

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Victory in Jesus, In Jesus' Name, In Control, What a Beautiful Name, Jesus

WELCOME

Are you currently feeling rested or feeling restless? Why? Share with the group.

WORD

ACTS 22:30 – 23:5

³⁰ But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them. ¹ Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." ² The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?" ⁴ But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" ⁵ And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"

Continue reading until **verse 35**.

Each day we face various challenges that make it hard for us to rest. If we look around us, we see so much need as well. So how do we find rest in this world? As we continue to study Paul's life and the difficulties he encountered, we will see how God encouraged him to be at peace in the midst of the turmoil surrounding him.

HAVE A GOOD CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD

The next day after Paul gave his testimony, he was standing before the Sanhedrin (**Acts 22:30**). He was completely confident for he knew he was innocent, and he knew God was with him. He looked intently at the Council and addressed them as brethren (**Acts 23:1**). These were people he knew. Some of them were students of Gamaliel like himself and many of them were Pharisees, his former associates. Paul then testified that he has lived his life with a perfectly **good conscience** before God. How can he say this when he has done so much wrong? Only by God's grace, since he responded to Jesus on the Damascus road.

God has created us all with a conscience deep within our soul. It is God's natural warning system of right and wrong. When we place our trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are given the Holy Spirit who ignites our conscience and guides us toward pleasing God with a life of holiness. When we ignore the prompting of the Holy Spirit, our conscience can over time become insensitive and hardened. In all we do, we need to listen intently, obey completely, to live with freedom from guilt and bring God honor through our daily choices. This is key to resting in God. Living with a pure conscience allows us to walk before God and men without guilt.

WALK IN HUMILITY BEFORE GOD

Upon hearing what Paul said, the high priest commanded those beside him to strike him on the mouth (**Acts 23:2**) – a

violation of the law since Paul hasn't been proven guilty yet. The high priest couldn't believe what Paul said because the former has never known freedom from sin. Unlike Paul, the high priest Ananias had never experienced what it means to have the blood of Christ cover his sins; he had religion but not a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus.

Paul reacted but was quick to correct himself when he learned that he was the high priest (**Acts 23:3-5**). Here we see Paul's humanity and humility. He respected the laws that God has put in place—recognizing God-ordained authority-- and was humble to admit that he was wrong. Humility is important to finding rest because God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble (**James 4:6**).

RECEIVE WISDOM FROM GOD

In an interesting turn of events, the Sadducees and the Pharisees turned against each other (**Acts 23:6-10**). The Spirit of God gave Paul wisdom at that very moment. He knew he was not going to get a fair trial and he perceived that there were two different groups present. The whole issue was the resurrection and so the Pharisees who were so mad at him were now on his side! When we face the storms of life, we can rest in God because he will give us wisdom as needed for the moment (**Proverbs 2:6**). In humility, we should ask God for wisdom and to the best of our ability make decisions based on what information God provides to us.

TAKE COURAGE IN HIS PRESENCE

The following night, the Lord stood at Paul's side and said, "Take courage..." (**Acts 23:11**). This phrase "take courage" is only used five other times in the New Testament. In all situations they had to do with Jesus and four of them were

WORD (cont'd)

of Jesus himself using the words to encourage (**Matthew 9:2, Matthew 9:22, Matthew 14:27, John 16:33**). God is our perfect Father who will never leave us when we feel distressed.

Forty of the Jewish religious leaders then form a conspiracy, to neither eat nor drink until they have killed Paul (**Acts 23:12-15**). But God's protection is limitless! He delivered Paul from the plot through his nephew and the centurion in charge of Paul assigned 470 soldiers as Paul's bodyguards and escorted him safely to where he needed to be (**Acts 23:16-33**). Likewise, we can take courage because of His limitless power. God is not only willing but is able to use anything and everything in our lives to accomplish His good purpose (**Romans 8:28**).

WAIT FOR JOY FOR AND WITH HIM

Paul now waits in a fine place, Herod's Praetorium, as he awaits God's call for him to speak before the rulers of Rome

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

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

1. Like Paul, can you say that you have a perfectly good conscience before God? Why or why not? How can you walk in humility before Him?
2. Are you waiting with joy for and with God? What specific steps will you take so you can you enjoy His presence now, look forward to His promises tomorrow, and remember His goodness yesterday?
3. If you are rested in Christ, in what ways can you carry the burden of those around you?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Practice your one-minute testimony in your small group. Pray for opportunities to tell God's story in your life.

If you know someone who is going through tough times and is currently restless, pray for and with that person. Ask God to give you wisdom on how to care for him/her and for opportunities to share the hope that you have in 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
- 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

(**Acts 23:34-35**). When we rest in God, we wait with joy. It doesn't mean our lives will be problem-free, but everything is more than awesome because of who we are waiting with and what we are waiting for. How do we wait with joy? We enjoy His presence today (**Exodus 33:14, Psalm 16:11, Isaiah 40:31**), we look forward to His promises tomorrow (**1 Peter 1:3-9, Revelation 21:1-4**), and we look at the past and remember His goodness yesterday (**John 3:16**).

We sometimes think of life with God only as having a specific destination. But the key to a joyful Christian life in this troubled world is to understand that we can wait joyfully for our final destiny and freedom from all troubles, because waiting with Jesus is a worthwhile journey. We can rest in Him because of what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. So, no matter what you are facing right now, take courage and rest in Him.