

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Jesus The Same, This Is Amazing Grace, God So Loved, You, Jesus Son of God, Cornerstone

WELCOME

When was the first time you heard about Jesus Christ? If you were to use one word to describe who Jesus is to you, what word would you use? Why?

WORD

(Read **Acts 24-26** in its entirety.)

ACTS 24

¹⁶ *In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men...* ²⁴ *But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.* ²⁵ *But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you."*

ACTS 26

¹⁸ *to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.* ¹⁹ *"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,* ²⁰ *but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.*

The Apostle Paul's life serves as an encouragement for all followers of Christ. He was not shaken by even the most difficult circumstances as he sought to fulfill God's mission for him. Instead, he was firm on his purpose, his eyes fixed on Jesus and was able to accomplish great things in the mission field. Today, we are bombarded by discouragements and challenges that cause many to lose hope. Paul had his hope rooted in Christ. If we want to remain faithful to our calling in the midst of our trials and sufferings, our hope must be grounded in Christ.

Paul was a worthy example of a FAITHFUL WITNESS for the gospel. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit (**Acts 1:8**) to enable us to be His witnesses to the entire world. To be a faithful witness:

1. BE CREDIBLE

A faithful witness is CREDIBLE. Paul's life was a good background for the message he shared to others. He was beyond reproach, and his confidence was in Christ. Amidst the accusations thrown against him (**24:1-6**), Paul was credible in his defense and there was no proof of his guilt over accusations that he was the ringleader of a Nazarene sect starting riots, etc. (**24:10-14**).

Paul was credible because he had a clear conscience before Christ and men. Having a clear conscience doesn't mean that we are perfect — it means that before God, we keep living a life that clearly brings honor and glory to Him.

1 Peter 3:15-16 reminds us to always be ready to defend the faith with gentleness and reverence, and to keep a good conscience before those who are against us.

2. BE COURAGEOUS

A faithful witness is COURAGEOUS. Sometimes we feel embarrassed to speak about the gospel, but like Paul, we can be filled with courage as we lean on the assurance that God is with us. **Acts 24:24-25** recounts how Paul discussed righteousness, self-control, and God's judgment with governor Felix and his Jewish wife, Drusilla, who wanted to hear what Paul had to say. The apostle's courageous witness had the governor scared (**v. 25**) that he sent Paul away!

The gospel that Paul preached was not about a ticket to heaven. Jesus died for our sins, and when you accept Jesus as your Savior, you must turn away from your sins, acknowledging that He is now your Lord.

Paul knew the life of both Felix and Drusilla. Felix was cruel, unrighteous, and immoral. Drusilla divorced her husband to be with Felix. That is why when Paul presented the gospel, he did not sugarcoat the truth; he told them of God's righteousness, and the coming judgment! We are to speak the truth in love (**Ephesians 4:15**). Though Paul was a credible and courageous witness, Felix did not believe in Jesus. So, remember that you can be the best witness, but you cannot change the hearts of people. Changing hearts is ultimately God's department! As witnesses, we can only make sure that we share Christ with others, empowered by the Spirit and trust God for the results.

WORD (cont'd)

3. BE CHRIST-CENTERED

Paul thereafter was kept in jail, and yet even in the dark times, Paul's heart continued to hope in Christ. When the new governor, Festus, was about to send him to Jerusalem for trial, Paul knew that it will be a treacherous route; with divine wisdom, he appealed to Caesar to stand trial in Rome (**Acts 25:10-11**). In his report to King Agrippa II, Festus' verdict was that Paul could not be charged with any crime (**vv. 18-20**). In **Acts 26**, Paul was given permission to meet King Agrippa II and queen Bernice, before whom Paul once again was able to share the gospel through his testimony as he defended his case.

Paul's defense was not a mere presentation of his innocence, nor an attack against his accusers. A faithful witness is always CHRIST-CENTERED. Paul took the opportunity to share God's amazing story in his life! We see this repeated in Acts — Paul was consistent with his story of redemption by Christ. He defined himself a strict adherent to the Law as a Pharisee and shared how he led

the persecution of Christians (**vv. 8-10**) before his life-changing encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road. Paul was one guy you wouldn't want to invite to your Bible studies. He was considered a dangerous enemy of Christ. BUT NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD! As Paul continues his story, the central point became JESUS CHRIST. It is Jesus who plays the transformative role in our salvation story — to open our eyes, release us from darkness to light, forgive us of our sins, provide us an eternal inheritance, and to transform our lives!

Agrippa rightly observed that Paul wanted to persuade him to turn to Christ (**vv. 28-29**). Once again, the apostle was given a "not guilty" verdict by King Agrippa of any crime worthy of death or imprisonment. But the greater achievement of Paul was not getting cleared of all charges, but his **FAITHFUL WITNESS for the Lord** before kings and rulers, and all those who were present with them. Are you ready to be a faithful witness of the gospel? Be credible, be courageous and be Christ-centered!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

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

1. How credible are you as a witness for Christ? Share one recent example of how you keep a clear conscience before God and others.
2. Share how you practice Christ-centeredness in your everyday life. In what areas do you need to improve in being Christ-centered?
3. Who is that one person whom you will courageously share the gospel to this week using your one-minute testimony?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for the person that God brings to your mind that He wants you to share the gospel to. Pray that the Holy Spirit will remove their resistance to the gospel caused by ignorance, immorality or stubbornness, as you share Christ with them.

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