

Sunday December 4, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

I'd like to start by reading some of Psalm 37, starting at verse 3. *"Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. 4 Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: 6 He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. 7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. 8 Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. 23 The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; 24 though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand."*

Let's pray. Father God, you are the creator of all things. You created the stars, the planets, and you created this earth. You created the seas and the mountains, the trees and the animals, the fish and the birds. And Lord, you created us, man and woman in your image. You are the author of life, the author of love, the author of family. And Lord we acknowledge that we have sinned and sin against you. We acknowledge that our sin causes us to work against your natural order, both in creation and in relationships. And so Lord this morning we humbly confess and repent of our sins. Help us to look to you and to your ways in everything we do. Help us to worship you alone. And Lord we pray this morning for our Pastor Stephen bless Stephen as he preached that, and you bless us as we listen to your words from your Word. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen

Song – Let your kingdom come <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kjMaYqhQnw>

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|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1. Your glorious cause, O God | 2. Give us Your strength, O God |
| Engages our hearts | And courage to speak |
| May Jesus Christ be known | Perform Your wondrous deeds |
| Wherever we are | Through those who are weak |
| We ask not for ourselves, but for Your renown | Lord use us as You want, whatever the test |
| The cross has saved us so we pray | By grace we'll preach Your gospel |
| Your kingdom come | Till our dying breath |

Chorus

Let Your kingdom come
 Let Your will be done
 So that everyone might know Your Name
 Let Your song be heard everywhere on earth
 Till Your sovereign work on earth is done
 Let Your kingdom come

Bible Reading – Acts 21:10-36 (NIV)

¹⁰ After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" ¹² When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done." ¹⁵ After this, we started on our way up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and brought us to the home of Mnason, where we were to stay. He was a man from Cyprus and one of the early disciples. ¹⁷ When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters

received us warmly. ¹⁸ The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. ²¹ They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. ²² What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, ²³ so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. ²⁴ Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. ²⁵ As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality." ²⁶ The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them. ²⁷ When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, ²⁸ shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place." ²⁹ (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.) ³⁰ The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. ³¹ While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³² He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. ³⁵ When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. ³⁶ The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Get rid of him!"

Announcements

Focus for December – Christmas. Christmas is one of the few times in the year that we can get our family and friends to come to Church with us. There is something about the carols, the shorter services, the joy of Christmas day that gives us a chance of bringing even the most ardent unbeliever along. So, who could you invite this year? Could you ask them not to give you a present but honour with your presence at Church? It's worth a try isn't it?

Upcoming Events

- Sun 4/12 Lords Supper. Please prepare your hearts and minds.
- Sat 10/12 Gather Round Christmas Celebration.
- Sun 11/12 Kids Church Presentation.
- Sun 18/12 Christmas Carols
- Sat 24/12 Christmas Eve service – 6pm
- Sun 25/12 Christmas Day service – 8am (Swansea) and 9:30am (Charlestown)

Vanuatu. Please keep praying for those going on a short term mission trip to Vanuatu in January. There are quite a few logistical issues that need to be sorted out including flights, accommodation, what work we will be doing and what ministry we will be doing. If you would like to sign up for prayer updates or support the cost of materials for our projects, please see either Stephen or Cheryl Gillard

Lords Supper. In Presbyterian circles we normally only have the Lords Supper quarterly so it becomes a good time to recommit yourself to the Lords service.

Gather Round. A Christmas Celebration. Next Saturday from 5:30pm. In the backyards of Charlestown Presbyterian. Carol Singing * Kids Activities * dinner* Christmas Stall * Entertainment. RSVP to Suzie by today! \$5 pp (kids under 5 years are free). BYO Chair/Rug.

Kids Church Presentation. Next Sunday (during our normal Charlestown AM services) is our time to celebrate what we have learned this year at Kids Church and to thank God for all that he given us this year. This means the kids will perform some items in Church before receiving their prizes and having their own celebration. Please come to support our families if you possible can.

Giving (if room). Would you like to give regularly to the work of the church so that our ministries can be sustained or even grow? If so the easiest way is by setting up a direct debit from your bank account. You just decide you much you would like to give on a weekly basis and then organise that amount to go to our Church each week. If you would like help to set it up then please speak to Letitia. Otherwise, the Church Bank details are Charlestown Eastlakes Presbyterian BSB 062 611, account # 1007 5420.

Kids Spot: We finish our series of lessons in Acts today as we learn about Philip and the Ethiopian from Acts 8:26-40. Through Philip's teaching to the Ethiopian, we learn that Jesus is the promised suffering servant for people all over the world. Question for the week: What can you do as a family to help the good news go to people in other countries so that they can hear and turn and follow Jesus?

