

Today we continue the saga of Paul in Judea which began in Jerusalem and now takes place in Caesarea. So far, he's testified to his innocence to the charges brought against him by the Jewish leaders and he's done well. But, as we have seen, he's been under arrest for more than 2 years and has nearly outlasted 2 Roman governors. Now, he goes before King Agrippa who's from the line of Herodian Kings. He is also Jewish.

This last fact is only important because it shapes the way Paul addresses the King. And even though Paul's witness is modified a bit depending on his audience, there is one central fact that he never fails to reveal....

Let's read this episode entitled "The King and I" then we can see what the **heart** of the matter really is.

(Acts 26:1) Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself:

(Acts 26:2) "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,

Remember that I talked about this "Herodian King" before:

1. His great-grandfather had tried to kill Jesus as a baby;
2. His grandfather had John the Baptist beheaded;
3. His father had martyred the first apostle, James.

So, Paul would not be endeared to him, being a Christian "convert".

This isn't brown-nosing. Jesus told Paul he would have the opportunity to witness to Kings...and here's his opportunity

(Acts 26:3) **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 wants "the record to show" that Agrippa is Jewish, and that Paul considers him an expert in Jewish customs, traditions and the law.

Paul hints that this take awhile...he's got a lot to say!

(Acts 26:4) "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. (Acts 26:5) 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.** (Acts 26:6) And now I stand and **am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers.** (Acts 26:7) 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. (Acts 26:8) **Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?**

Paul the Pharisee was known by his accusers. And as a Jew, he knew of the “hope of the promise made by God to our fathers”. Many Jews served God with this promise in mind.

But with all Agrippa’s knowledge and expertise, Paul says that Agrippa thought that it was incredulous that God raises the dead!

Which, by his words, IS the promise. And he and all unbelievers are just trying to put God in a very small box, saying that He can’t do this!

(Acts 26:9) "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (Acts 26:10) 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.** (Acts 26:11) 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.

So, Paul goes on to link the “raising of the dead” with the One who was raised: Jesus of Nazareth!

I cast my vote against them:

He freely admits his complicity in the destruction of these believers. He actually raged against them to the point of compelling some to Blaspheme (deny Christ). This also clearly implies that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, having a vote against Christians who were tried before the Sanhedrin (like Stephen in Acts 7). If Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, it also means that at that time he was married, because it was required for all members of the Sanhedrin. Since as a Christian, he was single (1Co 7:7-9), it may mean that Paul’s wife either died or deserted him when he became a Christian. (GUZIK)

(Acts 26:12) "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, (Acts 26:13) 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. (Acts 26:14) 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.'** (Acts 26:15) So I said, **'Who are You, Lord?'** And He said, **'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.** (Acts 26:16) **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.** (Acts 26:17) **I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, (Acts 26:18) 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.'

Paul's calling by the LORD was to be a minister and a witness: interesting choice of words: minister: Greek: under-oarsman, servant. Witness: Greek *mar'-toos* where we get the word "martyr"

And what was he called to do:

1. Open their eyes spiritually
2. Turn them from darkness to light
3. Turn them from the power of satan towards God

He needed to do this so that they would receive forgiveness of sins and receive an inheritance with the saints who have been sanctified by faith in Him. **"sanctified" means "made holy"**.

Note: **I will deliver you: Jesus promises to rescue him from both the Jews and Gentiles which He did more than Paul can count!**

(Acts 26:19) "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, **(Acts 26:20)** 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.**

Repent: *to think differently or afterwards, that is, reconsider*

Repentance: *compunction (for guilt, including reformation); by implication reversal (of decision)*

(Acts 26:21) For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill *me*.

(Acts 26:22) 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—

(Acts 26:23) 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."

The only thing Paul did is to declare the Word of God as written in the prophets and Moses! He did NOT make any of this up! He added nothing nor took away anything. However, they did need to have the revealed understanding of what they were reading! For they didn't lack in their zeal for God...but true knowledge was lacking (Romans 10:2) and therefore they stumbled over the stumbling stone (Romans 9:32-33; quoting Isaiah 8:14).

(Acts 26:24) Now as he thus made his defense, **Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!"**

Mad: gr: *mania* *craziness*:

(Acts 26:25) But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason.

Mad - to *rave* as a "maniac": - be beside oneself.

