

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Paul told the rioting crowd, “About noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me” (Acts 22:6). I praise you today as the God of light, the God who reaches down into the darkness of this world and confronts men with their need to be born again. You blinded Paul so he could receive spiritual sight, and I thank you for opening my own eyes to the glorious truth of the gospel. Praise the Lord!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me about Paul’s journey to Jerusalem and his arrest at the Temple. I was especially touched by Paul’s farewell speech to the Ephesian elders, and his comments have much to teach me about spiritual leadership. When the elders came, I expected Paul to begin by saying something like, ‘Now be sure to remember all the things I taught you.’ Instead, he reminded them of how he had lived among them (Acts 20:18). This teaches me that the essence of leadership is setting the right example for others. As I thought about this, I asked myself: ‘Could I gather my family and friends around me and tell them to remember how I had lived and encourage them to imitate my example?’ What a challenging and convicting thought! Paul went on to describe the way he had lived, and it reads like a manual on how to set a godly example. First, Paul served you with humility. This means my life and ministry should be marked by submission to your will and humility of heart and mind. Next, Paul faithfully endured persecution. This means I should remain steadfast in the face of trials and hardship, enduring all the way to the end. Paul boldly declared “anything that was profitable” (Acts 20:20). This means I must proclaim the full counsel of God, even if it involves correcting error and confronting people for their sin. Paul shared the gospel with both Jews and Gentiles. This means I must preach the good news to everyone, not just those with whom I am most comfortable. Paul followed the leadership of the Spirit. This means I must go where you want me to go and do what you want me to do, even if that means sailing into the midst of trouble and affliction (Acts 20:22–23). Paul refused to be daunted by the prevailing doctrinal winds of his day. This means I must preach the truth, even if I find myself being shouted down by a majority who is in error. Paul warned his congregation of the danger of false teachers. This means I must challenge others to stay alert and watch out for wolves in sheep’s clothing. Paul did not covet material possessions. This means I must guard myself against greed and gluttony and regard what you have given me to be enough (Phil 4:12–13). Paul worked hard to supply his own needs. This means I must avoid laziness and be diligent to provide, not only for those who depend on me, but also for the poor and weak. When Paul finished, he knelt down and prayed with them, and they were grieved that they would not see his face again. Yet as they watched his ship set sail for Cos, they knew he had left them a godly example to follow. I must be faithful to do the same.

Reflection

You told Paul to go to Jerusalem, yet you also told him that he would experience imprisonment and affliction. This means there will be times when I must do things that I know will be painful. Am I faithful to follow your leadership, even when it means trial and persecution?

Request

Father, I say with those who wept at Paul’s side, “Let the will of the Lord be done” (Acts 21:14). Help me to finish my course and the ministry I received from you. May I always testify of the gospel of your grace!

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the assurance that you will go with me into the stormy seas of life. I know that just as you stood by Paul in the night, you will also stand by me and say, “Take courage!” (Acts 23:11). Hallelujah!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “Jesus, Savior, Great Example” – William J. Kirkpatrick.

Meditation Verse: Acts 23:1.