

Acts Chapter 26

b. Paul's address, 26:1-29

Acts 26:1 Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and proceeded to make his defense:

Acts 26:2 "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;

Acts 26:3 especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

Paul finally has an opportunity to make a defense of his actions to one who is not biased and knows the customs of the Jews. The Jews knew their own customs but because of their stubbornness they refused to listen. It is said that Agrippa was a Jew in profession and his father Agrippa I followed the customs strictly.

Paul divides his defense into two areas.

1. His early life which was well known as a Pharisee
2. His life as a prisoner

1. His early life which was well known as a Pharisee

Acts 26:4 "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;

Acts 26:5 since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.

Paul lived by the strictest rules of the Pharisee's. His life was open to all and they knew him as this type of man. Paul shows his dedication in following God.

Cf. Phil. 3:4-6

Acts 26:6 "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers;

Acts 26:7 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.

Paul has made this statement several times, 23:6; 24:14-16 Here Paul states that he was only teaching what all the Jews had been hoping for, the promise made 430 years before the law, Gal 3:15-18.

Acts 26:8 "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?

This would be referring specifically to those Jews, who denied the resurrection.
(The Sadducees)

Acts 26:9 "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Here Paul refers back to his early upbringing, vs. 4,5. Because of his training in the Jewish customs he was lead to be hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Acts 26:10 "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.

Acts 26:11 "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.

1. Paul truly proclaims his zeal for God.
2. Note how Paul refers to those he persecuted. He calls them saints, v.10

3. He also states that he tried to force them to blaspheme, to Apostate, but he did not succeed they faced death rather than denounce Christ. This is possibly the reason he became enraged

Acts 26:12 "While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests,

Acts 26:13 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.

Paul enters into the account of his conversion. Note that here we have a little more insight to what actually took place. The other two accounts are found in Acts 9 and 22

Acts 26:14 "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 when we had all fallen to the ground,

This reminds us of what took place on the night of Jesus' betrayal, John 18:4-6

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.'

The goad was a stick six or eight feet long. The plow had but one handle and the plowman held the plow with one hand and the goad in the other; it is carried horizontally and used to prod the ox to make him go faster or obey the plowman. If the ox kicked when pricked with the goad he received a severer prod.

This statement throws some light on the state of Paul's mind before his conversion. It is possible that Paul was stifling conscientious doubts and scruples, and he is being warned against rebelling against God's will, lest he wound his conscientious more deeply.

Acts 26:15 "And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

This statement tells us that one who is persecuting Christians is really persecuting Jesus. We use a similar statement when evangelizing, "They are not rejecting you, but rejecting Jesus."

Acts 26:16 'But get up 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;

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Here we can see the authority of Paul's apostleship, Gal 1:1

but also to the things in which I will appear to you;

Jesus came to Paul in other visions, Acts 18:9; 23:11; 2 Cor. 12:2

Acts 26:17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,

Paul states that in his service to the Lord he would be protected. He was challenged by both sides yet he was delivered.

Acts 26:18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

Paul states what his mission was among the Gentiles.

Acts 26:19 "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,

Paul is saying. "You could not expect me to avoid the voice from heaven could you?"

Acts 26:20 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.

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Cf. 3:19; 2:38;

performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

This is the life of one who has repented or lives as a man who has repented should.

Acts 26:21 "For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.

Paul is referring back to what took place in Jerusalem, Acts 21:27ff

Acts 26:22 "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;

"So, having obtained help from God,

Paul understood that from the beginning of his work the Lord would protect him.

This message was revealed to Paul several times, Acts 18:9,10; 26:17

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;

Again Paul was only proclaiming what he has always been proclaiming, Acts 13:26-41; 17:2,3, and what the Jews had been waiting for. This is seen in the next verse.

Acts 26:23 that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

that the Christ was to suffer,

To the Jews this did not fit their idea of a prophet and would have concluded Isaiah 53 to not be Messianic. This could be one of the reasons they rejected the Christ.

and that by reason of {His} resurrection from the dead

Because Jesus was resurrected from the dead, by reason, He is able to proclaim light, Rom 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18

He should be the first to proclaim light both to the {Jewish} people and to the Gentiles."

The light proclaimed is eternal life, John 8:12. Jesus was the first to proclaim this light in the fact that was the first to die and to rise never to die again, Heb. 1:5-6, Rev. 1:5. He proclaimed this light in His death and resurrection.

*Acts 26:24 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."*

In this statement Festus shows forth his inability to understand the simple things Paul was teaching, 1 Cor. 1:18-31. We see this same type of attitude today in the world. Many of the wise men see Christians as foolish.

*Acts 26:25 But Paul *said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth.*

Paul counters Festus' comment about him being mad by saying he speaks words of sober truth. Note how this sane man addressed his accuser. This is not the characteristic of a mad man.

Acts 26:26 "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.

"For the king knows about these matters,

We did not see Agrippa shouting with a loud voice. His listening is intent and he understands what Paul is saying as seen in his own statement, vs.28

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.

All that had taken place concerning Christ was not kept a secret. His trial and crucifixion were public. The proclaiming of His resurrection was made public by His disciples. Paul's work was public. All the facts were on the table, nothing was left wanting.

Acts 26:27 "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do."

Agrippa had heard the arguments offered by Paul, and being a proclaimed Jew he also knew about the prophets whom Paul referred. It was now up to Agrippa to make the decision. Was Paul doing as he had proclaimed in vs.22.

In the world today we have similar situations. Once we have studied with someone and have shown them the simple truths it is time to ask them if they believe. At that time it is up to them to make a decision.

Acts 26:28 Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."

This passage in the Greek is a difficult one to translate. It is uncertain if Agrippa is saying that he is pondering the fact of becoming a Christian or not.

But the point cannot be missed that Paul has taken this opportunity to teach all present the saving Gospel of Christ.

Acts 26:29 And Paul said, "I would wish 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 Paul said, "I would wish 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,

Paul's reply appears to show that he believed Agrippa to be making a statement of a half-converted individual. We have this same response today, "I understand what you are saying, but..."

except for these chains."

Paul was in the customary position of a Roman prisoner, chained to a guard.

c. The end of the audience with the King, 26:30-32

Acts 26:30 The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them,

Acts 26:31 and when they had gone aside, they began talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment."

Acts 26:32 And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Compare this to Acts 26:30-32. The only reason Paul had appealed to Caesar was because of what Festus had tried to do, 25:9-12

Here we see once again that those with an open mind saw that Paul had done nothing wrong against the Roman government, but because of Paul's appeal he had to be sent to Rome.

Once again we can see the working of God in Paul's life, Paul wanted to go to Rome and the Lord said He must go.

Acts 19:21

Acts 23:11