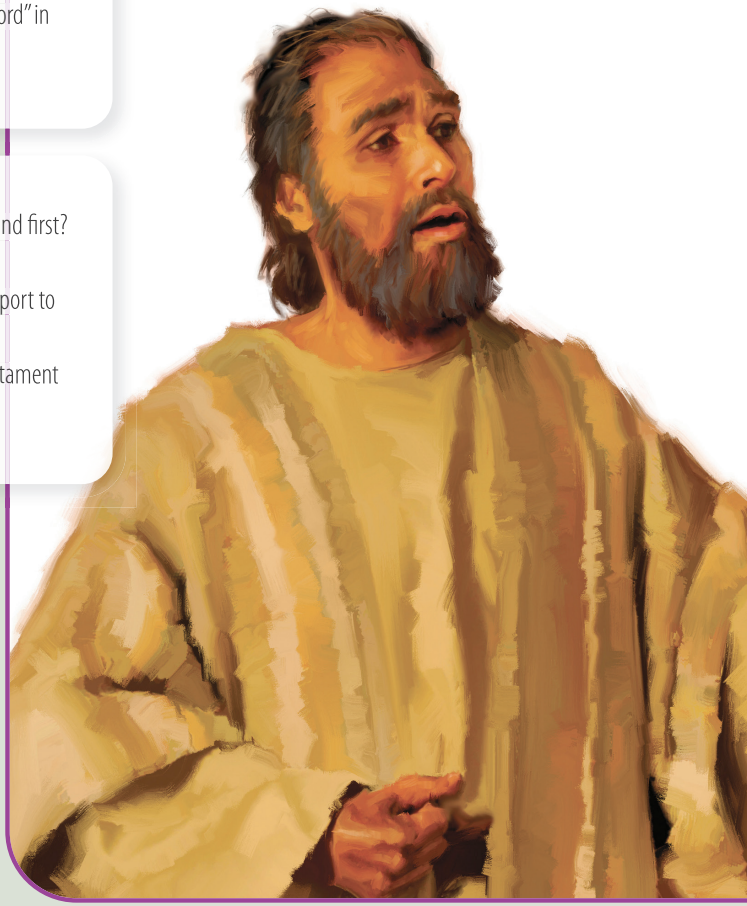
DISCOVER Find Tarsus of Cilicia on a New Testament map. Where would it be today?

PRAY Pray for your country and its leaders.

"May I speak to you?" Paul spoke calmly and politely to the captain in perfect Greek as they entered the headquarters building.

The captain replied with surprise. "Aren't you the Egyptian terrorist who has taken 4,000 men out into the desert to overthrow the government?"

"No," Paul smiled, "I am a Jew from the well-respected city of Tarsus in Cilicia. Could I please speak to the people outside?" The captain, surprised, granted his request, and they stopped on the stairs. Paul turned toward the crowd. The people started to quiet.



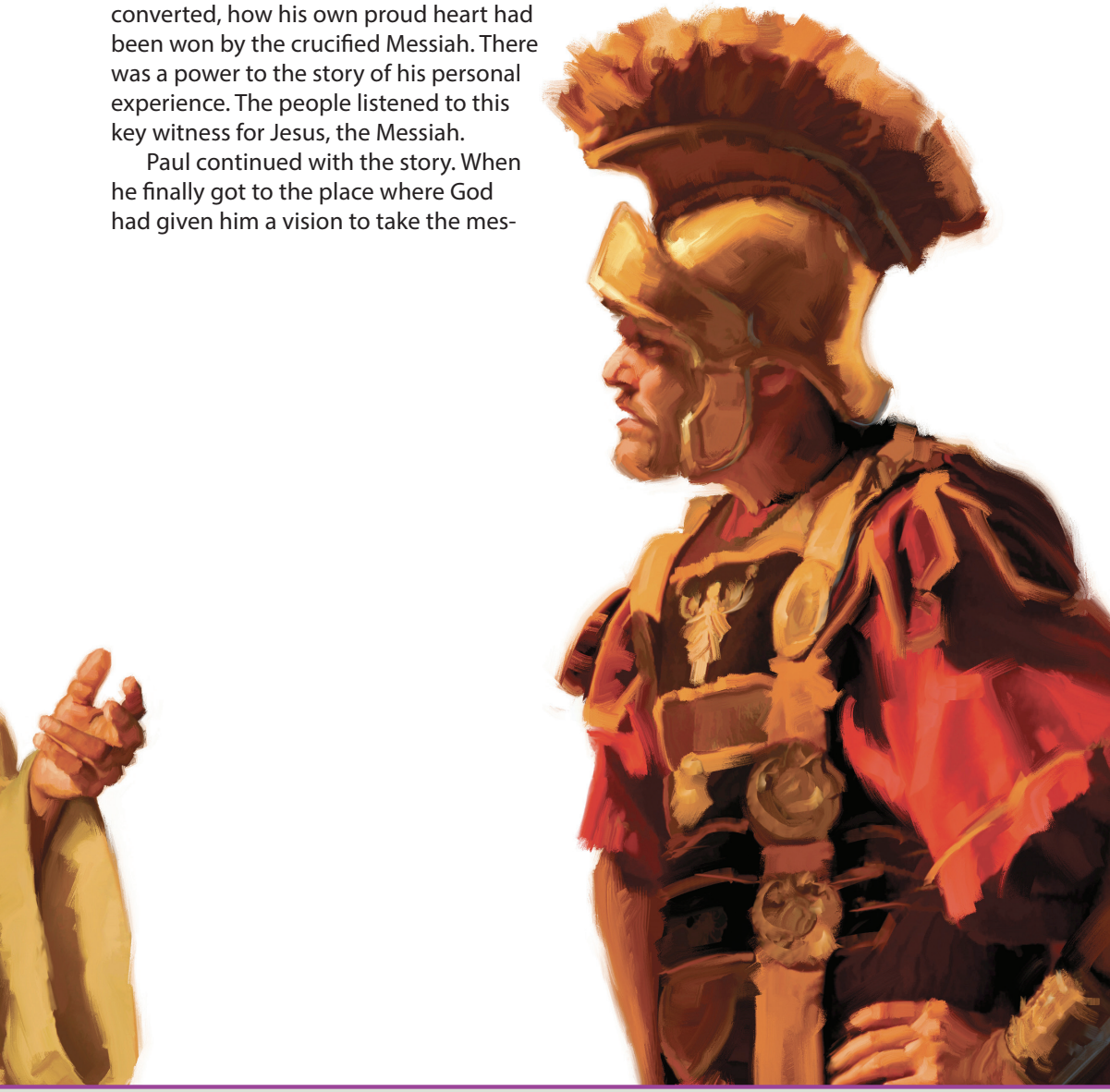
Paul now talked in Aramaic to the people who had been trying to kill him.

