

1/27/08

Acts 26

Paul has been brought before Felix, Festus and finally before Agrippa and Bernice in fulfillment of the proclamation of Jesus at his conversion, that he would bear His name before Gentiles, Kings and the children of Israel as a chosen vessel. Acts 9:15-16

The better chapter break would be in the preceding chapter, where Paul was brought forth as a kind of entertainment for Herod and Bernice, with the intent by Festus to come up with some charges to accompany Paul to Rome before Caesar by Agrippa.

This was not a genuine defense as those before, for Paul had appealed to Caesar already, which took all authority from anyone judging Paul.

The section of the apostle Paul before Agrippa is the longest of the five recorded in Acts. Acts 25:23-26:32

The formal introduction of Paul by Festus to Agrippa. 25:23-27

1. The impressive entry of Agrippa. 25:23
 - a. Agrippa and Bernice came in with great pomp. vs. 23a-b

- b. They entered into the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city. vs. 23c
 - c. At Festus command Paul was brought in. vs. 23d
2. The general charges are repeated by Festus to Agrippa. 25:24-25
 - a. The Jews had petitioned Festus against Paul, in Jerusalem and Caesarea, saying he was not fit to live. vs. 24
 - b. That Festus had found nothing against Paul deserving of death, stated emphatically. vs. 25a
 - c. Since Paul appealed to Caesar, he decided to send him. vs. 25b-c
3. The dilemma of Festus was expressed to King Agrippa. 25:26-27
 - a. He had not charges to accompany Paul before Caesar. vs. 26a
 - b. He was hoping Agrippa might be able to formulate some charges. vs. 26b-e
 - * Festus flatters King Agrippa, “Especially you, King Agrippa”
 - c. Festus thought it against reason to send Paul without formal charges. vs. 27
 - * That would make him look bad before Caesar!

Now Paul proclaims his defense before Agrippa by declaring the Gospel.

26:1-3 **The introduction of the apostle Paul.**

26:1 The formal opening.

- 1) Agrippa gave Paul permission to speak on his own behalf.
- 2) Paul stretched forth his hand as an orator addressing the crowd of Roman dignitaries, his chains being visible for the gospel.
- 3) Paul answered “apologeomai” for himself, we our word apology from it. vs. 24
 - a) Paul is not defending himself before a legal hearing but merely providing the evidence of his innocence.
 - b) Paul’s appeal to Caesar, terminated any more hearings till he was brought before Caesar.

26:2-3 The delight to have Agrippa listen to him.

- 1) Paul was not only delighted but confident to answer for himself regarding the accusation by the Jews. vs. 2

* The accusations were not by Romans nor against Rome.
- 2) Paul acknowledged Agrippa as an expert about the customs and questions, meaning the disputes and controversies, dealing with the Jews. vs. 3a

* The Rabbinical writings attest to his ability, remember he was the great Grandson of Herod the Great, an Edomite of the line of Esau.

- 3) Paul therefore begged to hear him patiently. vs. 3b
 - a) Paul presents himself with humility, the word beg “deomai” means to make supplication.
 - b) Paul presents himself with respect for King Agrippa, asking that he be patient as he listened to him.

26:4-23 **The apostle Paul detailed his life before and after Christ before Agrippa.**

26:4-9 *The life of Paul as a Jew.*

26:4-5 The heritage of Paul was unquestionably Jewish.

- 1) His way of life from youth was spent among the Jews in Jerusalem. vs. 4a
- 2) His life could be attested to by all the Jews. vs. 4b
- 3) This was true from the beginning. vs. 5a
- 4) The Jews could testify on his behalf if they desired, verifying his life devotion to the strictest sect of their religion, as a Pharisee. vs. 5b-c

* This was common knowledge by all in Jerusalem. Phil. 3:5

26:6-8 The argument of Paul was the contradiction of the Jews.

- 1) Paul was being judged for the hope God made to the fathers. vs. 6
- 2) Jews were accusing him of the very promises their Father's believed.
- 3) The twelve tribes exhibited this very same devotion night and day, in hope to obtain it. vs. 7a-c
- 4) Paul stated he was being accused for this very same hope. vs. 7d-f
- 5) Paul addressed the first personal question to Agrippa, the belief in the resurrection of the dead. vs.8
 - a) "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?"
 - b) If one believes this, there is no problem with anything else God might do!

