

PAUL

A MAN OF GRACE AND GRIT

STUDY NINETEEN

Standing Tall as Paul Stood

Acts 25:13–26:32

A hero doesn't seem like a hero at the time, but later, we look back and say, "That person stood tall." There's hardly a day that passes in my life that I don't focus on one of my heroes. His or her heroic life motivates me to go on and to do better than I have done before.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHO qualifies as a hero? In his book, *Paul: A Man of Grace and Grit*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll offers his own definition:

For me, a hero is someone who stands tall when others shrink back. A hero is someone who swims upstream while the majority of people go with the current. It's someone who speaks up for what's right as others look away, sitting silently on the sidelines.¹

No one is born a hero. Heroism germinates in our character and ripens over time, often without anyone noticing. A budding hero is often the most unlikely of people, recognized only after he or she is thrown into a crisis. Usually, heroism emerges in situations that follow a similar pattern:

1. *Something is wrong.* A cultural force or an emergency that threatens well-being must be met head-on.
2. *A principle is at stake.* A fundamental value is being sacrificed and must be upheld.
3. *An element of risk is involved.* In addition to risking personal safety, a hero faces being misunderstood, misrepresented, or mistreated. However, ignoring the problem makes matters worse. Taking a risk and doing something heroic often means acting alone.



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Who are your heroes—those who stood for a principle and made a difference in your life? Because of them, you press on when you feel like giving up. You speak up when it would be easier to keep silent and look the other way. You stand tall when you would rather blend in.

Paul was a hero—a man of grace *and* grit, both of which are required to reach hero status in the kingdom. Let's see these qualities on display in Paul's final defense of his faith in Caesarea before a most intimidating audience.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a moment to thank God for your ordinary heroes, just as Paul did: “Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God” (Philippians 1:3). Then ask the Lord to inspire you through Paul's heroic example in the Scripture passage we'll study.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul's bold speech in Acts 26 was the fifth and final defense he made for the faith recorded in Acts. In the following chart, read the biblical passages that record his first four defenses. Then, in the space below, write down what you see in Paul's character as he stood tall in each situation.

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Survey of Paul's First Four Defenses Acts 22–25			
Scripture	Situation	Audience	Result
22:1–30	Jews from Asia incite a riot in the temple against Paul. Roman officials arrest Paul. Paul speaks from the fortress steps.	The Jewish crowd	The Jews call for Paul's death. The commander orders Paul to stand trial before the Sanhedrin.
23:1–10	The high priest presides as judge in the council chamber.	Pharisees and Sadducees in the Sanhedrin	Conflict erupts. Jews plot to kill Paul. Romans take Paul by night to Caesarea.
24:1–27	Jewish officials make their case against Paul in Caesarea.	Jewish accusers, Roman governor Felix, and his wife Drusilla	Paul declares the gospel. Felix delays decision and keeps Paul in custody two years.
25:1–12	Jewish leaders accuse Paul in another trial in Caesarea.	Jewish accusers and Roman governor Festus	Festus wants to send Paul back to Jerusalem. Paul appeals to Caesar.

Now let's pull up a seat and listen to Paul's final defense before a royal court.



Observation: Standing Tall for Christ

In *observation*, it's helpful to set the scene, beginning with the characters.² For two years, Paul had been in custody in Caesarea under Felix. Felix was married to Drusilla—King Agrippa's sister who had left her husband to marry Felix after an affair with him. King Agrippa's other sister was Bernice, whom he was living with in an incestuous relationship. Their father, also named Agrippa, was the king in Acts 12 who sentenced James (John's brother) to die by the sword and ordered Peter to be thrown into prison. What a morally corrupt family!

And yet it was King Agrippa and his sister who presided as judges over innocent Paul. What happened in [Acts 25:13–22](#) that resulted in Paul gaining an audience with King Agrippa and Bernice?

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Now, let's examine the setting. Describe King Agrippa and Bernice's arrival in [Acts 25:23](#) and the location. What impression about the setting and the audience did Luke intend to make for the reader?

What did Festus, the governor of Judea who succeeded Felix, say in his address in [25:24–27](#)? What did he admit regarding his own judgment of Paul?

Paul was the only man in chains but the only free man among them. What an irony. They, the ones without chains, were caught in the bondage of their own moral misery and sin. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Paul's Bold Message—Acts 26:1–23

Despite King Agrippa's intimidating power and showy protocol, this ruler was ruled by sin. Paul, the one in chains, would point the way for him to find true freedom in Christ. Let's look at Paul's method for sharing his faith.

He Built a Bridge

In his opening statements, how did Paul connect relationally with King Agrippa in [Acts 26:1–3](#)?