TEAR Fund (if room) During the Christmas services we will have a retiring offering for the work of TEAR Fund. As a Church we believe that Christmas is a great time to think about those less fortunate than ourselves. TEAR Fund is a practical expression of a Christians love for the poor. Please support it as you are able.

Offerings for October

Budget for October 2022	\$27,000
Actual for October 2022	\$28,764
Surplus for October 2022	\$ 1, 764
Surplus for Jan-Oct 2022	\$13,160

Discipleship Course: In 2023 we are starting a weekly home group focussed on discipleship. It's designed for Christians of any age who are seeking to go deeper and further as a disciple of Jesus, using material created specifically for this purpose. If you would like to know more please chat with Stephen Taylor or John and Miranda Harris.

Prayer Points for 4th December 2022

Psalms 34:7 "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them."

Pray for Kosovo: Pray for continued freedom to evangelise among the 80% Muslim population. Pray for the peace of Jesus to heal the hatred between ethnic Serbs and Albanians. Pray for spiritual growth and bold proclamation among the small group of committed Christians.

Pray for the taking of the Lord's Supper: Pray for the Lord to bless this time. Praise God that even though we are unworthy we get welcomed to the table. Pray the Spirit would enliven our faith. Pray that as we share the Lord's Supper together we would be struck afresh by the cross and the revelation of God's love for us.

Pray for Tearfund. Floods in Pakistan have killed hundreds and left millions homeless. Tearfund is working with partners in Pakistan to support those whose lives and livelihoods have been severely impacted. Please pray for safety, resilience and hope for those affected. Pray that God will give wisdom to the country's leaders in managing this crisis and the ability to build a better future for their people.

Bible Reading – Acts 26:1-32

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: ² "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, ³ and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs & controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently. ⁴ "The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. ⁵ They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. ⁶ And now it is because of my hope in what God has

promised our ancestors that I am on trial today.⁷ This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me.⁸ Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?⁹ “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”¹⁰ And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.¹¹ Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.¹² “On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.”¹³ About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me & my companions.¹⁴ We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’¹⁵ “Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied.¹⁶ ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.’¹⁷ I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’¹⁹ “So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.”²⁰ First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.²¹ That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.²² But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—²³ that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”²⁴ At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.”²⁵ “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable.”²⁶ The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.”²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”²⁸ Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”²⁹ Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”³⁰ The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them.³¹ After they left the room, they began saying to one another, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.”³² Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

Song – All to Jesus <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j04Bx9pKwpU>

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| 1. All to Jesus, I surrender | 3. All to Jesus I surrender |
| All to Thee I freely give | Now I feel the sacred flame |
| I will ever love and trust You | O the joy of full salvation |
| In Your presence daily live | Glory, glory, to Your name |

Chorus: I surrender all, I surrender all
All to Thee, my blessed Savior
I surrender all

2. All to Jesus, I surrender
Lord, I give myself to Thee
Fill me with Your love and power
Let Your blessing fall on me

Sermon – You must be crazy! - Stephen T

You must be crazy? Are you raving mad? Why would you come to Church each Sunday when life is so busy and you could have a sleep in and then a time at the beach with your family? Why would you give money to the church, even tithe, couldn't you spend that money on a bigger & better holiday? Why wouldn't you sleep with your partner rather than wait for marriage, isn't it better to try before you buy? Why would you leave your family and friends and go overseas and serve the Lord, your kids will miss out on everything Australia has to offer. Why would you follow the rules of a book that is 2000 years old, surely the modern world has much better answers?

The truth is that people think we are mad to be followers of Jesus. In the past they were glad because they saw that the Christian morals were good for our society. Then they were sad for us because we were missing out on all the good things that they thought that life was offering us. Now they think we are mad because our views on marriage, sexuality, money and life are so out of step with society that we are bordering on being dangerous.

Slide 2

But it was exactly the same in Paul's time. And as we get to the end of the book of Acts, we see that Agrippa calls the apostle Paul mad. Acts 26:24 *"Festus interrupted Paul's defence. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."*

You're mad Paul. You are completely bonkers! But as our passage will show us, he is considered mad not just because he is willing to be a servant of the Lord Jesus but also because he believes in the resurrection, he is willing to give up things for the sake of the unity of the church and even because he is willing to go to places where danger awaits him.

