

VOYAGER

Experiences That Shape Our Faith

About the Series: Experiences are powerful and can shape our Christian faith. But experiences should not be what defines our faith. Rather, it should serve to strengthen our faith and affirm what we already know to be the facts of our faith as recorded in the Scriptures. In this sermon series, we explore the journeys of Apostle Paul and how encountering life-changing experiences can teach valuable life lessons to voyagers like us who are on a journey called life.

Part 17

When Nothing Goes Your Way

Acts 24:1-27 | Dr. Stephen G. Tan

DISCUSS

It is easy to live the Christian life when everything is going well. But when the stresses and anxieties of life hit, when things don't go as planned, how do you feel? What are we supposed to do when nothing seems to go the way we want it to? How do we respond when none of our plans go our way? Let's look at the apostle Paul's reaction and learn from the way he responded to his circumstances in Acts 24:1-27.

Background: *Throughout the apostle Paul's ministry, many of the things he planned out for himself didn't go his way, including the time when he planned to bring the gospel to all of Asia Minor but was instead redirected to Europe; or when he partnered with Barnabas thinking they would be the Dream Team but instead ended up with Silas; or even when he wished to stay longer in some cities but was led by the Spirit to return to Jerusalem earlier.*

Continue to worship God and obey His word (v. 14)

- What did Paul declare he would do in spite of all the accusations thrown at him?
- How do you respond when things don't go your way? Do you get upset with God?
- When He doesn't give you what you want, do you still continue to worship Him, love Him and live in obedience?
- Do you believe that even when you are still grieving and hurting because of terrible things that happened in your life, that you can also live, have hope, and even worship God while grieving? Why is that possible (Isaiah 41:10, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9)?

Have hope in God because justice will come (v. 15)

- Knowing that he would not get a fair trial before the Sanhedrin, what two things did Paul declare because his hope was in God?
- Do you believe that when things don't go your way and life seems unfair, God, who knows and sees all, will bring about justice to all people?
- How will justice happen for the Christians and the non-Christians (if not now but in the future) and how does that tell us that no one gets away with anything?

Keep a clear conscience before God and men (v. 16-21)

- How did Paul demonstrate as he stood before God and men that he really self-reflects and assessed his own life?
- Why is it easy for someone to see the faults of others, but not his or her own faults or shortcomings?
- When things don't go as planned, why is it a good idea to check if God is calling your attention or teaching you a lesson through your disappointment?
- What happens when you as a follower of Jesus live a life above reproach, guilt free and without sin, with the help of the Holy Spirit?

Maintain a testimony of Christlike character (v. 22-27)

- What message was Paul able to share with Governor Felix and his wife when they began to be curious about Christianity?
- Why did Paul's message make Felix afraid and uncomfortable?

- Why should we talk to others about sin, their need to live righteously, and that we will all face judgment one day even if these topics make people uncomfortable?
- Why did Felix not free Paul even though he should have known that Paul was not guilty as charged? How did Paul maintain his Christian testimony in those difficult situations and circumstances?
- How would you maintain your Christian testimony in the midst of difficult situations and disappointments?

REFLECT

Examine yourself: Do you have the confidence that when nothing goes your way, everything always goes God's way? What do you need to know and understand about God and His character so that you can gain confidence in trusting Him when things don't go your way?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, it is so awesome to realize that even in our difficult situations and disappointments, Your ways still turn out for the best because Your plans never go wrong. Thank You, Father, that when I seek Your will, You lead me to the best of plans even if it is not according to what I initially planned for and wanted. Help me to always submit to Your will because You know what is best for me. In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.