

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Your Grace is Enough, Wonderful Grace of Jesus, I'd Rather Have Jesus, Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)

WELCOME

What three (3) words will you use to describe your life today? What are you most grateful for to the Lord about your life?

WORD

ACTS 22:14–16

¹⁴ And he said, "The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. ¹⁵ For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."

Read **Acts 22:1-21** in its entirety.

Did you know that the apostle Paul wrote about God's grace 110 times in his epistles? In **Acts 22** Paul gives his testimony of God's grace as a defense against the accusations of the Jews. Here we discover four characteristics of the amazing grace of God that Paul experienced as we examine the three-point outline of the apostle's testimony.

GOD'S GRACE IS UNDESERVED

In **Titus 2:11-14**, he wrote how "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men...to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." That God's grace appeared to Paul who as Saul, persecuted the church (also called The Way) to the death, is proof of how God gives His grace to those who do not deserve it. **Before coming to Christ**, Paul thought that he was zealous for God as he tried to destroy the followers of Christ (**Acts 22:4-5**). Many of us are like Paul in his former life—he was sincere in his "service" to God, yet he was sincerely wrong. But when God's grace found him, Paul instead became zealous for good deeds because of his love for Jesus. Notice that as Paul begins sharing his testimony before his Jewish audience, he connected with them using a common language—Aramaic, that was easily understood by his listeners (**v2**). Another way by which he connected with them was by his reference to Gamaliel, his former teacher and a well-respected Jewish rabbi at that time. The apostle also wanted the people to know how he identified with them, that he understood where they were coming from. He introduced himself as a fellow Jew, and he addressed them as "brethren and fathers" (**v.2-3**). When we talk to people about God's grace, we must find ways to connect with them first using language and situations that they are familiar with.

GOD'S GRACE IS UNCOERCED

No one forced God to save Paul, or any of us. As the he transitions his testimony to his **turning point** on the road to Damascus (**v. 6**), there was no mention of anyone forcing the Lord to reach out to Paul. In fact, God's grace can come to us "suddenly" and quite unexpectedly just like in Paul's case (**vv.6-8**). We often do not recognize such encounters as God's grace at work, but when it comes, we are drawn to Jesus. We will often discover that God makes us experience His grace in a very personal way. While he and his companions saw the flash of light, it was only Saul (now Paul) who understood God's voice who spoke out of the bright light. This encounter prompted Paul to ask two important questions (**vv.8-10**) that we all should ask of the Lord as well: (1) "Who are You, Lord?", and (2) "What shall I do, Lord?"

God has a specific, custom-made purpose for each of us! For Paul, Jesus gave him his unique calling in life: "Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (**v.21**). Our turning point in our life story happens when Jesus reveals Himself to us by His undeserved, uncoerced grace. Then and only then can we begin to understand His will for our lives.

GOD'S GRACE IS TRANSFORMATIVE

Paul's dramatic encounter with the Lord started the process of his acceptance and understanding of who Jesus really was, and His plan for Paul's life (**vv.10-21**). This journey of knowing Jesus was not easy for the apostle. First of all, he was struck with blindness and became dependent on others to get around. God used this difficulty to teach Paul humility and his need for the Lord. God knows how to make us listen, often through problems and trials. God's invisible grace is often made available to us in the middle of difficult circumstances. The Lord was

WORD (cont'd)

transforming Paul's character, and the apostle, in **1 Cor 15:9-10** attributes his changed life to God's grace when he wrote, "but by the grace of God, I am what I am."

GOD'S GRACE IS TO BE RECEIVED

Paul's life as a committed follower of Jesus ("**After Christ**") started the moment he responded to God's grace extended to him on the road to Damascus. He did this by "believing in the Lord Jesus" (**Acts 16:32**) for his salvation. We too must decide to receive the grace God offers to us unconditionally and uncoerced through Jesus Christ, before He can transform our lives. It is also when we respond to God's grace that we receive our calling. Paul accepted the challenge to be an apostle to the gentiles as a response to the grace of God in his life. In fact, Paul had a tough life after accepting God's grace in his life, yet the apostle never wavered in his love and commitment to Jesus and His cause. Paul understood

grace in the light of God's justice, revenge and mercy. Justice is giving the sinner what they deserve according to the law; revenge is taking the law into our own hands and giving the sinner what they deserve; mercy is withholding the punishment that the sinner deserves but God's grace is not only withholding just punishment but giving undeserved favor to the sinner. Paul knew that he was a recipient of God's grace.

If you experience God's grace, your life will never be the same. You will want to live your whole life sharing about the grace of God to others by the way you treat them. You will want to share the story of your life before Christ, your turning point when you encountered the grace of God, and how Jesus transformed your life after you received His offer of grace—to save you from your sins and give your life purpose for His glory. Experience God's grace today and be a faithful witness to others about the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

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

1. How has God revealed Himself to you through problems and trials in life? What do you think is He trying to tell you through these difficulties?
2. Have you come to a point in your life where you made the decision to recognize Jesus as your Savior and Lord? What were the circumstances that God used to bring you to that point?
3. What changes have you seen in your life that demonstrates how God's grace has been transforming you to be more like Jesus?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Prepare your one-minute testimony of your experience of God's grace in your life. Pray for who God wants you to share your testimony with in the next 7 days. Take the time to be a witness for Jesus and tell others about how you encountered and experienced God's grace given to us through Jesus Christ.

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 and 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