11

Keep Talking

Key References: Acts 9:15, 16; Acts 20:24; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; *The Acts of the Apostles,* chap. 50, pp. 509-513; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 149-151; Our Beliefs, nos. 10, 17, 11















powertext

"Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you" (Acts 18:9, 10).

powerPoint

We speak about God's grace wherever we are.

Stand up and stretch as high and as wide as you can. How does that feel? Imagine what it would feel like if you were chained and not able to stretch or move freely. Paul was in that situation. Many others may have felt depressed in such conditions, but Paul was full of hope. Moreover, he encouraged everyone with messages of God's grace.

The filthy cell is dark. A thin shaft of light filters in from a window high above. The prisoner's thin clothing is not enough to keep out the chill of the cold, damp stone floor and walls. Heavy chains clank each time he moves. He is awaiting execution, and his pen scratches across the paper as he writes last letters of hope and encouragement to his friends.

This is not the first time Paul has been thrown into prison. His life as a messenger of God's grace has been hard. Lashed by the Jews five times; beaten with rods three times; stoned once; shipwrecked three times, once floating at sea for an entire day and night. His life has been one of constant danger—from the Jews, from the Gentiles, from rivers, from bandits, in the city, in the country, from unfaithful friends.

He has gone without sleep, without food, without water. He has been cold and naked. Prison is nothing new. Yet in every one of these situations Paul found the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus. Shipwrecked and stranded on the island of Malta for three months, Paul used the time to make converts. Imprisoned under house arrest in Rome for two years, he preached the gospel of grace to his guards

Sabbath

DO Do this week's activity on page 88.

11

Sunday

READ Read Acts 9:15, 16, 20-24 and this week's story, "Keep Talking."

WRITE Write the power text, Acts 18:9, 10, on a stone to remind you of God's protection.

LEARN Begin to learn the power text, Acts 18:9, 10.

PRAY Ask God for strength to witness, even in difficult times.

Monday

READ Read Acts 16:22-34.

RESEARCH Trace Paul's second missionary journey on a map.

ANSWER What would you do if you were facing some of Paul's trials?

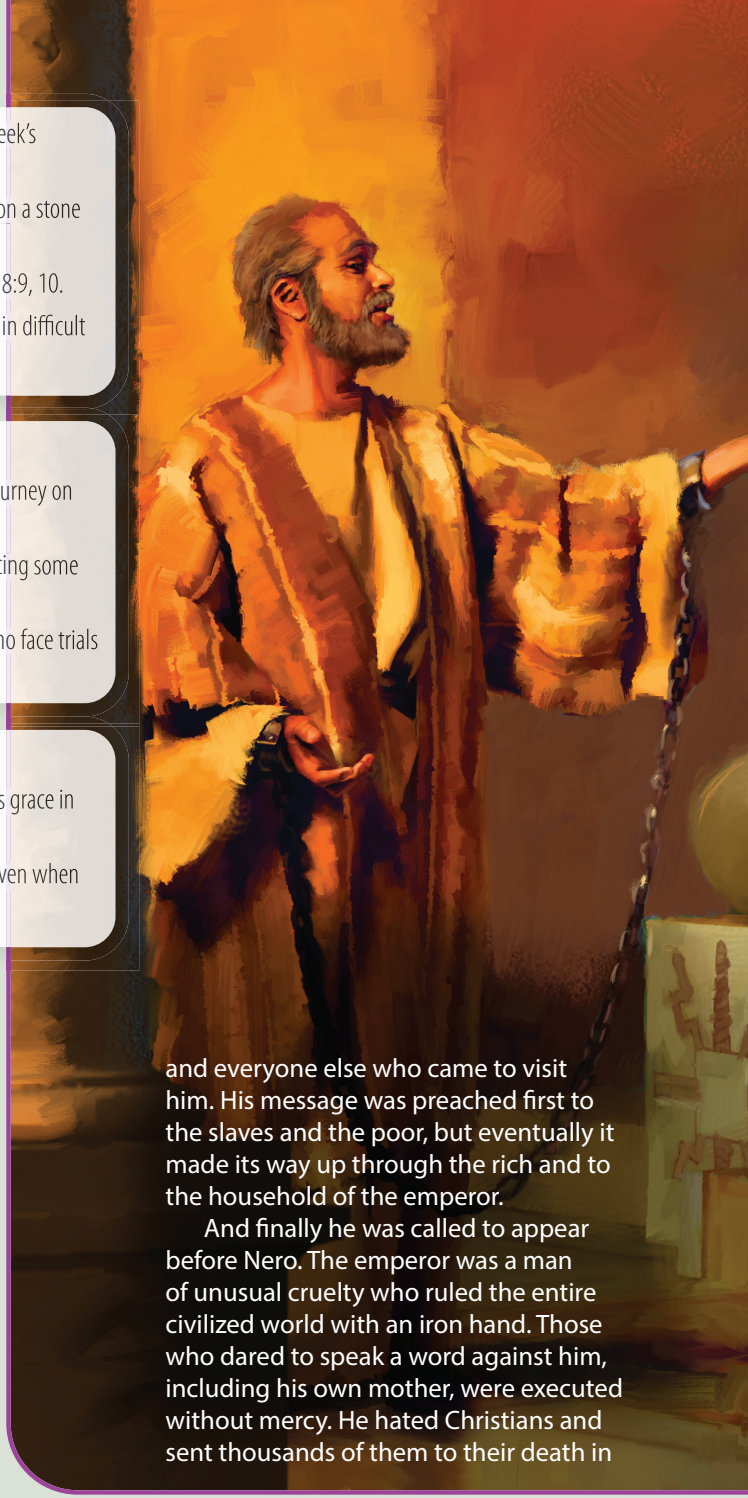
PRAY Ask for God's protection for people who face trials while sharing their faith.

