

Acts Chapter Twenty-Six

Acts 26:1-3

And Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and *proceeded* to make his defense:

"In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today; especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among *the* Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

- Paul doesn't use opportunity to defend himself—but to present Christ to Festus and Agrippa
- This is a high point in Paul's ministry
- Since Paul has appealed to Caesar—not even King Agrippa can condemn him (they can't set him free either).
- This is a gathering with great pomp and pageantry—attended by chief captains and men of the city.
- Paul—a prisoner in chains—bears witness before kings
- Paul sees himself as a prisoner—Philemon 1, Eph 3:1, 4:1, II Tim 1:8
- King in purple—Paul in prison garb
- Paul is standing before the man whose great grandfather tried to kill Jesus—his grandfather killed John the Baptist—and father killed the Apostle James
- This is a partial fulfillment of Acts 9:15

Acts 26:4-7

"So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my *own* nation and at Jerusalem; since they have known about me for a long time previously, if they are willing to testify, that I lived *as* a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion. "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; *the promise* to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve *God* night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews.

- Both Paul and Agrippa are well instructed in Mosaic Law.
- Gives his background—living life as a Pharisee
- Paul stresses the fact that he had lived as an ultra orthodox religious Pharisee—righteously indignant for God and the Law.

- He is being consistent to teaching traced back to Abraham—resurrection was implied throughout the OT.
- The God he worships is the God of Israel.
- Paul considers his position on resurrection to be at the root of the conflict.

Acts 26:8-11

“Why is it considered incredible among you *people* if God does raise the dead? “So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. “And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. “And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

- He rehearses the level of his own darkness, blindness, wrong conclusions, the extent of his own religious zeal and the error of his ways.
- He had locked up the saints in prison—he reflects on this as he now sits in prison.
- Paul speaks of his regret over these incidents in I Cor 15:9 and I Tim 1:15
- Paul cast his vote—as a member of Sanhedrin
- If he was a member of the Sanhedrin—he had to be married at one point (to be in the Sanhedrin, you had to be married). Perhaps she died.

Acts 26:12-18

“While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. “And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ “And I said, ‘Who art Thou, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ‘But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; delivering you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may

receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

- This is Paul's fullest account of his experience on the Damascus Road. He notes that he went on a mission of hate and persecution with the authority and commission of the same religious leaders who now accuse him.
- It is on this road that his conversion begins—Phil 3:7-8
- This section captures the nature of the call on Paul's life
- He is being called to a radical new understanding of the God he had been previously been serving.
- His mission: the Gentiles—I Thes 1:9—to turn Gentiles away from satanic power to God Himself (turn—repent)
- As a result—Gentiles will receive forgiveness for their sins and belong to the same family/inheritance as believing Jews.
- Paul had to repent of his misguided zeal and wrong understanding of God.

Acts 26:19-23

“Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. “For this reason *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death. “And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, *and* that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.”

- After sharing his vision—he defends basing his actions upon this—obeying God rather than man.
- Paul makes it clear that 'The Way' is a fulfillment of the OT—Law and Prophets.
- He shares that his message is now an invitation to all—a proclamation to both Jews and Gentiles.
- In vs 19—Paul declares where his allegiance lies—He must obey God rather than human authority (4:19, 5:29)
- Paul's message is rooted in Hebrew scriptures, claims Jesus is the Messiah, it is a message about a suffering Messiah, who rose from the dead, for the sake of all the nations—that Jesus is God in flesh appearing.

Acts 26:24-28

And while *Paul* was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind! *Your* great learning is driving you mad.” But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. “For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. “King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.” And Agrippa *replied* to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”

- Festus remarks that Paul is not mentally sound—to make such assertions.
- His message is full of truth and reason—based on historical events—not hidden—open to full disclosure and examination.
- Agrippa may know/be aware of the facts—be familiar with the prophets—yet he has no heart response—he is dead in his sins.
- Scripture says—Now is the day of salvation. To begin to believe without submission to the will and work of God can eventually harden you.
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Acts 26:29-32

And Paul *said*, “I would to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

And the king arose and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them, and when they had drawn aside, they *began* talking to one another, saying, “This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment.” And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

- Things are getting too close for Agrippa—conversation is brought to a close—king stands up.

Acts Chapter Twenty-six—Workbook

Key Words:

Harmonize:

Read Isaiah 42

Dig:

- 1) Why does Paul appreciate defending himself before King Agrippa?
- 2) What is the problem Festus faces? Why doesn't he just let Paul go free?
- 3) Is King Agrippa in a position to help? Why?
- 4) What does Paul claim as the real source of his conflict with the Jews?
- 5) Is Paul's speech a defense or a testimony? Is the purpose of Paul's speech to convince Festus and Agrippa of his innocence or to proclaim the truth about Christianity?
- 6) What does Paul choose to share about his Jewish roots?
- 7) What part of Paul's own history and behaviors is he now receiving himself?
- 8) As Paul tells his conversion story—what new elements are added?
- 9) What purposes does Jesus lay out for Paul's life?

10) How does Paul explain the way of salvation in this chapter?

11) Who was the first to proclaim light to both the Jewish people and the Gentiles?

Discuss:

- 1) How does Paul's conviction about the resurrection differ from the Pharisees—who also believe in the resurrection?
- 2) As you read the purposes laid out for Paul's life in vs 16-18—how well is the church doing with these same purposes?

Point of Prayer:

Pray for someone experiencing long term suffering in an area of their life.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) If you condensed your spiritual journey to just a few highlights—what would you share?
- 2) Have you shared different aspects of your conversion based on your audience? Why?
- 3) Do you have regular contact with unbelievers? Who?

- 4) What is the response of unbelievers today to the claim of the resurrection? Has this topic come up in any discussions?
- 5) How familiar are you with hearing the voice of the Lord? How did you learn to discern His voice?

- 6) Could you explain the gospel using the Old Testament? (vs 22)

- 7) Have you experienced long-term suffering? How has this effected your spiritual journey?