

## WORSHIP

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Let the Praises Ring; Endless Praise; Great Are You Lord; Jesus, Son of God; The Cause of Christ

## WELCOME

If you have only once chance to say one thing to those who mean the most to you on earth, what would you say, and why?

## WORD

### ACTS 21:15-20

<sup>15</sup> After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem. <sup>16</sup> Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge. <sup>17</sup> After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. <sup>18</sup> And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup> After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. <sup>20</sup> And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; <sup>21</sup> and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs."

(Read **Acts 21:15-40** in its entirety.)

Paul and the team have now arrived in Jerusalem, bearing a much-needed financial gift for the brethren. It is amazing how this gift was given by Gentile believers for their Jewish brethren in Christ. The gospel of Jesus truly has the power to unify us and remove barriers that naturally exists between people from different backgrounds. It was also a testimony of Paul's fruitful ministry to the Gentiles despite of all the troubles he encountered along the way. What motivated Paul as he planted churches from one Gentile city to the next can be seen through his own words in **2 Cor. 5:14** which tells us that it was the **love of Christ**. This was what Paul held as of highest importance in his life.

**Acts 21:16** introduces us to a long-time believer from Cyprus named Mnason. He welcomed Paul and his team to stay at his home. Nothing more is said of him, but Mnason was probably disciplined by those early believers who fled persecution in Jerusalem which Saul instigated. Now, because of Jesus, Mnason and the rest of the Jerusalem brethren welcomed Paul gladly (**v.17**). Mnason, like Philip (**Acts 21:8-9**) has obviously forgiven Paul and relates to him now as a brother in Christ. How about us, is there someone from our family (and church family) who has hurt us in the past, that we do not welcome warmly because we have not forgiven them?

Paul recounts in detail all that God has done among the Gentiles, and the Jerusalem elders were glad and glorified God (**v.19-20**). We celebrate God's goodness when we count every blessing He gives, small or great as we give Him thanks and glory that He deserves. The Lord is doing many amazing things among us. What has God done in your life that you can thank Him and give glory to Him for?

**Acts 21:21-26**, seems to act as a buffer between the warm hospitality of the believers and the hostile reception by unbelievers towards Paul. This passage shows us how Paul

was "**firm with the essentials**" and "**flexible with the non-essentials**" of the Christian faith. With non-essentials such as certain religious practices—in this case, the purification rituals that Jews who have come from Gentile places must undergo when they enter Jerusalem—Paul was more than willing to fulfill so as not to cause anyone to question his gospel message and teachings about Christ. He followed the instructions of the Jerusalem church elders and completed what was required for his ritual purification.

What are some of the essentials of the Christian faith that we must be firm with? This is so important, as Jesus himself considered it so crucial when He prayed that all believers in Him will become one (**John 17:20-21**). When we are united in the essentials of the faith, then the world will know that we belong to Jesus, and they will take notice of the love we have within the family of God. The deity of Christ, the Trinity, the gospel, salvation by grace alone by faith alone, are some of these essentials. Some of the non-essentials that we ought to be flexible about would be the style of worship services, signs and wonders, timing of the second coming of Christ, divorce and remarriage. To fellow believers, the one thing that we should say ought to be "**I love you. Let us major on the essentials.**" Someone once wisely gave this guideline we all should follow, "**In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity.**"

Despite Paul's submission to the non-essential Jewish religious beliefs, his presence in Jerusalem during Pentecost was met with hostility by the Jews. He was falsely accused that he "is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place" (**v. 28**). The situation quickly became dangerous for Paul, especially since the

## WORD (cont'd)

accusation had to do with the Law. The Feast of Pentecost was by then a Jewish celebration of how God gave the Law to Israel. Paul soon found himself violently brought out of the city gates, getting beaten by a Jewish mob intent on ending his life (v. 30-31). But God, just in time, rescued Paul through the Roman authorities—a commander took Paul, bound in chains and had him protected by soldiers from the angry crowd who wanted him dead (v. 32-38). Paul, bound in chains, knew this day would come—as Agabus prophesied back in **Acts 21:10-11**.

Bloodied and badly beaten, yet calm and focused, Paul courteously asked permission from the Roman commander

to allow him to address his detractors. The commander allows Paul to speak, and while the apostle spoke in Greek to the commander, he now turns to speak to his fellow Jews in Aramaic. Under extreme stress, Paul displays amazing self-control and focus, traits that can only come from the filling of the Holy Spirit! This is where **Acts 21** ends, and we may wonder what would Paul tell this crowd of hostile unbelievers? This was probably the only chance he would ever get to address this group of people. We will learn more about this in **Acts 22**, but we can be certain that this is the truth that we are to share to those who are not yet believers in Christ: **“Jesus loves you. He is the essential for your life.”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)*

How are you living your life right now? Do you FOCUS on the Truth that Matters?

- FAITH - Do you believe God has a mission for you? Is it to share Christ to your co-workers, disciple family members, or perhaps be more involved in mission endeavors in other cities?
- OPPORTUNITY - What occasions does God give you to share His love and truth on a daily basis? How can you maximize those opportunities this week?
- COURAGE - What are you afraid of in terms of living all-out for Jesus? Is it perhaps the hostile reception of unbelievers? What promise of God in the Bible can you claim to counter this fear?
- UNITY - How can you best love God's people despite our differences? How can you promote unity among believers?
- SACRIFICE - What do you need to give up for Jesus' sake so that you may be able to fulfill His mission for you?

## WORKS

### PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for wisdom for how you can live life focused on the Truth that matters. Pray that those outside the church will witness how you live in unity with the Body of Christ in the essential matters of the faith; as a result, unbelievers will want to know and follow Jesus too.

As you continue in the power of the Holy Spirit to show compassion and care to others who may be hostile to the gospel, by faith let them know that Jesus loves them, and He is the essential they need in their life.

### WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

#### I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

#### II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants
- A God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

#### III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

#### IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

#### V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends