

August 26, 2018

“Empowered: The Church on Fire!”

“A Journey through the Book of Acts”

“Don’t Let the Fire Be Quenched by Regret”

“And Agrippa said to Festus, ‘He could have been set free if he hadn’t appealed to Caesar.’” Acts 26:32

A. Paul appeals to King Agrippa...

“So Paul, gesturing with his hand, started his defense: ‘I am fortunate, King Agrippa, that you are the one hearing my defense today against all these accusations made by the Jewish leaders...’” Acts 26:1b-2

1. God gave Paul, a fairly unknown Jewish/Christian missionary, the opportunities to share his testimony to the Jewish Sanhedrin, Felix the Roman Governor, Festus the Roman Governor, and Agrippa the King of Palestine!

“Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You may speak in your defense.’” Acts 26:1a

2. Paul faced his former choices.

“I used to believe that I ought to do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus the Nazarene.” Acts 26:9

3. Paul used his life testimony to share the gospel in every opportunity given to him.

“One day I was on such a mission to Damascus, armed with the authority and commission of the leading priests.” Acts 26:12

4. Paul knew his purpose and was determined to fulfill his mission.

“I am sending you to the Gentiles to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me.” Acts 26:17b-18

5. Paul kept his primary purpose in the forefront of every opportunity he had to share.

“I preached first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that all must repent of their sins and turn to God—and prove they have changed by the good things they do.” Acts 26:20

6. Festus jumped into the middle of Paul’s appeal dismissing his words.

“Suddenly, Festus shouted, ‘Paul, you are insane. Too much study has made you crazy!’” Acts 26:24

7. Rather than be shut down, Paul appealed to King Agrippa again.

“‘King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do—’ Agrippa interrupted him. ‘Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so quickly?’” Acts 26:27-28

8. Paul made one final appeal.

“Paul replied, ‘Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains.’” Acts 26:29

9. The consensus from the King, the governor, Bernice, and all of the others was...“If only...”

“Then the king, the governor, Bernice, and all the others stood and left. As they went out, they talked it over and agreed, ‘This man hasn’t done anything to deserve death or imprisonment.’ And Agrippa said to Festus, ‘He could have been set free if he hadn’t appealed to Caesar.’” Acts 26:30-32

B. We make our plans but God holds the key to His purpose being fulfilled...

“You can make plans, but the Lord’s purpose will prevail.” Proverbs 19:21

1. Paul knew Jesus’ words had predicted that trouble may come.

“But before all this occurs, there will be a time of great persecution. You will be dragged into synagogues and prisons, and you will stand trial before kings and governors because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me.” Luke 21:12-13

2. Paul knew the importance of always being ready to share God’s message.

“For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.” Ephesians 6:15

3. Keeping focused on the plan and purpose of God, rather than his own setbacks gave Paul opportunities of a lifetime.

“Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You may speak in your defense.’” Acts 26:1a

4. Paul’s two-year delay in prison did not hinder him from maintaining his purpose. He knew that detours have a purpose. He was able to see these detours as divine appointments rather than interruptions or irritations.

“After two years went by in this way, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And because Felix wanted to gain favor with the Jewish people, he left Paul in prison.” Acts 24:27

5. Paul was undaunted by the refusals to hear his message of salvation, but he continued to offer the gift.

“The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:18

C. If only...how should we deal with regrets?

Paul had regrets from his past, **but** he was able to overcome those nagging temptations that would allow those regrets to overcome him.

“This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’—and I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of His great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in Him and receive eternal life.” 1 Timothy 1:15-16

1. When we confess our sin, He is faithful to forgive all our sin...and we are no longer condemned. We can’t change our past, we can only accept His forgiveness.

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...” Romans 8:1

2. If we have offended others, seek their forgiveness as well. Our testimony will only be respected when we have cleared the pathway to others.

“So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.” Matthew 5:23-24

3. Remember, God can use all things for good, even our failures and sin.

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.” Romans 8:28

4. Give thanks in all circumstances. It will keep you focused on God being in control rather than your own attempts to be in control.

“Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18

5. Don’t let your past define your future! Move forward! Trust God with His plan for your future!

“No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.” Philippians 3:13-14

6. God has designed us to be fruitful and to fulfill our purpose. Regrets will hold you prisoner and prohibit you from moving forward.

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”
Ephesians 2:10

7. Be changed! No matter what is behind. Let your past fuel you to do good to those in your present! Don’t just be sorry...be different! Write it down...and throw it away!

“Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
1 Corinthians 6:11

Let’s Live with

“No Reserves- No Retreats- No Regrets”

Prayer to God for Forgiveness of Sins

Lord Jesus, for too long I’ve kept You out of my life. I know that I am a sinner and that I cannot save myself. No longer will I close the door when I hear You knocking. By faith I gratefully receive Your gift of salvation. I am ready to trust You as my Lord and Savior. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for coming to earth. I believe You are the Son of God who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead on the third day. Thank You for bearing my sins and giving me the gift of eternal life. I believe Your words are true. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, and be my Savior. Amen.

Prayer for Forgiving Others

*Dear Merciful Lord,
Thank You for Your gift of forgiveness. Your only Son loved me enough to come to earth and experience the worst pain imaginable so I could be forgiven. Your mercy flows to me in spite of my faults and failures. Your Word says to “clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.” ([Col. 3:14](#)) Help me demonstrate unconditional love today, even to those who hurt me.
I understand that even though I feel scarred, my emotions don’t have to control my actions. Father, may Your sweet words saturate my mind and direct my thoughts. Help me release the hurt and begin to love as Jesus loves. I want to see my offender through my Savior’s eyes. If I can be forgiven, so can he. I understand there are no levels to Your love. We are all Your children, and Your desire is that none of us should perish.
You teach us to “let the peace that comes from Christ rule in our hearts.” ([Col. 3:15](#)) When I forgive in words, allow your Holy Spirit to fill my heart with peace. I pray this peace that only comes from Jesus will rule in my heart, keeping out doubt and questions. And above all, I am thankful. Not just today, not just this week, but always. Thank you for the reminder, “Always be thankful.” ([Col. 3:15](#)) With gratitude, I can draw closer to you and let go of unforgiveness. With gratitude, I can see the person who caused my pain as a child of the Most High God. Loved and accepted. Help me find the compassion that comes with true forgiveness.
And when I see the person who hurt me, bring this prayer back to my remembrance, so I can take any ungodly thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ. ([2 Cor. 10:5](#)) And may the confidence of Christ in my heart guide me into the freedom of forgiveness. I praise You for the work You are doing in my life, teaching and perfecting my faith. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

- Kristine Brown

Short Prayer to Forgive Others

Dear Lord, I thank You for the power of forgiveness, and I choose to forgive everyone who has hurt me. Help me set [name anyone who has offended you] free and release them to You [[Romans 12:19](#)]. Help me bless those who have hurt me [[Romans 12:14](#)]. Help me walk in righteousness, peace, and joy, demonstrating Your life here on earth. I choose to be kind and compassionate, forgiving others, just as You forgave me [[Ephesians 4:32](#)]. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

- Debbie Przybylski

Short Prayer to Forgive Yourself

Father, today I ask forgiveness of all the negative and harmful words I have spoken about myself. I do not want to abuse myself in such a way again. Transform my thoughts and let me understand how marvelously You made me. Change my habits so I use my tongue to speak hope and favor upon my life. In Jesus’ Name.

-Sarah Coleman