"I am a fellow Jew," he began. "I was educated right here in Jerusalem. I became a member of the Sanhedrin and persecuted the followers of Jesus."

He told them how he had been converted, how his own proud heart had been won by the crucified Messiah. There was a power to the story of his personal experience. The people listened to this key witness for Jesus, the Messiah.

Paul continued with the story. When he finally got to the place where God had given him a vision to take the message about the Messiah to the Gentiles, the listening Jews erupted. "Take him away. Kill him. He doesn't deserve to live," they screamed.

The surprised Roman captain ordered the soldiers to take Paul up the stairs



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Wednesday

READ Read Acts 22:6-12.

THINK Why did Paul mention Ananias's devotion to the law and the Jews' respect for him?

DO Following Paul's example, begin writing your own testimony in your Bible study journal. Start with where you were born and grew up, where you go to school and church, who your teachers are.

PRAY Thank God that He has a plan for your life.

Thursday

READ Read Acts 22:13-22.

THINK What did Paul say that made the crowd so angry at him? Why? How was Paul serving God in this situation?

DO Finish writing your testimony. Plan to share it in family worship tomorrow.

PRAY Pray that you will have the courage to give your testimony despite others' reactions.

Friday

READ Read Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-10; and Acts 26:4-18 with your family.

COMPARE Compare and discuss the differences among these three stories.

THINK What did Paul always do when telling his story? Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 for the answer.

SHARE Read your testimony to your family. Ask them to tell theirs.

PRAY Thank God for being able to serve Him by telling others about Jesus.

and beat him until they could find out what he had done. Almost instantly the soldiers had Paul upstairs, stripped from the waist up, tied to posts, and ready to be flogged.

Finally Paul got the attention of the centurion. "Isn't it against the law for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't been convicted of a crime?" he asked politely.

"Stop!" cried the centurion, running for the captain.

"This man claims to be a Roman citizen," he gasped. "We'd better be careful what we do to him."

The captain joined the centurion and returned to where Paul was tied. "Are you really a Roman citizen?" he asked.

"Yes, I am," Paul replied.

"It cost me a lot of money to buy my citizenship," the captain confided as he handed Paul back his outer robe.

"I was born a citizen," Paul answered again.

The captain called a guard. "Remove his ropes and show him to one of the rooms downstairs. I've got to find out what this is all about."

Alone in a guarded room, Paul thought over the events that had taken place since he had arrived back in Jerusalem. He didn't know exactly how this would turn out in the end. But he was glad that, once again, God had given him an opportunity to share his story with so many different people. He knew that what God had done for him had made him a key witness of God's goodness in sending Jesus as the Messiah. He would continue to testify about God's grace as long as he could, in Aramaic, in Greek, and in chains, if necessary.



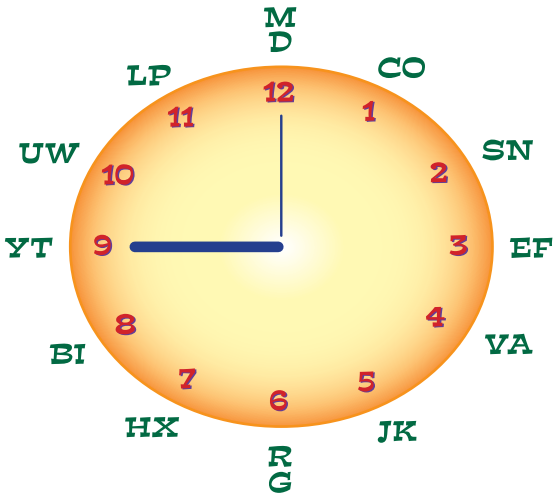
PUZZLE
9

TIME IS SHORT

Instructions: Consider the following Bible verses:

"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near" (Isaiah 55:6). "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14).

What do we need to do then? To find out, decode this message by choosing one of the letters from the clock for each time (hour) listed. For example, for 9:00, pick either Y or T.



9:00, 3:00, 11:00, 11:00; 1:00, 9:00, 7:00, 3:00, 6:00, 2:00;
4:00, 8:00, 1:00, 10:00, 9:00; 5:00, 3:00, 2:00, 10:00, 2:00;
10:00, 7:00, 8:00, 11:00, 3:00; 9:00, 7:00, 3:00, 6:00, 3:00;
8:00, 2:00; 2:00, 9:00, 8:00, 11:00, 11:00;
9:00, 8:00, 12:00, 3:00.