

## June 27 2010 Zeal for the Gospel – Acts 26

Last week, Acts 20, Paul told the Elders of Ephesus that “chains and tribulations await” him in Jerusalem. Before we get to the point of Acts 26 we need to summarize the events leading from Acts 20 to Acts 26. You can’t tell the players without a program.

In Acts 21 Paul arrives in Jerusalem. The Church greets him with great joy and encouraged him to perform the ritual of cleansing as prescribed by Moses – which Paul does. He is almost immediately beaten by the Jews in an attempt to kill him. (1<sup>st</sup> attempt).

In Acts 22 Paul is given a chance to defend himself before the crowd; and then defense before the Centurion; wherein he claimed Roman citizenship (purchased citizenship as he was born a Jew)

In Acts 23 Paul is brought before the High Priest Ananias (not the disciple) and the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin divides over Pharisee and Sadducee issues of belief in resurrection. Paul is rescued by the Centurion. The Jews agree together with a plan to assassinate Paul the next day. (2<sup>nd</sup> Attempt). Paul is delivered to Caesarea prison to stand trial before Felix the Governor.

In Acts 24 Felix heard testimony from High Priest Ananias and his attorney (orator) Tertullus against Paul. Felix understood many things about The Way, and he “reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.” Yet he refused to accept and sought a “more convenient time,” to hear Paul again. Felix kept Paul in prison for two years! Felix is succeeded by Festus.

In Acts 25 the Jews almost immediately ask a favor of Festus to send Paul to Jerusalem. This was the 3<sup>rd</sup> assassination plot against Paul. Festus said no and left Paul in Caesarea. Paul makes an appeal to Caesar instead of letting his case stand before the Jews. King Agrippa arrives to hear Paul’s defense and testimony. Festus tells Agrippa he can find no charges to file.

This brings us to our text in Acts 26.

Summary: Paul gives his testimony again to King Agrippa. Paul’s zeal for the Gospel grows with each delivery of his testimony. These passages reflect fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy in Luke 21:12-13 and Acts 9:15. Paul describes the Damascus Road experience. Festus is astounded and Agrippa is “almost” converted.

Key Verses for our consideration:

Vs. 18-19 – “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision

Vs. 24b-26 – “Much learning is driving you mad!” and “This thing was not done in a corner.”

Vs. 28 – “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”

Vs. 18-19 – Paul’s mission is universal; to the Jews and to the Greeks.

- a. To open their eyes. To be the instrument of informing their understanding in the things of God.
- b. To turn them from darkness to light. From heathenism and superstition to the knowledge and worship of the true God.
- c. From the power of Satan to God. From the “authority” and domination of Satan; for as the kingdom of darkness is under his dominion and he has authority and right over those who live in this darkness.
- d. Forgiveness of sin and an inheritance. By removal of sin; the guilt and pollution of sin; they become children of God; and, if children, then heirs. Among the sanctified – not only the forgiveness of sin but also the purification of the heart – holiness.

- e. Faith in Me (Jesus). Believing that Jesus Christ died for their offenses and rose again for their justification. Faith to believe.
- f. Paul was “not disobedient” even unto death.

Vs. 24b-26 – Festus is astounded and calls Paul a madman.

- a. Paul’s answer, “most noble Festus,” shows that he was far from anger or argument.
- b. Further, “none of these things escapes his attention,” notes that Paul understood that Festus was also a man of much learning and that he understood the Law of Moses.
- c. The “things not done in a corner,” indicate the preaching, miracles, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were most public and notorious; and of them Agrippa could not be ignorant.

Vs. 28 – “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”

- a. Some say this was a taunting statement.
- b. However, the declaration was almost the necessary consequence of Paul’s reasoning and Agrippa’s faith. If he believed the prophets (vs. 22-23) and believed that Paul’s application of their words to Christ Jesus was correct, he must acknowledge the truth of the Christian faith.
- c. The Christian faith is at once the faith requiring ultimate faith that a dead man got up and walked and as yet the most reasoned and reasonable of all faiths based on the consistency of the words of the ancient prophets.

Conclusion:

Paul’s zeal for the Gospel was great. His commitment to the heavenly vision was such that nothing of this world could dissuade him from God’s calling.

God is still calling today.

- a. Calling for you to come away from the life of sin and self. To have your eyes opened to the spiritual light and truth of Jesus Christ.
- b. Calling you to publically declare your faith and not keep it in a corner (compartmentalization of your faith).
- c. Calling for you to have an ever-increasing faith in Jesus Christ for every aspect of your life.