

The Book of Acts

Chapter 26

Paul's Audience and Testimony Before Festus and King Agrippa II

26 – 1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.”

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: *(This motioning is also described in Acts 13:16 as it an action to focus attention or quell disturbing voices or was it a salute to Jesus to attend his words. I rather think it was the latter but we can not know with certainty.)* **2** “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, **3** and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently. *(Paul summarizes his personal background which is that of a devout and fervent Jew. He intends to make the point that his own believes were no different than those of his accusers.)*

4 “The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, *(Tarsus, the capital city of Cilicia in present-day Turkey and well known for its intellectual environment.)* and also in Jerusalem. **5** They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. **6** And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. **7** This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. **8** Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? *(Paul emphasizes the hope of the resurrection of which all Pharisees pursue. Yeshua, Jesus is the first of those who is the first to demonstrate the truth of the doctrine although to the natural mind it appears a preposterous concept.)*

9 “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. **10** And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. **11** Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. *(We can contrast the peacable nature of Christianity to the militancy and rigidity of the practice of Pharisaic Judaism. Judaism described here was exclusive and legalistic and dealt severely with those who were antagonistic to the faith, sentencing such to death, usually by stoning. Present day Islam is a very similar religion with no tolerance for any who depart from their doctrine which are clarified in Sharia. Executions remain in force as a way to punish religious offenses with beheading being a continued practice.)*

12 “On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. **13** About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. *(Paul's own testimony is repeated exactly as he had earlier, Acts C.22; Those who have not experienced the power of God, unbelievers, will most often be unpersuadable by quoting Scripture. In such cases the personal testimony of how God has changed your life may have the most impact. You may judge how successful it was in this account.)* **14** We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic,^[a] ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ **15** “Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. **16** ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. **17** I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending

you to them¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

Are there some details that were not expressed earlier? “ – to turn them from darkness to light and the power of Satan to God is a very strong message. Which of course, applies as much to our ministries and callings as Paul’s. It would appear that this a rather strong allegation to sdeliver to the ears of the ruling class aristocrats who literally exemplify “the leaven of Herod” that Jesus spoke of in Mark 8:15)

19 “So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. **20** First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. *(Genuine conversion will result in righteous deeds done of a pure conscience. James in his epistle stresses ‘doing’ as a indicator of a changed life. Paul and James are on the same page with this understanding.)* **21** That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.**22** But I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— **23** that the Christ [b] would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead,would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.” *(This is a rather strong reaction of one who’s mind can not grasp any thing pertaining to spiritual matters. – 1Cor. 12:1) I also enjoy, using this quotation in gest when conversations with individuals grow too speculative or flambuoant. Festus may be trying to anticipate how Agrippa will react sensing the unbelievable nature of the testimony they are both hearing.)*

25 “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. *(With God there is no partiality or respect of persons, but Paul is cosmopolitan enough to know when to oil with obsequies.)* “What I am saying is true and reasonable.**26** The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. **27** King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” *(Agrippa uses the name Christian which by this time is evidently in parlance in Roman society.)*

29 Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.” *(If we had been there as Luke evidently was, we would see the drama maybe even humor, in including this part of the conversation. Be like me, – – Oh, but not with the chains you see on me.)* **30** The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. **31** They left the room, and while talking with one another, they said, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.” **32** Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.” *(In a turn of fate, or spiritual destiny, Paul is set upon another course than freedom. His appeal to Caesar will ensure his final destination to a Roman prison and ultimate martyrdom.)*

Paul’s Testimony (s) As Recorded in Acts

http://www.newdurham.org/images/studies/Acts/acts_29.html

For Chronology of the events described in Acts go to this link:

http://www.christianbiblereference.org/st_acts_intro.htm