

Jesus Christ's work through the Apostles to the Uttermost

Acts 26 If at first you don't convince the Governor; convince the King

"... and ye shall be witness unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judae'a, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8

Introduction: Here in this chapter Paul is given opportunity to speak to King Agrippa and Bernice. We understand from the previous chapter that others are here to view the spectacle as well. Against this backdrop, Paul begins to recount again his testimony. He tells of his life prior to Jesus Christ and the day he met Jesus. He is certainly *"happy"* to do so.

- I. Paul's Manner of Life 1-11**
- II. Paul's Midday Encounter 12-23**
- III. Paul's Message Avoided 24-32**

I. Paul's Manner of Life 1-11

A. The Opening Scene v1

- 1. **v1** Paul is given permission to speak.
- 2. He is told he may *"speak"* for himself. We are reminded that our personal testimony is ours to tell.
- 3. **v2** Paul is *"happy"* to confess before the king Jesus Christ. His life before Christ would have been honorable in considering his zeal as a Pharisee, but Paul will show his own error in his life.
- 4. **v3** Paul knew king Agrippa and Bernice would have knowledge of the *"customs"* of the Jews.
- 5. **v3** Paul desired him to listen *"patiently."* And it seems he did. There are often times when people checkout mentally when delivering the Gospel.

B. The Orderly Jew v4

- 1. **v4** Here we see a glimpse into Paul's early life. Paul was trained and *"lived"* as a Pharisee.
- 2. **v5** Paul mentions that the Pharisees were the *"straightest"* sect. Meaning it was the most precise to adhere to the Mosaic law. Pharisees would have an outward holiness about them.
- 3. **The obvious implication here is that Paul walked his talk.**

C. The Opposing Views v6

- 1. **v6** Paul contends truthfully that the hope for which he is judged is the same hope his people seek.
- 2. **v6** It is *"the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers;"*

3. The promise of which Paul speaks no doubt has to do with the resurrection, but also the promised Messiah. In the following verse Paul poses the question (v8) *“Why should it be thought an incredible thing with you, that God should raise the dead?”*
4. **“But it may be observed that in his view the two things were closely united [the promise of the Messiah and the resurrection].** He hoped that the Messiah would come, and he hoped therefore for the resurrection of the dead. He believed that he had come, and had risen, and therefore he believed that the dead would rise. He argued the one from the other.” – Albert Barnes
5. **v7** Paul is stating that the Jews universally *“serve”* God with this hope in mind. Though there were variations among the Jewish community and though some made be apostate, generally speaking the Jewish people looked for these promises.
6. **v8 Why is it incredible to think that God should raise the dead?** It is indeed interesting that man would soon believe that man could send someone to the moon, make a car that drives itself, or even suppose that man could travel unbelievable speeds and distances; but yet we relegate God quickly to not having all-power.
7. **v9** Paul thought before his encounter with Jesus Christ, that it was his duty to *“do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”*
8. **v10** These things he did not just think, but actually did. Oftentimes, we have many thoughts that are disconnected with any action. Paul is explaining that he acted on his convictions.
9. He had *“many of the saints...”* *“...shut up...”*
10. His authority was given and consented to by the chief priests.
11. He *“gave his voice...”* for them to be put to death. Of course, we have the account of Stephen’s martyrdom, but we see the use of the word *“they”* indicates that more than just Stephen is in view here.
12. When Paul gave his voice it literally means his consent.
13. **v11** This he did with great zeal. The word *“oft”* indicates for you and I this was not a passing thing, but was literally his *“manner of life.”* Here there were no bounds to his ventures. He mentions *“every synagogue...”*
14. **v11** His madness mentioned in verse 11 gives the idea of rage. Why was he so mad? We do note from his conversion that he was kicking *“against the pricks.”* (**Acts 9:5**)
15. **The idea of running away from God is no new one.** Running away from God, trying to get rid of God, trying to evade the conviction of the Holy Spirit is all futile.
16. **The idea of blaspheme here mentioned is to get them to renounce Jesus Christ.**
17. Paul’s design before Jesus was to not allow Jesus Christ’s followers to continue to proselytize.

II. Paul's Midday Encounter 12-23

A. His Worldly Commission v12-15

1. v12 Paul had authority and power (commission) from the chief priests.
2. v13 On his way he describes a light above the brightness of the sun. Imagine the brightness that must have been to outshine the sun at midday.
3. v14,15 Give for us the very words that the Lord spoke to Paul in part. Paul was already under conviction, of which he could not shake. The Lord points out the "pricks" of which he was trying to get rid of.
4. The more the ox kicked against the goads the more goads he received. For Paul, his madness against Christians never satisfied his soul. It was not until he met Jesus Christ that he found peace with God.

