



LESSON NINE: THE GOSPEL BRINGS PERSECUTION

*Lamb of God Lutheran Church, Columbus, OH
November 25, 2018*

RELATING TO THE WORLD'S STORY

- 1) Our world is filled with suffering, distress, abuse, and injustice. They are more visible in some cultures and felt more by some individuals, but they are everywhere. When people experience such things, how does it affect the way they view themselves, other people, life, and God?

LEARNING FROM PAUL'S STORY

- 2) Read Paul's story in  Acts 16:16-25, and watch the fifth segment of  *To the Ends of the Earth* (22:10-27:22). Compare how the young girl's slave owners reacted to the injustice they experienced with how Paul and Silas reacted to the injustice they experienced.
- 3) How do different individuals, cultures, or groups today depict Christian values and acts of kindness when it differs from or conflicts with local or personal culture, customs, and worldviews?
- 4) Read Jesus' words in  John 15:16-21. Compare and contrast what Paul and Silas experienced with what Jesus experienced during his life on earth.
- 5) Why are Jesus' words important to remember? Why are they easy to forget?

It didn't take long for a mob to form against Paul and his mission crew. There was no trial, no time for fact-finding, just raw mob emotions. They were stripped of their clothes, beaten, and thrown in a maximum-security prison. There was no way for escape. No assurance if they would ever be released.

- 6) Evaluate Paul and Silas' reaction in prison. What does it tell you about them?

Want to know more?

Paul lists the sufferings he went through and the strength he found in weakness

2 Corinthians 11:22-31

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

About Paul God had said, "This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name" (Acts 9:15-16). The worldly powers that came against Paul were the same ones that had Jesus whipped and crucified on a shameful cross. Then Stephen was stoned to death for his faith (Acts 7:54-60), and James was put to death with the sword (Acts 12:1-2). Opposition to Christians continues today. Over 35 countries are labeled with extreme or very high persecution against Christians. Many have been marginalized, jailed, had their homes burned down, or even killed for standing strong in their faith in Jesus.

- 7) What can we learn from the words Paul wrote that help us endure with confidence and strength when we face suffering for Christ?

 Romans 5:1-8

 2 Timothy 2:8-13

 2 Corinthians 4:6-18

- 8) Personal Reflection: Choose one or two key thoughts from the passages above that you see as most encouraging for you or most valuable to share with other Christians who face suffering for Christ.

Paul must have recalled how Jesus was shamed publicly – stripped naked of his dignity and honor and hung with criminals. But “he entrusted himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23). How do you keep from growing weary and not losing heart? “Fix your eyes on Jesus ... who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Want to know more?

Apostle Peter rejoices in suffering for the name of Christ

Acts 5:29-33, 40-42
1 Peter 1:3-9; 2:19-25;
4:12-16

9) The dungeon became a worship space for Paul and Silas. The songs they sang probably cried out to God for strength and expressed their praise and joy in their Lord. Their prayers gave words to their trust and confidence in Jesus and perhaps asked forgiveness for those who had wronged them and mercy for their fellow inmates.

What songs, hymns, or verses might help you through unjust suffering or difficult times?

Want to know more?

Words of comfort & strength when suffering

Psalms 23, 27, 42, 46,
61
Romans 8:18,28,35-39

MAKING IT YOUR STORY

10) If you were in Paul’s situation, what would fellow prisoners learn about you and God from your comments and reactions? Plan what you can do to prepare for unexpected suffering so that you too become a light that leads people to glorify God when Jesus returns.

THIS WEEK:

- *Learn this Bible Story to share: **Joseph in Egypt** (Genesis 37,39-41,45,50).*
- *Research where Christians are being persecuted most today. Imagine yourself there. How would you fare? Pray for their strength and freedom. If possible, encourage them and their families.*

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.