26:9-11 *The various crimes Paul committed against Christians as Jew*

- 1) Paul confesses his own opposition to the name of Jesus of Nazareth at one time but more than this, he has just tied the raising of the dead to the promises of God to the Father's in the old Testament and to the New Testament hope in Jesus Christ. vs. 9
- 2) Paul gives a list of his crimes. vs. 10-11

- a) He shut up many of the saints in prison at Jerusalem. vs. 10a-b
- b) He had the authority of the chief priests. vs. 10c
- c) He cast his vote against them when they were put to death. vs. 10d-e
- d) He punished them often in every synagogue, forcing them to blaspheme. vs. 11a
 - * The tense could imply that he didn't succeed.
- 5) He was so hateful that he perused and persecuted them to foreign cities. vs. 11b-c

26:12-14 *The conversion of Paul to a Christian as a Jew.*

- 1) Paul was on journey with the authority and commission by the chief priest. vs. 12
 - a) Paul had no intentions of becoming a Christian.
 - b) Paul was on a mission to capture Christians!
- 2) Paul was encountered by God. vs. 13
 - a) He said took pace "at midday, O king. vs. 13a-b
 - b) He said it was, "along the road." vs. 13c
 - c) He said, "I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun." vs. 13d-e

* Acts 9:3; 22:6

d) He said it was, “shining around me and those who journeyed with me.”
vs. 13f

* Acts 9:3; 22:6

1)) The consistency of the account is marked by the other parallel chapters. Acts 9, 22

2)) The focus of this account is the preaching of the gospel.

3) Paul was confronted personally. vs. 14

a) They all fell to the ground. vs. 14a

* Acts 9:4, 22:7

b) The voice was heard only by Paul. vs. 14b-f

1)) The voice was distinguished only by Paul not the men with him, they only heard the sound as the accounts are compared, while Paul understood the voice in the Hebrew dialect, Aramaic

2)) The phrase, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads”, is only found in this account.

3)) The expression of goads refers to the ox kicking back in rebellion but striking a sharp object teaching them not to kick but to submit, but it also was well known as opposition to deity.

4)) The apostle’s persecution was against Jesus not man.

5)) The damage was to himself not the church or the individual.

26:16-18 *The commission of Paul as an apostle of Jesus .*

26:15 The inquiry of Paul regarding the voice.

1) “Who are you Lord?” vs. 15a-b

2) “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting”.
vs. 15c-d

* Paul immediately recognized the greater authority of the Sanhedrin by the word Lord “kurios”.

26:16 The commission of Paul.

1) He was to stand on his feet. vs. 16a

2) He was to know that Jesus had appeared to him to make him a minister and a witness of the things he had seen and the things to be revealed to him. vs. 16b

26:17 The protection of Paul.

1) He was to know that God would rescue him from the Jewish people. vs. 17a

2) He was to know that God would rescue him from the Gentiles also. vs. 17b

3) He was to know that it was Jesus was sending him, to the Gentiles. vs. 17c

26:18 The mission of Paul.

- a) He would open their eyes. vs. 18a
- b) He in doing so, with the purpose of turning them from darkness to light. vs. 18b
- c) He would turn them from the power of Satan to God. vs. 18c
- d) The objective was that they receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus. vs. 18d

26:19-23 *The obedience of Paul to the vision.*

26:19 The proclamation of Paul's obedience.

- 1) The word "therefore" makes this the conclusion of all that precedes, from verse sixteen to eighteen. vs. 19a
- 2) The one to whom Paul focuses his appeal to is King Agrippa. vs. 19b
- 3) The actions of Paul were that of submitting himself to the divine authority in full obedience. vs. 19c

26:20 The evidence of Paul's obedience.