B. His Heavenly Commission v16-22

1. v16 Paul was to be a **minister**, a **messenger**, and a **mediator**.
2. *"...to make thee a **minister**..."* (hupēretēs - an under oarsman) This word means an **under-rower** or **subordinate rower**. Simply put Paul would now be acting under the directions of another. The beautiful picture is given here that Jesus is the captain of his Salvation and Paul would be laboring for him.
3. **Secondly**, we see Paul was to be a **messenger**. *"...a minister and a **witness**..."* (martus- one who has definite knowledge of something and can attest to. that fact). The word translated as witness is where we derive the English word martyr.
4. **Thirdly**, Paul would be a **mediator**. He would witness not only what he had seen, but what he would see in the future. As Paul wrote many letters and established many works, he was a mediator delivering what the Lord would show him. (**Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews**).
5. *"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;"* **Ephesians 2:14**
6. v17 The Lord specifically informs Paul of his new orders. He would go to the people *"...whom now I would send thee."*
7. v18 Describes the **condition of people** and the **result of the Gospel**.
8. **The condition of the people** - *"To open their eyes..."*
9. *"to turn them **from darkness**..."*, *"...**from the power of Satan** unto God..."*
10. **The result of the Gospel** – Turning *"...unto God..."*, *"...receive forgiveness of sins..."*, *"...inheritance..."*, *"...sanctified by faith..."*
11. v19 Speaks of Paul's obedience. The one item that a Christian has control over is obedience. In the parable of the seed and sower no rebuke is given for the seed falling on the hardened earth because our responsibility is to deliver the message (Obedience).
12. v20 Paul gives his testimony of obedience, notice the list is extensive (Damascus, Jerusalem, all Judea, *"the Gentiles..."*)

- 13.v20 The message is “...*repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ...*” (**Acts 20:21**) resulting in “...*works meet for repentance.*” [In other words, Paul is saying the result of someone being saved will result in a heart change and thus a life change.]
- 14.v21 Paul cuts to the heart of the matter, it is “*For these causes...*”
- 15.v22 The two opposing sides are in view here. Paul rightly gives God the credit. All through the book of Acts, God providentially helped Paul. Particularly he cites what had taken place in Jerusalem and understood it was God that he “...*obtained help...*” from.

C. His Personal Conviction v22,23

1. v22 We could say ‘Therefore,’ “...*I continue unto this day...*” There is a whole lot to be said about this word continue.
2. v22 Paul witnesses to all and his testimony agrees with the counsel of God, “...*those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:...*” Concerning Jesus Christ.
3. v23 This is the Gospel. The usage of ‘Christ’ is Jesus’ messianic title. The Savior or anointed one. The one they believed would be a political conquer instead was the sacrificial Lamb. Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and also the Lamb of God.
4. v23 Light is given unto the Jew and Gentile alike.

III. Paul’s Message Avoided v24-32

A. Almost A Christian v24-29

1. v24 The interruption of the scoffer. At the resurrection of Christ, Festus would not believe. He had to ascent to nothing more than that Paul is mad. (Mania)
2. v25 Paul declares his sanity and does not scorn Festus, but insists this is the truth and ‘soberness’ (sanity).
3. v26 Could the resurrection be denied? (**Acts 1:3**) “*To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:*” How could you deny what had taken place and been witnessed by so many. Festus being ‘new to town’ perhaps thought all of this was superstition, but Agrippa would know that this had allegedly taken place.
4. v26 Paul alludes to this when he states, “*for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.*”
5. v27 Paul determines to continue to pursue King Agrippa, notice he goes back to the Word of God. “...*believest thou the prophets? I know thou believest.*” In other words, if you believe the Word of God, how can you deny this truth?
6. v28 “...*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*” There is no middle ground. What takes place with Agrippa after this, no one knows.

7. “Agrippa was thoroughly alarmed, for Paul’s thrusts came far too close to home. He is typical of many a person quite willing to listen to a sermon, even to take a deep, philosophical interest in the sermon—just so long as the preacher does not make personal the claims of Christ. Many will discuss and debate the issues of the gospel but will balk at a personal decision for Christ.” – John Phillips
8. v29 Paul’s desire was to all to accept Jesus as their Savior and be given to him fully and unconditionally.

B. Almost A Freeman v30-32

1. v30 They **terminated** the testimony. Many will run from the prodding of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the Word of God.
2. v31 They **talked** between themselves.
3. v32 They **testified** of Paul innocence.
4. v32 They did not understand that Paul was at liberty, free from the bondage of sin, but also that he was the servant to his Master Jesus Christ. This path was the path God had for him. “...*This man might have been set at liberty...*”