

Acts 26

Paul's Defense Before King Agrippa

A. Paul speaks in his hearing before King Agrippa.

1. (1-3) Paul's introductory words.

(1 - 3) Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently."

Paul stood before the man whose great-grandfather had tried to _____ Jesus as a baby; his grandfather had John the Baptist _____; his father had martyred the first apostle, _____.

Though he was a prisoner, Paul was _____ to speak before Agrippa.

This was a _____ fulfillment of what the Lord promised Paul at his conversion: *Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.*

2. (4-5) Paul's early life as a faithful Jew and Pharisee.

(4 - 5) "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."

Paul was born in _____, several hundred miles from Jerusalem.

Not only was Paul a faithful _____, but was known as a faithful man among the Jews, living according to the strictest sect of the Pharisees.

3. (6-8) Paul as a faithful, believing Jew confronts Agrippa for his lack of faith.

(6 - 8) "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?"

Paul made it clear that in both his heart and mind, he remained a _____ Jew.

Since Agrippa was an expert in all _____ and questions which have to do with the Jews, he should have understood the belief that God could, or would, raise the dead.

4. (9-11) Paul explains that at one time he persecuted the followers of Jesus.

(9, 10, 11) “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.”

Before his conversion, Paul believed he _____ persecute the followers of Jesus.

Paul later speaks of the great _____ he had over his prior life as a persecutor.

I cast my vote against them clearly implies that Paul was a _____ of the Sanhedrin, having a vote against Christians who were tried before the Sanhedrin (as Stephen was in Acts 7).

Before his conversion, Paul was an _____ man. His great rage showed that his relationship with God was not right, despite his diligent religious observance.

5. (12-15) Jesus reveals Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus.

(12...15) “While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’”

He first noted that he went on his mission of hate and persecution with the authority and commission of the _____ religious leaders who now accused him.

Paul literally saw the _____ before he figuratively saw the _____.

These words emphasize:

- The _____ appeal of Jesus (Saul, Saul).
- The misdirected _____ of his persecution (Me).
- The _____ of persecuting Jesus (Why).

These words, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” _____ Paul’s world.

6. (16-18) Jesus commissions Paul on the road to Damascus.

(16 – 18) “But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”

Jesus called Paul up to his _____.

The religious leaders sent Paul to Damascus for a purpose, with authority and commission. Now he must choose _____ purpose, the purpose of Jesus.

Paul was commissioned to be a minister, which means he was to be a _____ of the things which he had seen, and of the things which Jesus would yet reveal to him.

Paul was also called to be a _____ of those things.

Jesus described the _____ Paul would do.

Jesus described His followers, His people, His family as those who are _____ by faith in Me.

7. (19-20) Paul’s obedience to Jesus.

(19, 20) “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”

Given the experience Paul just described, to not be disobedient to the heavenly vision was _____.

This is a neat _____ of Paul’s message.

8. (21-23) Paul summarizes his defense.

(21 – 23) “For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come; that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.”

Paul plainly states the _____ of the case.

During his more than two years of confinement, Paul _____ receive help from God.

Paul also stated his unswerving commitment to the _____ gospel, because that gospel was based solidly on the Word of God (the prophets and Moses) not on the traditions or spiritual experiences of man.

These were the three main points to Paul's preaching: Jesus' _____, His _____, and the preaching of this _____ news to the whole world, without respect to either Jew or Gentile.

B. The response from Festus and Agrippa.

1. (24-26) Festus asserts Paul is mad, and Paul responds.

(24 – 26) Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner."

Paul was obviously an intelligent man, a man of much _____. Still, at this moment Festus thought he was _____, saying this with a loud voice among all present.

Yet, Paul knew that not only his gospel was _____, it was also _____.

Paul's message was characterized by _____ and reason, because it was based on _____ *events*, things which were not done in a corner, but open to examination.

2. (27-29) Agrippa is almost persuaded to become a Christian.

(27, 28, 29) "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe." Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."

Paul used Festus' outburst to appeal to what King Agrippa _____.

He wanted to connect what Agrippa already believed to what he _____ believe.

This is a good and often necessary part of the presentation of the message of who Jesus is and what He did for us – calling the listener to _____.

When Paul called Agrippa to faith in the prophets and in Jesus, Agrippa _____ to believe and to say he believed.

Far from being admired for how far he did come, Agrippa condemned himself even _____ by admitting how close he has come to the gospel and how clearly he has understood it, while still rejecting it.

Paul declared his continued trust in the _____ of Jesus Christ.

With a dramatic gesture, Paul showed that even though he was in _____, he had more freedom in Jesus than any of the royalty listening had.

3. (30-32) Agrippa admits Paul's innocence, yet forwards him to Caesar.

(30 – 32) When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains." Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Paul's direct _____ was too much for Agrippa, Festus, and the others on the platform.

Agrippa also saw there was no _____ offered to support the accusations against Paul, and he respected Paul's great integrity even while rejecting Paul's gospel.

Yet, Paul could not be set free, because he had _____ to Caesar.

However, we should see the _____ of God's plan through all these events.

The _____ to Caesar, and his subsequent journey to Rome at the Empire's expense, were also the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit's purpose that Paul should go to Rome.