(Acts 26:26) 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 tells Festus that the King knows these things as well! So, calling me 'mad' is like calling your King 'mad'.

Not done in a corner: everything I testify to has been in the public eye! Nothing was done in secret with an attitude of "just trust us".

(Acts 26:27) **King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."**

Believe: to *have faith* (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), that is, *credit*; by implication to *entrust* (especially one's spiritual well being to Christ): - believe (-r), commit (to trust), put in trust with.

Paul tells Agrippa that he knows that, being "an expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews (verse 3), he would have believed what the prophets had written! But, does the King go as far as entrusting his life to Jesus?

(Acts 26:28) **Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."**

Almost: *puny* (in extent, degree, number, duration or value); especially neuter (adverbially) *somewhat*: - + almost, brief [-ly], few, (a) little, + long, a season, short, small, a while.

Persuade A primary verb; to *convince* (by argument, true or false); by analogy to *pacify* or *conciliate* (by other fair means); reflexively or passively to *assent* (to evidence or authority), to *rely* (by inward certainty): - agree, assure, believe, have confidence, be (wax) content, make friend, obey, persuade, trust, yield.

And, just like that, Agrippa goes just so far...and like so many others, fails to truly believe! Everything makes sense to him but there's a dark place

in heart that he refuses to open to the light of His grace. Fear? Pride? Knowing how he conducts his life with his sister and doesn't want it to change? Most likely!

(Acts 26:29) 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 expresses HIS heart too. He wants ALL of those who heard his defense and testimony to be as he is: a believer and follower of the Son of God: Jesus of Nazareth!

(Acts 26:30) When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; (Acts 26:31) and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, **"This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains."**

Well....DUH!

(Acts 26:32) Then Agrippa said to Festus, **"This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."**

You say that now but that doesn't seem the way things went for the past 2+ years!

And yet Paul chose to appeal to Caesar because that's what His boss told him to do!

We talked about Paul's approach to witnessing. To the gentiles it was logic, showing them how they were worshipping their so-called-gods – all made up and represented by little statues and other things made by their hands. He declares the One True God, creator of heaven and earth. He explains that we are his offspring: made in His image. He tells them of God's grace in the face of such ignorance and idolatry – but that judgment is coming. And that Judge will be His Son, Jesus, whom He raised from the dead.

And their reaction?

Acts 17:32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some **mocked**, while others said, "We will hear you again on this *matter*."

To the Jews, it was all about Christ as hidden in the OT. And all about prophecies! BUT! The same things happened: some believed but many mocked (or worse – they desired that Paul and all of the Believers both Jews and Gentiles, be destroyed!).

What's going on?

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, (5) and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. (6) After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. (7) After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. (8) Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

This is just one citation of the evidence for the resurrection. There are many more by Paul, Peter, John, James and the other writers of the NT.

Listen to another passage from 1 Corinthians 15:

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. (14) And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. (15) Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. (16) For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. (17) And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! (18) Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (19) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

Paul preemptively sums up the argument against the resurrection. But he well knows

the truth of the resurrection because He himself saw Him!

One of the cardinal facts and doctrines of the gospel. If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain ([1Co 15:14](#)). The whole of the New Testament revelation rests on this as an historical fact.

And truth be told, most everyone in the first century knew that He had been raised from the dead. They accepted it as fact!

But throughout history there have been 3 reactions to this doctrine:

1. Many will just dismiss it altogether claiming the NT is just a book of myths and lies.
2. Many will admit that it is an historical truth but reject the truths that lay behind it. These are those who believe things and it's their belief that makes it so.
3. Some will accept the truth and fact of the resurrection and then choose to believe what they know is true.

That's what Paul is up against as a minister and witness of Jesus Christ.

But, I think a large measure of it is the denial that anyone needs a Savior at all. Felix, Festus and Agrippa and ALL unbelievers dismissed the truth because they loved their sin more than life. They were deluded into thinking that what they thought and did in darkness was hidden from view. And if anyone knew about it, it was just life-style choices and not any evil act.

In other words (of Jesus):

John 3:19-20 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20) For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Paul was not called, and we are not called to save anyone. We are all called to be witnesses, either with our words or our deeds OR both. We are called to show people who Christ is. This is best done in a relationship so that the unbeliever can see why they need Jesus. They need to see the reality of Jesus in your life!

...the rest is up to the Holy Spirit as He wrestles with the free-will of man. y