Paul's mad. He's a fool. But as the saying goes "I'd rather be a fool in the eyes of men, than a fool in the eyes of God." So, as we see where Paul goes, what Paul does, what he believes and the way that he witnesses then a clear choice opens up for each one of us. Will we follow Paul as he follows Christ? Are we willing to be seen as mad because we follow Jesus?

Slide 3

1. Should he go? (Acts 21:1-16, 27-36)

¹⁰ *"After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"*
¹² *When we heard this, we and the people there **pleaded with Paul** not to go up to Jerusalem."*

Paul's on his way to Jerusalem. Earlier in the chapter they stopped off at Tyre for a week & the disciples there also told Paul not to go to Jerusalem. For the Holy Spirit had warned them it was a dangerous place for Paul to go. Here we see it happen again, a couple of days later. A prophet warns Paul he will be imprisoned. The people plead for him not to go. Why not go elsewhere and continue spreading the gospel rather than to Jerusalem to go to jail?

Slide 4

It makes sense. And Paul knew what they are saying is true. Just a while back he had written these words directed to the Roman church. *"I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favourably received by the Lord's people there..."*

But these friends might have the right knowledge but they have jumped to the wrong conclusion. They think if there is danger somewhere, Paul should avoid it. If there is a chance of prison, Paul should look at another option. And by doing that they are trying to mould God's will to their own preconceptions. Prison

can't be God's will for Paul's life. Suffering is not the road that God would want us to go down but Paul sees things differently

Slide 5

¹³ "Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Paul disagrees. I am willing to go to prison for Jesus, after all didn't, he do that for me? Actually, I am even willing to die for Jesus, because isn't that what he also did for me? Didn't Jesus say on the last night of his life, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). You see Paul's chief concern was not his comfort, safety or even a long life. It was to be faithful to the calling that God has given over his life.

Paul was not asking himself the question, Lord why would you send suffering into my life? He was instead asking the question, how can I witness to Jesus in the midst of my suffering?

Slide 6

Listen to what commentator Douglas Milne has to say, "*The interaction between the believers and Paul about whether he should face suffering is significant because it shows that sometimes well-intentioned people can be wrong about what God desires. There is no doubt that those who warn Paul have his best interests at heart and are trying to protect him. It is also clear, however that Paul has a real sense of what God is calling him to do and that he is has prepared himself to pay the human price to do it.*"

And indeed, he does pay that price. If we skip ahead a bit, Paul goes to Jerusalem and the Jews stir up trouble. A riot ensues. Paul is beaten by the crowds. He is lucky to escape with his life as the Roman's soldiers arrive just in the nick of time before he is killed. And he ends up in a Roman prison in and around Jerusalem for the next two years of his life. Paul goes to Jerusalem and he gets exactly what the Holy Spirit said would happen to him.

Slide 7

So would you have gone? Paul would still say yes even though he ended up in prison. And it raises the question for us. Should we go? Should we go where the Spirit is convicting us to go even if we are called mad? Martin Luther was warned not to go to the Diet of Worms because his life was in great danger. He replied "*I shall go to Worms, though there were as many devils as tiles on the roofs.*" Friends our call is to go wherever God is calling us to go.

To live where he wants us to live. To work where he wants us to work. To go to Church where he wants us to go to Church. To be involved with the activities that God wants us to be involved in. Now some of us today may be wrestling with thorny issues? Unsure of the way forward. Well stick close to Him. Read His word. Be open to His Holy Spirit and don't make the decision based on what is the easy option but what is God's clear direction.

Slide 8

2. Should he go and secondly should he listen (Acts 21:17-26)

"When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly. ¹⁸ The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ When they heard this, they praised God."

Paul, you see, had brought with him a number of brothers who represented the Church of Europe and Asia. And he had also brought with him a collection from those Church for the poor of Jerusalem. It was a tangible picture of the unity of the Church. It is growing all over the world but it is thankful for all that it has received from the mother Church, Jerusalem. It was evidence of God's grace and it brought praise to the lips of the leaders of the Church.

Slide 9

But reading between the lines you can see there are great strains in the relationship also. We saw back in Acts 15 that the role of the law and the place of the gospel had been a stumbling block when it came to Gentile believers. Once they became Christians did, they also have to accept the Jewish law as well? And the answer that was decided at that time was, no. You can't add law to the gospel, that would subtract from the nature of God's grace

But here we see the goal posts have shifted a little. What about the Jews? Once they became Christians do they need to jettison the law? And was that what Paul was teaching people on his missionary journeys? So rather than be over the moon at what God was doing throughout the world, the Jewish church is suspicious of Paul. And rather than believe the evidence before them, they opened themselves up to rumour and innuendo and gossip.

