



JOURNEY WITH PAUL: CALLED TO BE FAITHFUL

Study Guide

October 30, 2022

Opening Prayer

Holy God, help us to continue to discern your call that we might be responsive as we listen to your voice.

As the Apostle Paul lived his life to promote the gospel, so let us live ours to share your message of healing and life for all people. Even in the face of death and unimaginable adversity, make us steadfast in our mission to serve you.

And as we face our death, may we begin to really live fully trusting in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

Video Teaching

Read Acts 21:27-40

When Paul got to Jerusalem, the church leaders asked him to show that he was not trying to tear down the Law of Moses. They asked him to take part in a Hebrew ritual (cf. Acts 21:20-24), and Paul agreed willingly. Ironically, during that ritual some of his enemies from Asia saw him in the Temple. They wrongly assumed he had taken a Gentile into the area set aside for Jews only, and urged the crowd to kill him. Only prompt action by Roman soldiers saved Paul from swift, violent death.

- As when the Ephesian silversmiths rioted (cf. Acts 19:30), Paul didn't want to run, but asked to speak to the angry crowd. The Roman commander, with his soldiers at hand, let him do it. We read Paul's Acts 22 speech during the first week of this series. He did not win the crowd over. Was it worth having a chance to "plant seeds" in people's minds, even if he did not convince them on the spot? Paul fought the faith before he accepted it. Might that have played a part in his wish to speak even to angry enemies?
- It's easy to see the overblown tone of the claims Paul's enemies made in verse 28. Paul cherished his Hebrew heritage, and did not teach "against" the Hebrew people, their law or the Temple. When have you seen others exaggerate the position of people they disagree with, creating a straw man that is easier to discredit? Are you able to differ with someone without falsely portraying or exaggerating what that person believes?

Read Acts 25:9-12, 26:1-32

Paul stayed in Roman custody for two years, safe from plotters (cf. Acts 24). Then a new Roman governor, Porcius Festus, saw it as good politics to please the Jewish leaders by sending Paul back to Jerusalem. But that journey still risked ambush. Paul, born in Tarsus and therefore a Roman citizen, used his legal right to appeal to Caesar. This assured him a trip to Rome under Roman protection (albeit as a prisoner). His strong testimony to Jesus triggered strong reactions in Festus and King Agrippa (a great-grandson of Herod the Great).

- In Acts 26:8, Paul posed a question that is still fundamental for Christian witness: "Why is it inconceivable to you that God raises the dead?" Some unbelievers might say, "I've never seen it happen." But we believe all kinds of things about our world and universe that we've never personally observed. Can you trust as strongly in Jesus' resurrection as Paul did? How can you, in love and concern, pose the question he posed?
- We sometimes say, "God doesn't call the equipped." It's true that God isn't dependent on our human abilities or credentials. But Paul's final journey showed God using Paul's training as a Pharisee, his Roman citizenship by birth, and his passionate Christian witness—a strikingly unique set of attributes that Peter, John or James would not have had. What qualities do you bring to your service for God that may allow you to serve in ways others might not be able to?



JOURNEY WITH PAUL: CALLED TO GIVE

Read 2 Timothy 4:6-13, 16-18

Family Activity

Even in Paul's darkest times, he believed deeply in the hope of Christ's resurrection. With the long, dark nights of winter approaching, consider how you will keep Christ's hope and light alive in your homes and hearts.

Maybe you can light candles and remember Christ is the Light of the World. Share the light of Christ by serving a neighbor or a person in need. Let God's Word light your path by reading Scripture each day—choose to memorize a verse each week as a family!

Light up your home with the hope of Christ by sharing joy, laughter and encouragement with one another. Pray for God to fill you with hope and light even in the darkest of times, and then share that light with the world!

In a moving letter, Paul asked Timothy to come to him before the Romans executed him. The requests for the cloak and the scrolls, “especially the parchments,” show Paul’s human frailty and his resolve to keep learning and growing right to the end. We don’t know if Timothy made it—but we know Paul’s unsinkable faith still inspires Christians around the world. As scholar N. T. Wright said, “The picture we get, as we take leave of this intimate and personal letter, is of a man facing serious trouble and likely death, beset with problems and anxieties, but who nevertheless remains determined to bring every single aspect of his life into the orbit of the gospel itself, the royal proclamation of Jesus as Lord. He lives in the present world, Caesar’s world, as already a cheerful citizen of the world to come, Jesus’ world.”

- You may feel as though you have only a few years left to serve God in this life, or you may have reason to look forward to many decades of faithful service. Is the present course of your life such that you are confident that, when it ends, you will be able to say, “I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith”? If not, what “mid-course corrections” do you want to make so that Paul’s words can also become your personal testimony?

Paul's Journey to Rome



Closing Prayer