

A PURPOSE FOR A PREACHER IN PRISON

Lesson Aim: Be a faithful witness for the Lord to all sinners whether you are free or in bonds.

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson; then ask the following questions for class discussion.

God called Paul to be a witness for Jesus Christ to all that he met. Paul said he was faithful to this calling in his testimony before King Agrippa II: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22-23). This should be the desire of every Christian.

How can we be a faithful witness to those that make false charges against us? 24:5-21

First, we should expect persecution from hardened unbelievers when we witness to them. Paul expected persecution from unbelievers that refused to repent, so it did not take him by surprise. He forewarned Timothy to expect it, so he would not think the Lord had deserted him when it happened (2 Tim 3:12). What false charges did the Jews make against Paul before Felix? They said he was a trouble-maker among the Jews – a mover of sedition (24:5); he was organizing a heretical religion – a ringleader of a sect (24:5); and he had desecrated the temple by bringing into it a Gentile – a profaner of the sanctuary (24:6). These lies did not stop Paul's faithful witness.

Second, we should declare the truth. If we have lived a godly life and tell the truth, we will be a faithful witness for Christ. Paul refuted each lie by the Jews with the truth in Felix's court. First, he said these Jews were unable to prove their charge of sedition against him since he had been in Jerusalem only a few days, had not disputed with anyone and had not gathered any crowds around him (24:11-13). Second, he was not organizing a heretical sect, but was worshipping the God of his fathers according to the Scriptures with hope in the resurrection and with a clear conscience (24:14-16). Third, he had not desecrated the sanctuary, but was peacefully worshipping God in the temple when they found him. Besides this, his accusers were not present in this court nor had the Sanhedrin proved him guilty in their court earlier (24:17-21). Telling the truth is a faithful witness for Christ to the unsaved.

How can we be a faithful witness to ungodly men? 24:24-25

We will be a faithful witness when we allow the Holy Spirit speak through us to sinners. What does the Holy Spirit want us to say? He has been sent to convict sinners about sin, righteousness and judgment (Jn 16:8), so He wants us to speak to sinners about these three subjects. We should use the Ten Commandments to convict sinners of their sin. We should speak of Jesus' death for our sins and His resurrection for our eternal life. He is only way to obtain God's righteousness. We should tell sinners that Jesus will judge them. If they trust in His good works, their names will not be blotted out of the book of life (Rev 3:5). If they trust in their good works, they have rejected His propitiation for their sins (1 Jn 2:2), and their names will not be written with the righteous, but will be blotted out of the book of life (Ps 69:28). Those who do not have their names written in the book of life will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:11-15). When Paul spoke to Felix about righteousness, temperance (to abstain from sin) and judgment, he trembled (24:25).

How can we be a faithful witness to sinners that have some knowledge of the Bible? 26:1-32

We can tell them how we received Christ for salvation. Tell them how you lived before you were saved by Jesus. Tell them how you saw your need of salvation. Tell them how you received Jesus as your Savior from sin and from eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire. Tell them about the changes that He has made in your life. This is what Paul did when he was given an opportunity to witness to King Agrippa. Paul's story kept Agrippa's attention and interest, so Paul asked him about his belief in the prophets. He was about to ask Agrippa to receive Jesus as his Savior when Agrippa stopped Paul. If we are witnessing to a person that has shown interest in our story of salvation, we should be ready to invite them to receive Jesus as their Savior like Paul.