

Acts 26:12-32
Feilding Baptist
19th October 2026

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

As we begin, what do these verses from Isaiah 43 tell us about God?

Isaiah 43 New Living Translation

The Savior of Israel

1 But now, O Jacob, listen to the Lord who created you.

O Israel, the one who formed you says,

“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you.

I have called you by name; you are mine.

2 When you go through deep waters,

I will be with you.

When you go through rivers of difficulty,
you will not drown.

When you walk through the fire of oppression,
you will not be burned up;
the flames will not consume you.

5 “Do not be afraid, for I am with you.

Pray

Almighty God, thank you for these verses, that once again remind us about trusting in You, and not being afraid. Thank You for wanting to drive out fear from us. Thank you for wanting to comfort us. Thank you for being with us, for wanting to protect us. Thank you for giving us hope. Thank you for loving us. Thank you for sending Jesus, the expression of all the good things that You want for us. And thank you for sending the Holy Spirit, to help know You even better. We are grateful.

So we ask Holy Spirit for Your blessing on this time, and on this space, and on us this morning we pray, Amen.

Message - Determined to follow the Light

Paul did great things for God by what God had done in him.

We turn to Acts 26, leaving only two chapters to go, that we'll cover after Pentecost next year.



The book of Acts really begins with the book of Luke. In Luke we have the outline of Jesus' life and death, and resurrection. Acts follows on, to 'what happened next'. It begins with Jesus leaving, His ascension, after telling the disciples to go to the ends of the earth, telling people about Him. Then the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost enabling the spreading of the news of Jesus through Judea, Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth.

Yet, while it is something new, it is also something old. This was no new religion. It was just that the old thinking about God had become twisted. The foundation from which it had been built, had been washed away (like this image of the railway to Gisborne.) Jesus got everything back on track. Acts, and Luke, really start with the Old Testament.

Paul has been journeying through Gentile territory, establishing and strengthening churches. He has returned to Jerusalem with an offering for the struggling church there. But the chief priests and temple leaders thought he was doing something new, and eroding what they were relying on.

Paul was arrested, and ended up in the prison in Herod's palace (23:34) in Caesarea for two years. Remarkably, despite being in prison, Paul got to speak to all sorts of people; soldiers, commanders, governors, and in today's verses Paul, even though he's a prisoner, is speaking to the new Roman Governor, the prominent men of the city, high ranking military officers, King Agrippa and his trend setting sister Bernice. And as he has appealed to the Emperor, Paul will soon be on the way to Rome, to speak to Caesar.

Just before today's verses King Agrippa has said to Paul, tell us your story. And Paul has begun by telling how he was a passionate destroyer of the faith in Jesus, not only in Jerusalem, but in other places too. He continues his story, let's read;

Acts 26:12-32 New International Version - UK

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 and my companions. 14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic,[a] "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 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."

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 defence. '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.'

v12-18 So that...

Well, let's clear something up, what is this 'kicking against the goads'? What a strange saying! What is a goad? So to kick against the goads, is utterly foolish! You only get yourself more hurt! Fighting against God is what this is about.

Paul has his eyes closed, he is in darkness, with Satan, and is in sin, unclean.

And Jesus spoke to him, and brought him into life, and into the light. Verse 18 explains what Jesus does for us, Jesus:

1. Turns darkness to light
2. Us from Satan to God
3. Provides forgiveness of sin
4. And gives us an inheritance due to faith

Paul's eyes were opened v15 to not just the reality of Jesus, but that Jesus was alive!

And he hopped on board big time. He did not keep Jesus in the rear view mirror, like this week's bill board at the Seventh Day Adventist church. He saw clearly, his thinking was straightened out. But let's not underestimate Paul's turning around. Conversion is a radical transfer of allegiance (Stott, 374). It is a liberation from and liberation into God's light and power.

Does that sound familiar? Let's hear Ruth's testimony.

v19-23 Deeds consistent with repentance

When we are in the darkness we just can't see. That's what is happening here too. The chief priests just didn't get it. See v22, all of what happened to Jesus was what Moses and the prophets said would happen.

1. Christ would suffer Isaiah 53:5

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

2. Christ would be first from the dead Isaiah 52:13 and 53:12

See, my servant will act wisely;

he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

3. The light of Christ is for both Jews and Gentiles Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 60:3

'I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness;

I will take hold of your hand.

I will keep you and will make you

to be a covenant for the people

and a light for the Gentiles,

Paul has had his untangled twisted thinking straightened, and now understands. Now he is being sent to help untangle more crooked ideas, and help the Gentiles turn from their worship of idols, from darkness to light.

Which is why we perform deeds consistent with repentance. Nothing else matters. We put all that old stuff behind us. Following Jesus becomes our priority. The world falls off.

v24-29

This didn't happen in a corner - it was out there!

v30-32

We get to the last three verses and what amuses me, is that after all this, they still have nothing to write on the charge sheet, nothing to write to Caesar, explaining why this prisoner is a prisoner. Instead they get out into the foyer to have a cuppa, and they talk about Paul's innocence. If only we could have set him free they say. But they didn't get it. They hadn't been listening. Because, Paul had been set free! He was free indeed! He was no longer trapped in darkness.

The sad thing is, Agrippa, Festus, Bernice chose not to be free, but to walk back into bondage.

That image of the kingdom of darkness, is the image of all that is evil, all that is opposed to good. From war, to fighting to backchat, to anti social behaviour. This dark kingdom was all powerful, and out of control. This darkness took the opportunity to kill Jesus, the opportunity to kill God. If successful, Satan would have become king.

But after Jesus died, God restored Jesus to life, defeating Satan. So instead of Satan becoming king, Jesus became King. The Kingdom of Light was victorious. The Kingdom of Light is more powerful. And as a result, we can have forgiveness of sin, and we have hope in an inheritance from Jesus, everlasting life. Through faith in Jesus, we can be sanctified, made clean, and acceptable to God.

So the point is, while God did great things for Paul, God can do and does, the same things for us. We too can have a positive future of hope, when we have faith in Jesus. The alive Jesus, the risen Jesus. (Ruth's drama)

Pray

God is always calling us to accept Jesus, to turn to Jesus.

Have you sensed God's nudge?

Turn to Jesus

Let Jesus in

Be free