

ACTS 26

Paul before King Agrippa

25:23 So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. 25:24 And Festus said,

King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. 25:25 But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him. 25:26 But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. 25:27 For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him.

Paul's Defense before Agrippa

1 So Agrippa said to Paul,

You have permission to speak for yourself.

Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense (*ἀπολογέομαι*):

2 I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense (*ἀπολογέομαι*) today against all the accusations of the Jews, 3 especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

4 My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. 5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, 7 to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! 8 Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?¹

9 I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. 11 And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme. And in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

¹ Paul quickly brings up the topic of resurrection. The Jewish leaders are Sadducees and don't believe in resurrection.

12 In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun,² that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language,

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.³

15 And I said,

Who are you, Lord?

And the Lord (ὁ...κύριος) said,

I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint (προχειρίζω, aor.)⁴ you as an adjutant (ὕπηρέτης)⁵ and witness (μάρτυς) to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,⁶ 17 as I deliver (ἐξαιρέω, pres.)⁷ you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to open (ἀνοίγω, aor.) their eyes, so that they may turn (ἐπιστρέφω, aor.) from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive (λαμβάνω, aor.) forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified (ἀγιάζω, perf. pass.)⁸ by faith that is into me (πίστει τῇ εἰς ἐμέ).⁹

19 Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but kept declaring (ἀπαγγέλλω, imperf.) first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, to change their minds

² **Is 60:19-20** 19 Yahweh will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. 20 Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself, for Yahweh will be your everlasting light.

³ Luke has not related this last sentence before. This phrase seems to indicate Paul had been wrestling with the gospel message before Jesus confronted him on the Damascus road. Before his conversion, Paul was already thinking about the claims of Jesus and his followers.

⁴ “[T]o express preference of someone for a task, *choose for oneself, select, appoint*” (BDAG, 891).

⁵ “[F]req. as t.t. for a governmental or other official) one who functions as a helper, freq. in a subordinate capacity, *helper, assistant* (e.g. a physician’s assistant...; as adjutant...; the lictor beside the consul...; the 20 senators with Pompey...; the priest’s helpers” (BDAG, 1035).

⁶ Jesus appeared to Paul more than once.

⁷ “[T]o deliver someone from peril or confining circumstance, *set free, deliver, rescue*” (BDAG, 344).

⁸ See *Phase One Sanctification*.

⁹ The object of faith, the Lord Jesus, is emphasized here. Here we have a wonderfully concise description of the process by which unbelievers come to be believers in Jesus. A witness is sent by Jesus to open eyes, that unbelievers may turn and believe into Jesus, thereby receiving forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are set apart.

(μετανοέω, pres. act. inf.) and turn (ἐπιστρέφω, pres. act. inf.) upon God, practicing (pres. act. part.) works worthy of a change of heart.¹⁰ 21 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying (μαρτύρομαι, pres.) both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: 23 that the Messiah must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.¹¹

Paul Urges King Agrippa to Believe

24 And as he was saying these things in his defense (ἀπολογέομαι, pres.), Festus said with a loud voice,

You're out of your mind (μαίνομαι, pres.),¹² Paul. Your great learning is driving you out of your mind (μανία).¹³

25 But Paul said,

I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words (ἀληθείας καὶ σωφροσύνης¹⁴ ῥήματα ἀποφθέγγομαι (pres.)).¹⁵ 26 For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly (παρρησιάζομαι). For I am persuaded (πείθω, pres.) that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.¹⁶ 27 King Agrippa, do you believe (πιστεύω, pres.) the prophets? I know (οἶδα) that you believe (πιστεύω, pres.).¹⁷

¹⁰ Practicing good works worthy of a change of mind is the theme of Titus.

¹¹ This is a summary of Paul's primary message: the Messiah had to die, and his resurrection is light for both Jews and Gentiles who believe in him.

¹² "[Y]ou're out of your mind, you're raving, said to one whose enthusiasm seems to have outrun better judgment" (BDAG, 610).

¹³ "[M]adness, frenzy, delirium. Freq. in a non-diagnostic sense of eccentric or bizarre behavior in word or action...too much study is driving you mad (i.e. turning you into a fanatic)" (BDAG, 615).

¹⁴ "[S]oundness of mind, reasonableness, rationality" (BDAG, 987).

¹⁵ "[T]o express oneself orally, w. focus on sound rather than content, *speaking out, declare* boldly or loudly (of the speech of a wise man...; but also of an oracle-giver, diviner, prophet, exorcist, and other inspired persons" (BDAG, 125). **Ac 2:14** 14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed (ἀποφθέγγομαι, aor.) them: Men of Judea.....

¹⁶ Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection were publicly known by everyone. So was the ministry of the apostles. The Christian faith is not something we hide in secret. It is to be publicly known. The church is not a secret society.

¹⁷ Here we see that the Greek verb πιστεύω very often means to believe what someone says. It doesn't mean to believe plus act on one's belief, as Lordship Salvation proponents often advocate. The focus here is on the content of belief, that is, what the Old Testament prophets have written concerning the coming Messiah.

28 And Agrippa said to Paul,

In a short time would you persuade (πείθω, pres.) me to be a Christian (Χριστιανός)?¹⁸

29 And Paul said,

Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.¹⁹

Paul Is Innocent and Should Be Set Free

30 Then the king rose, and the governor, Bernice, and those who were sitting with them. 31 And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another,

This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.

32 And Agrippa said to Festus,

This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.²⁰

¹⁸ Yes, Emperor Nero. Even you may become a Christian.

¹⁹ What a statement. Paul is so confident that in Jesus he has found the way, the truth, and the life.

²⁰ This is the verdict Luke hopes Nero is to reach. How did Luke know about this conversation between Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice? Why couldn't Paul withdraw his appeal?

Notes