Slide 10

"Then they said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. ²¹ They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. ²² What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, ²³ so do what we tell you." So, James and the elders come up with a plan.

Slide 11

"There are four men with us who have made a vow. ²⁴ Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law." Now what should Paul do? Should he listen to the brothers?

Well, if you listen to commentators and sermons, it seems they are deeply divided on this issue. Some say he shouldn't have listened to James's advice. Isn't that what the book of Hebrews is all about? Once you become a Christian you no longer need the law because it has been fulfilled. And yet there are others who say, yes it is right for Paul to listen to James. It's not a gospel issue because it is about discipleship not salvation. Paul should be willing to and is willing to, bend over backwards to not put a stumbling block in the way of the Jews.

Slide 12

It's a tough one, isn't it? I am happy for you to disagree with me on this but I think Paul was right. He was willing to give up his freedom not to follow the law to help those whose conscience was weak. He valued unity among the believers so much that he went to great effort and great expense. It was a risky thing to do but Paul has such a passion for the lost and for the glory of God that he was willing to run the risk of being misunderstood.

Slide 13

Which begs the question, should we listen? Should we listen to people who have different views to our own? And are we willing to give up things in order to maintain the unity of the Spirit? At times we will put aside our own wants and our desires in order to help a weaker brother. We will give up some of our freedoms not to place a burden on others. People might call us mad, inconsistent even, but we take very seriously the unity of the body.

Slide 14

3. Should he go, should he listen and thirdly should he believe? (Acts 26:1-16)

We skip a couple of chapters and we find Paul defending himself before the King, King Agrippa. At the end of Acts 25 we are told the high and mighty enter with all their worldly pomp and glory and conduct a show trial of Paul, who is in his prison garb and still chained.

Now King Agrippa is a Herod. Remember Herod the Great tried to kill Jesus based on the information provided to him by the Wise Men. His son Antipas had killed John the Baptist and had been called a fox by

Jesus. His grandson Agrippa I had killed the apostle, James. And now Paul is being tried by Agrippa's son. His life is a Herod's hands!

So, should Paul back pedal on what he believes? It is after all because his beliefs which have clashed with the Jew's beliefs that means he is where he currently is right now? No Paul won't back down. Instead, he sees this as an opportunity to share the gospel with the most powerful man in the country. Even with his life on the line he knows what he believes.

So he tells Agrippa, ⁴ *"The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. ⁵ They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. ⁶ And now it is **because of my hope** in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. ⁷ This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God, day and night.*

Slide 15

What is this hope? What is at the crux of Paul's imprisonment? ⁸ *"Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?"* The resurrection. That's the key issue here. That is the hope of Israel. That there is more than this life and death. That there is a Saviour, a Messiah who can defeat our greatest enemy, death. Now the Romans' believed that the resurrection was a logical impossibility but Paul goes on to tell Agrippa that the promised Messiah Jesus was resurrected. And he appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road.

Paul had a direct, personal encounter with Jesus. He had been butting against that message for a while before that. Kicking against the goads is the expression Paul uses. So when he was there at the stoning of Stephen and when he saw up close and personal the Christians he was persecuting, Jesus was calling Paul to himself. But he wouldn't have a bar of it until he thrown off his high horse by Jesus himself.

Paul does not shy away from the big issues. Paul doesn't not try and compromise on the death and resurrection of Jesus. Because it is the one thing that makes all the difference. It was foretold by the OT prophets. It happened during the time of Pontius Pilate and it's been confirmed by over 500 people seeing the risen Lord, including Paul himself.

Which raises the question, should we believe in the resurrection? Should we believe in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus? We haven't personally seen the risen Christ ourselves so can we be sure, really sure it actually happened? This is the issue that Christianity rises or falls upon. Paul will write in 1 Corinthians 15 that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead our preaching is useless and so if your faith. Because if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we will not rise from the dead either. If Jesus didn't come back to life, the Christian has no hope.

Slide 16

So, do you believe in the resurrection? Paul did. And he was willing to live or die for that belief. And I would stake my life of it because I have already staked my life on it. But you need to be sure. You need to look at the evidence. You need to see what the Bible says. You need to have a personal encounter with the risen Lord. He is alive today so he can come into your life today. People might think you are mad for believing in the resurrection. Mad that you would follow a man that lived 2000 years ago. But if it is true, you are not mad at all.

