

## WORSHIP

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

This is Amazing Grace, Grace That Won't Let Go, Broken Vessels (Amazing Grace)

## WELCOME

How have you been more connected to people you care about during this time of great crisis?

## WORD

### ACTS 9:10-19; 26-27

<sup>10</sup> Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." <sup>11</sup> And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, <sup>12</sup> and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." <sup>13</sup> But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem; <sup>14</sup> and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; <sup>16</sup> for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." <sup>17</sup> So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup> And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; <sup>19</sup> and he took food and was strengthened.

<sup>26</sup> When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. <sup>27</sup> But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.

Grace is only grace because it is freely given and undeserved. **Romans 11:6** says that if something is achieved on the basis of works, then grace is no longer grace. This is why grace is unstoppable because it is from God alone, never from man's abilities or efforts. This we see clearly in the lives of three men in Acts 9: Paul the Apostle, Ananias the disciple, and Barnabas the "encourager".

### Grace is Underserved

Paul was not even interested in becoming a Christian in the first few verses of Acts 9, he was totally against it. As Saul, his goal was to destroy Christianity by sending followers of Christ to prison, persecuting them and putting them to death (**Acts 9:1-2**). Saul's transformation into a Christ-follower and into the great apostle Paul, was a demonstration of the undeserved grace from God (**Acts 9:15**).

### Grace is Initiated by God

**Acts 9:3-5** tells us that it was Jesus who took the initiative to introduce Himself to Saul in a dramatic encounter on the Damascus Road. God reached down to introduce himself to Christianity's greatest enemy during the church's earliest days. God does the same thing to us today (**Ephesians 2:8-9**), grace saves us from continuing on the wrong path in life. As a result of his encounter with Jesus, Saul goes blind and was completely helpless (**Acts 9:8-9**) when he reached Damascus. As Saul sits in darkness without eating or drinking anything

for three days, he probably never imagined that God's unstoppable grace was at work in his life!

### God's Grace is Always at Work

Grace comes often in mysterious ways and forms that we fail to recognize it as such. As **CS Lewis** wrote, "We can even ignore pleasures, but pain insists on being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pain. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." What God allowed Paul to experience was not pleasurable and perhaps you too are going through financial pain, loss of a loved one, health problems because of this COVID 19 crisis. You may be asking, "Lord, why is this happening to me?" and yet, as we discover in Paul's life, God's grace is always at work even in our most difficult times.

### Grace is Channeled Through Ordinary People

God's grace is undeserved, it is initiated by God, it often comes in mysterious ways and channeled through ordinary people.

### Ananias

Such was Ananias, introduced simply as a "disciple" of Jesus living in Damascus. He made himself available to respond to God's call as he responded, "Here I am, Lord" (**Acts 9:11**). What was most notable about this ordinary disciple was his willingness to obey God's command though he felt afraid and was reluctant at first to do so; he was willing to go beyond his comfort zone in obedience to God (**Acts 9:13-16**). Ananias'

## WORD (cont'd)

calling was not easy, but through him, Paul received God's undeserved grace (*Acts 9:17-19*).

Grace is not just for salvation, but it is the **enabling gift of God for us to overcome sin**. It is the work of God to transform even the hardened heart like Saul's. Ananias participated in God's work of grace in Paul's life when he obeyed. Such is the grace of God--he uses ordinary people, simple disciples of Jesus who nevertheless obey the Lord and go out of their comfort zones to do so. God used Ananias to evangelize, pray for, and baptize Paul. History was changed because God used Ananias to reach Paul!

### Barnabas

After some time, God uses another ordinary person, Barnabas, to encourage Paul to keep doing what he was doing (*Acts 9:26-27*). When others in the church avoided Paul because of his reputation as Saul, Barnabas went out of his way to welcome Paul. Can you be a Barnabas to someone today? Can you be an Ananias? God uses ordinary believers as much as he uses someone like Paul because where would the church or the world today be, if it were not for Ananias and Barnabas' ministry to Paul?

### God's Grace Transforms Lives

In *Acts 9:18-22* Saul's transformation became evident and he later became known as the great apostle Paul. Indeed, grace is

God's power to transform even our desires; it is the power of God that enables us to do his will (*Titus 2:11-12*).

Today, God's grace continues to transform lives through ordinary disciples. There are amazing stories from around the world of the great power of God transforming individuals, their families and communities. As ordinary believers obey God, the Lord uses them to pray for people who are sick, or in spiritual bondage and oppression. People are healed and set free from darkness and sin as they trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. As we celebrate CCF's 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Missions Month this August, we are amazed at how God's grace has reached thousands of people around the world through our online worship services with an estimated 300,000 viewers from 183 countries each Sunday. Through our BEYOND International Missions partners, there are 36,000 house churches established. We now have 44 CCF satellites around the world and our Skypleship ministry has exploded in growth with at least 1,600 groups meeting online. COVID 19 has not stopped God's grace in continuing on the mission. Will you be a channel of God's unstoppable grace? Share Jesus, our greatest hope, to a world that is suffering. Be part of the mission, go beyond your comfort zone today!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

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

1. In what ways have you experienced God's grace in your life?
2. Are you someone like Paul, Ananias or Barnabas? Why?
3. How can you be a channel of God's grace to others this week?

## WORKS

### PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for God to bring to mind someone who may need prayer for an encounter with Jesus, for healing or encouragement. Take time to pray for and with that person whenever possible. Share Christ with them and encourage them to obey God even in this COVID 19 crisis.

To take part in what God is doing through CCF as the mission continues, connect with us today!

**BEYOND** International Missions and Church Planting Movement

- Facebook: @ccfbeyond
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- Web: [ccf.org/ph/beyond](http://ccf.org/ph/beyond)

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### WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

#### I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives even in the midst of the pandemic

#### II. Country and the World

- Effective and compassionate solutions to the COVID 19 crisis in the Philippines and the world
- Repentance and salvation of people everywhere

#### 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