

ACTS CHAPTER 26

Paul's Defense before Agrippa (Acts 26:1-27)

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.

"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, 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. 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.

“While so 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.’

What is a goad? An ox goad is a wooden tool, approximately eight feet long, fitted with an iron spike or point at one end, which was used to spur oxen as they pulled a plow or cart. Jesus asked Saul why he was persecuting Him and reminded him that, just as an ox that kicks against the pricking of the goad can hurt itself, Saul’s continued resistance to the gospel would only result in danger to himself.



“And I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’

And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ‘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; rescuing 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, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’

What do we learn from this account of Paul’s conversion? Here we have the fullest report of what the Lord said to him from heaven. First it should be observed that Saul was not, like those saved under the ministries of John the Baptist and the twelve, a repentant Jew. He had not sought Christ or wished to know Him. His salvation was clearly by sovereign grace. Secondly we learn that the truths he was to proclaim were to be further made known to him in a series of revelations in which the Lord Himself would appear to him. Third, we learn from this passage that from the day of Paul’s conversion he was chosen from Israel and from the Gentiles as Christ’s apostle to both. And how complete a representative! Here we have a Hebrew and a Roman in one person! Moreover, he was a former enemy, reconciled to God by exceeding abundant grace! What an ideal representative of the believing Jews and Gentiles in this dispensation, who have been “reconciled to God in one body,” who have “the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace!”



Map 2. Shows the location of Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea, Syria, Cilicia and Tarsus

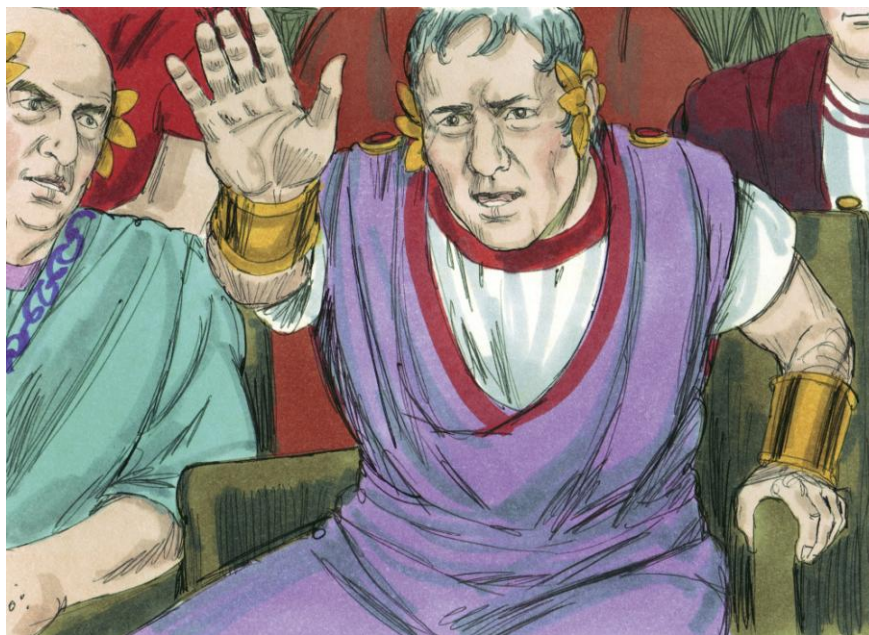
“So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles,…”

When did Paul preach throughout all the region of Judea? After his return to Jerusalem from Damascus (Gal. 1:17-18), he went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia (Gal. 1: 21) apparently in connection with his journey to Tarsus (Cf. Acts 9:29-30). Evidently this was the occasion of the founding of Gentile churches there, for later we find letters being sent along with Paul and others, to the Gentile believers there, to confirm them in grace (Acts 15:23-27). Now all this time, Paul himself tells us, he “was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ” (Gal. 1:22). He could not, therefore, have preached “throughout all the region of Judea” before going to the Gentiles. His ministry in Judea more probably took place at the time when the Gentiles at Syrian Antioch sent financial “relief of the brethren living in Judea” (Acts 11:29-30) or else on one of his subsequent visits to that region.

“...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.”

¿Should we assume that the apostle Paul, during this period, had preached “the gospel of the kingdom,” even as John the Baptist, our Lord and the twelve had done? This would be contrary to the whole record, however. A moment’s reflection will show that the true soul winner, still today, will seek to persuade men to “repent,” lit., “change their minds” and “turn to God” and then “to works” consistent with that change. This is still so, even though the theme of our message is the finished work of Christ and the riches of His grace.

“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 would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.”



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.”

Why did Paul not wait for an answer? It would have been improper as well as foolish under such circumstances. He, not Agrippa, had been called for a hearing, and to put the king in an embarrassing position would only have angered him. Thus, tactfully, the apostle immediately answers his own question. He knows King Agrippa believes the Old Testament writings – and surely Festus would not call Agrippa mad! Nor could Agrippa, in his position, deny this and accept Festus’ opinion of the sacred Scriptures. Thus with superb tact the apostle appeals to Agrippa himself and uses him as his witness, at the same time driving home the truth of his argument.