Tuesday

READ Read Acts 21:20-40.

REFLECT How can your attitude reflect God's grace in difficult situations?

PRAY Ask God to help you share His grace even when you are falsely accused.



and everyone else who came to visit him. His message was preached first to the slaves and the poor, but eventually it made its way up through the rich and to the household of the emperor.

And finally he was called to appear before Nero. The emperor was a man of unusual cruelty who ruled the entire civilized world with an iron hand. Those who dared to speak a word against him, including his own mother, were executed without mercy. He hated Christians and sent thousands of them to their death in



Rome. When Paul was called to defend himself on charges of rebelling against the government, he had no reason to be hopeful. But God had other plans for Paul's court appearance, and He knew He could count on Paul to use the opportunity to witness for Him.

A Roman prisoner was allowed to bring someone to court with him to help argue his case, much like a lawyer does today. But no one was brave enough to appear before Nero with Paul.

"At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me," he wrote to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:16). "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth" (verse 17).

In a court appearance that would make others tremble, Paul stood calmly in the crowded hall and presented the good news about Jesus. People from many lands listened in awe as he explained how Jesus came and paid the price to

11

Wednesday

READ Read Acts 23:9-11.

WRITE Write in your Bible study journal about a time when God helped you be courageous in sharing His grace with others.

CREATE Create a song/poem about Paul's experiences.

PRAY Ask Jesus for courage to face your fears.

Thursday

READ Read Acts 28:17-20.

THINK What would you share about God's grace if you were unjustly accused and questioned in court?

WRITE Write your answer to the above question in your Bible journal.

PRAY Pray for the people who are wrongly accused.

Friday

READ With your family, read Acts 9:15 and Romans 5:3-5.

SHARE Talk about Paul's calling by God and his perseverance in completing the task God assigned to him. What has God called you to do for Him?

ACT Award someone who inspires you with a Perseverance of Paul Certificate and tell them that their faith encourages you. If you don't have a certificate from Sabbath School, write out Romans 5:3-5, using the person's name. Write as if they have already done what the verses describe.

PRAY Thank God for His grace and ask Him to help you be His messenger of hope.

save us from our sins. Paul's words and the peace of Jesus that showed on his face converted many of the powerful and mighty who heard him that day.

Nero himself was influenced by Paul's speech and returned him to prison instead of throwing him to the lions in a public execution.

Nero eventually ordered Paul beheaded, but even on his way to his execution Paul preached the gospel of Jesus. Some of the soldiers who watched him die were moved by the Spirit of God as they listened to his grace-filled words.

Paul didn't complain that God had abandoned him as he sat alone in a filthy dungeon. His faith in his Savior was never shaken. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing," he wrote in his last letter to Timothy (verses 7, 8).

Paul was called to share God's message of grace in unusually difficult circumstances. But even in prison, even standing before one of history's most famous dictators, even on his way to his death, he found a way to share with others the good news about God's grace. He felt God's presence with him in even the worst of circumstances and used each to share his faith.

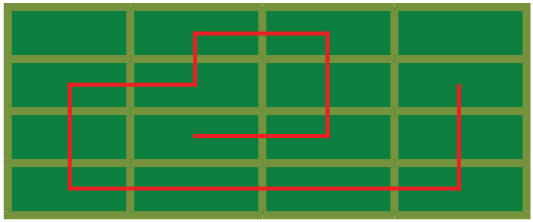
We don't know what our lives will bring. But God has promised to be with us no matter what lies ahead. "And surely I am with you always," Jesus promised (Matthew 28:20). It's a promise that we, like Paul, can take with us wherever we go.



PUZZLE
11

NO MATTER WHAT

Instructions: Find a Bible promise by following the pattern indicated by the red line. Once you have found the Bible verse, write it on the line below:



see	and	always	be	time	through	be	with
that	trouble,	are	seen	trouble,	of	at	us
you	of	us	at	all	times,	always,	all
times	all	with	me,	all	at	and	today
all	and	be	you	with	am	will	times,
at	us	will	always,	you	I	age.	the
us	with	be	to	and	surely	the	all
through	all	of	the	very	end	of	the