Slide 17

4. Lastly should Paul witness? (Acts 26:16-32)

"The Lord replied. ¹⁶ 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. ¹⁷ I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and

from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

Paul is called to be a servant and a witness. The word servant is the word used of an under-rower. Someone who did all the hack work on a galley ship. Paul has gone from the top of the heap Pharisee to the bottom of the pile pastor. And he is called to be a witness. To turn on the light so that others can see. To open people's eyes so that they can perceive the truth. To switch on the lights so that Satan's darkness might disappear. To tell all people that they need to repent and believe in Jesus.

Slide 18

And so Paul starts his speech with him being on trial but he ends it by putting his hearers on trial. You are the ones who will be judged by what you do or don't do with the good news of Jesus. You can see that it has changed my life, Paul says & the trajectory of my life. Now its your turn. For the same gospel that Paul must accept is the gospel that Agrippa must accept.

That's when Festus calls out, "you are mad Paul". This is not about Jesus, its about you. You are on trial for your life, it is not about Jesus' life. Besides you can't expect us to believe something like this. We are kings after all. Representatives of a Roman government. We believe in the god of power. We are drunk on the god of influence. We enjoy a privileged position, why would we throw it all away from someone like Jesus?

Slide 19

So Paul makes it even more personal. ²⁵ *"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true & reasonable. ²⁶ The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."*

I am not the mad one. What I am telling you is true and reasonable. In fact, if you don't believe in the resurrection, you are the mad one. If God gave us life, then surely, he could give us eternal life. If God came as a man, surely that man could defeat death. If God has laid down his plan in the OT, surely God can fulfil that plan through his son Jesus. What do you think Agrippa? You believe that, don't you? Don't you?

Slide 20

How brave. How courageous is Paul. But Agrippa will have none of it. ²⁸ *"Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" ²⁹ Paul replied, "Short time or long, I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." ³¹ After they left the room, they began saying to one another "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment"*

Agrippa may not have been converted that day but Paul was a successful witness. He told the truth. He pointed Agrippa to the resurrection of Jesus. He called him to repent. And that was his job, to be a witness. And he bravely and courageously bore witness to Christ.

Slide 21

Which raises the question should we witness? If we have had a personal encounter with the risen Christ. If we believe in the resurrection. If we have been told to go through the whole world and make disciples, then we should be people who will at times take a deep breathe, mumble a quick prayer and seek to encourage people towards repentance & faith in Jesus. How could we do but anything else? Jesus died for me why wouldn't we want to live for him & always be on the look out to witness for him, no matter what the consequences are.

But friends if we do that, we will be called mad. No one called DL Moody crazy when he was a shoe salesman but once he became an evangelist, he was known as Crazy Moody. No one will call us crazy if we keep quiet about our faith, if we are not clear about what we believe, if we go where everyone else is going and listen just to the voice of our society.

No one will call us mad at all. But in the end Agrippa is the one who is mad because he missed the chance to become a child of God. And our society contains the ones who are truly mad because they are not looking at the evidence of the resurrection and they have put their fingers in their ears so that they don't hear and respond to the good news of Jesus.

You are not mad if you want to come worship the true and living God. You are not mad if you want to raise your family in the ways of the Lord. You are not mad if you are willing to go anywhere, do anything, give up any possession in order to serve the one who gave up everything for you. You are not mad at all. Others will think you are mad but God doesn't.

He would only say you are mad if you come to Church today, listen to His word today and then forget about it all and act as if nothing has happened. That would be complete and utter madness. So don't do that. Instead, be a believer and a witness to his gospel today, no matter what the cost, for it is worth it.

Slide 22

What did Jim Elliot famously say? *"He is no fool, who gives up what he can't keep, in order to gain what he cannot lose"*.

Song – By Faith [By Faith - Keith & Kristyn Getty - YouTube](#)

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1. By faith we see the hand of God
In the light of creation's grand design
In the lives of those who prove His faithfulness
Who walk by faith and not by sight</p> | <p>3. By faith the prophets saw a day
When the longed-for Messiah would appear
With the power to break the chains of sin & death
And rise triumphant from the grave</p> |
| <p>2. By faith our fathers roamed the earth
With the power of His promise in their hearts
Of a holy city built by God's own hand
A place where peace and justice reign</p> | <p>4. By faith the church was called to go
In the power of the Spirit to the lost
To deliver captives and to preach good news
In every corner of the earth</p> |

Chorus

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>We will stand as children of the promise
We will fix our eyes on Him our soul's reward
Till the race is finished and the work is done
We'll walk by faith and not by sight</p> | <p>5. By faith this mountain shall be moved
And the power of the gospel shall prevail
For we know in Christ all things are possible
For all who call upon His name</p> |
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Benediction.

²⁸ "Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" ²⁹ Paul replied, "Short time or long, I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."