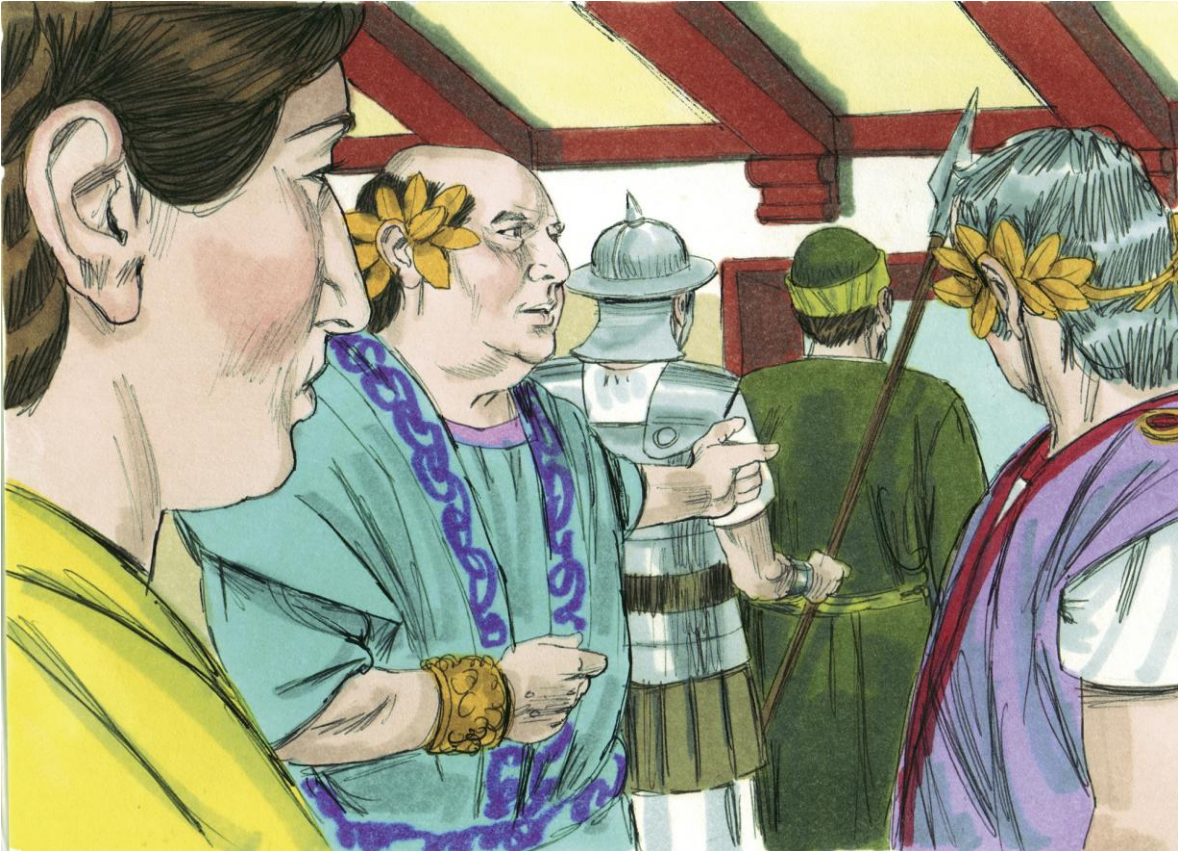
Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.”

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.”



The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them, and when they had gone 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.”



QUESTIONS OF ACTS CHAPTER 26

ALL ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND IN THE TEXT OF CHAPTER 26

1. How did Paul consider himself in regard to all things of which he was accused by the Jews?

2. For what hope was Paul being accused by Jews according to his defense?

3. What things had Paul done which were hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth?

4. What did Paul see on the way to Damascus?

5. What did the risen Jesus say to Paul in the Hebrew dialect?

6. What is Jesus His purpose in opening the eyes of the Jewish people and the Gentiles?

7. What message kept Paul declaring to Jews and Gentiles?

8. According to Festus, what was Paul's great learning doing?

9. How did Paul answer Festus?

10. What was Paul's wish to God?

ACTS CHAPTER 26 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

Paul's Defense before Agrippa

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

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

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; **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.**6**"And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; **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. **8**"Why is it considered incredible among you *people* if God does raise the dead?

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

12"While so engaged as I was journeying 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, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. **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.' **15**"And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. **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; **17**rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, **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.'

19"So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, **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. **21**"For this reason *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.**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; **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."

24While *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." **25**But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. **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. **27**"King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." **28**Agrippa *replied* to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." **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."

30The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them, 31and when they had gone aside, they *began* talking to one another, saying, “This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment.” 32And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE(r),

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