- 1) He preached the gospel first at Damascus. vs. 20a
- 2) He then preached the gospel in Jerusalem. vs. 20a
* Gal. 1:18-24

- 3) He next preached the gospel throughout all the regions of Judea. vs. 20b
- 4) He ultimately preached the gospel to the Gentiles. vs. 20c
- 5) The gospel is described. vs. 20d-f
 - a) That they should repent. vs. 20d
 - b) That they turn to God. vs. 20e
 - c) That they do works befitting repentance. vs. 20f
- 6) This was the reason why the Jews tried to kill him in the temple, because he preached repentance to the Gentiles! vs. 21
 - a) This is a transitional verse, looking back and forward.
 - b) It links what precedes and what follows to verse twenty-three.

26:22-23 *The faithful preaching of Paul.*

- 1) Paul declares that it had been God who had helped him and to that very day enabled him to stand witnessing to both small and great about the gospel. vs. 22a-d
- 2) Paul was proclaiming only the things that the prophets and Moses said would come. vs. 22e
- 3) Paul gives the particulars of
 - a) That Christ would suffer. vs. 23a
 - b) That Jesus would be the first to rise from the dead. vs. 23b

- c) That Jesus would proclaim light to the Jewish people and the Gentiles. vs. 23c
- * Paul had tied together the hope of the resurrection in the Old Testament by Moses and the Prophets to the person of Jesus Christ and the gospel, as the fulfillment.

26:24-29 The appeal of the apostle Paul to Agrippa.

26:24 The response of Festus to Paul.

- 1) Festus concluded, declaring in a loud voice, that Paul was raving mad or crazy. vs. 24a-d
- 2) Festus gave his reason, Much learning had driven Paul mad. vs. 24e

26:25-27 The response of Paul to Festus and fervent appeal to Agrippa.

- 1) Paul said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus.” vs. 25a-c
- * The word “but” marks the sharp contrast between the wrong perception of Festus and the truth of Paul’s state of mind!
- 2) Paul said, “I speak the words of truth and reason.” vs. 25d

- a) The word truth “aletheia” means what is true regarding the gospel, objective truth.
 - b) Christianity is reasonable truth based on God’s revelation of Himself and the plan of salvation to sinful man, not unreasonable!
- 3) Paul focuses his appeals on Agrippa’s personal knowledge of the prophecies, the claims of Jesus and the events of his death and resurrection. vs. 26
- a) The king knows these things. vs. 26a-c
 - b) These things did not escape the king. vs. 26d
 - c) These things did not take place in some isolated place but openly in public. vs. 26e
- 4) Paul made his personal appeal to Agrippa. vs. 27
- a) Paul’s appeal had to do with Agrippa’s faith in Jesus before all present, “Do you believe the prophets?” vs. 27a-b
 - b) Paul encouraged Agrippa regarding his decision, affirming, “I know that you do believe.” vs. 27c

26:28 The lamentable decision of Agrippa.

- 1) King Agrippa said to Paul. “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”

* The adjective almost “oligos” reference to quantity, with such few words or such brief argument.

- 2) Some believe that Agrippa was sincere, but I think by Paul’s response in the following verse, his answer was in irony.

26:29 The heart of Paul for all sinners.

- 1) Paul desired that not only Agrippa but all hearing him that very day, might become both almost and altogether such as he was, saved. vs. 29a-d
 - a) Almost “oligos”, Paul uses the same word of Agrippa, few words or many, a short time or long, that did not get it, it is only giving an ascent to the gospel intellectually, short of repentance!
 - b) Either you are a Christian walking with God or not!
- 2) Paul excluded his chains from being on them. vs. 29e
 - a) Paul the man who was being held and accused falsely declares, held the truth for live and death.
 - b) Paul was the freest man of all those present, even though he was shackled.

26:30-32 **The dismissal of the apostle Paul by Agrippa.**

26:30-31 The conclusion of Agrippa.

- 1) King Agrippa stood, along with the governor Festus and Bernice, as well as all those sitting with them. vs. 30
- 2) The conversation was one of agreement, Paul had done nothing deserving of death or chains. vs. 31
 - * Weather conviction or the impatience of Agrippa cause him to stand, bringing the meeting to an end, we are not told.

26:32 The unofficial decree of Agrippa to Festus regarding Paul.

- 1) Paul might have been set free.
- 2) If he had not appealed to Caesar.
 - a) Agrippa in affect, told Festus he had made an error in setting Paul free.
 - b) This meant that he had no legal charges against Paul, to send to Caesar.