Let's learn a lesson from our hero, Paul. When you have an opportunity to be with those of high rank and significant authority, be courteous, be gracious. Treat them with respect. You may not agree with their lifestyle; nevertheless, it is a privilege for you to be heard. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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He Explained His Life Prior to Christ

What did Paul say about his life as a Pharisee in [Acts 26:4–8](#)?

Mentioning the Jews, Paul turned to the Jewish audience: “Why does it seem incredible to any of you that God can raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8). What was Paul’s reason for asking this question?

Then, in [26:9–11](#), Paul openly confessed his former persecution of Christians. Why was Paul so transparent about his sin? What do you think was going through King Agrippa’s and Bernice’s minds?

He Shared His Conversion Experience

Paul was not seeking Christ, which makes his experience with Christ even more profound. What miraculous act of grace happened, according to [Acts 26:12–17](#)? Imagine you were in the audience as Paul spoke. What would you have thought and felt?

Paul drove his point home in [26:18](#). How did this statement explain Paul’s mission and precisely sum up the gospel?

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He Described His Life after Conversion

How did Paul say his life changed after meeting Christ, according to [Acts 26:19–23](#)?

The Results of Paul’s Message—Acts 26:24–32

What responses did Paul’s message stir in Festus, King Agrippa, and Bernice, according to [Acts 26:24–28](#)?

How did Paul end his message in [26:29](#)? What did Paul’s passionate statement communicate about his heart?

Isn’t this a great moment? “Agrippa, would to God that you and all those around you were just as I, freed from the sin of our lives through Christ’s power, without chains.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

What concluding declaration did the officials make in [26:30–32](#)? Why is this statement important in Luke’s telling of Paul’s life story?

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Interpretation: The Heart of the Gospel

Let's dig deeper into some key points in Paul's message. Explain the meaning of the following verses in your own words and write down the reasons they are vital to our faith in Christ. Don't forget to consult your Bible-study resources like [Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Acts](#) available for purchase at [insight.org](#), [Constable's Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#), or the [IVP New Testament Commentary on Acts](#) at [biblegateway.com](#).

Our Hope—Eternal Life

"I am on trial because of my hope in the fulfillment of God's promise made to our ancestors. . . . Why does it seem incredible to any of you that God can raise the dead?"
(Acts 26:6, 8)

Our Need—Forgiveness

"I am sending you to the Gentiles to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me."
(Acts 26:17–18)

Our Savior—Jesus Christ

"I teach nothing except what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, and in this way announce God's light to Jews and Gentiles alike." (Acts 26:22–23)

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Correlation: Paul's Testimony and Yours

Paul's evangelist heart for the lost poured out in his final appeal:

"I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains." (Acts 26:29)

Even though he was a prisoner, Paul was the only truly *free* person in that auditorium. Christ had broken the chains of sin binding his heart, and *he longed for everyone to experience the freedom he had in Christ.*

Paul expressed his passion for the lost in [1 Corinthians 9:20–23](#). How does Paul's zeal inspire you?

God redeemed Paul's life so he could help others find redemption in Christ. What did Paul say about his past and how God was using him, according to [1 Timothy 1:15–17](#)?

How can God use your life story to help others?

Paul stood just as tall on the steps of the fortress in Jerusalem before a hostile mob as he stood in the palace auditorium before royalty. It didn't matter where he was or whom he addressed. Paul preached Christ with the confidence of a man whose heart had been set free.



Application: Standing Tall in Your Arena

Paul's example reflects two facts for standing tall in our day.

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First, *when standing tall, you become so focused you feel invincible*. Paul was unconcerned about himself, unimpressed with those in authority, unintimidated when fighting alone, and uninhibited in zeal and determination.

Second, *after standing tall, you are often unaware of the impact you made*. King Agrippa was visibly moved by Paul's message, but did he convert? Paul never knew. Having done his part, Paul was satisfied to leave the results to God.

In what arena might God be calling you to stand up for your faith? Your family, your neighborhood, your work? How has Paul's example given you confidence?

Based on Paul's example of giving his testimony, what would you say about your faith in Christ if the opportunity came knocking? What key points in the gospel would you include?

Paul is a hero not because he spoke in his own strength but because he spoke the name of Jesus. He stood on the rock of Christ—the risen Savior in whom we all stand tall.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You that this message of hope in the risen Christ is as good today as it was back then. I pray, Lord, that You will cause this sense of hope to give me a renewed determination to stand tall without concern for others' responses, to do what is right without tiring of it, and to do so the rest of my life. May I be the hero that some need, whether they be my children or grandchildren, my neighbors or friends, or people whom I've never met. Life begins and ends with Christ, and I pray in His great name and for His sake. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Paul: A Man of Grace and Grit* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 273.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2001, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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