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Acts 26

Paul's Testimony to Agrippa

([Acts 9:1-9](#); [Acts 22:1-21](#))

As we read about Paul's defense before King Agrippa II who is accompanied by his sister/wife Bernice keep in mind Agrippa and Bernice are both Jewish by ancestry. They would both be aware of the conflict between the Pharisees and Sadducees over "after life". Both Agrippa and his sister would also be aware of the coming Messiah. Remember how their grandfather King Herod dealt with the birth of Jesus by killing all babies up to 2 years old.

Matthew 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Paul now addresses the grandchildren of the very king that Satan used to destroy Jesus at His Birth by killing all male children 2 and under in and around Bethlehem.

1Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

Paul had no defense attorney to plead his case, but he was quite capable of testifying as to the Good News and to how he came to believe in Christ Jesus the Lord. As far as Jewish knowledge he could hardly have found a better judge than Agrippa II due to his own Jewish ancestry and historical knowledge of Judaism. A Believer speaking to a non-believing Jew was challenging. Let alone a non-practicing Jew that may have been committing incest.

2I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: 3Especially *because I know* thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

Paul makes it clear that he knows who King Agrippa is and his ancestry. He calls on that former relationship with God to be honest in his dealings with Paul.

4My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

If we had to define the difference between the Pharisees and Sadducees in today's parlance on social economic terms, the Pharisees would be the blue-collar workers and the Sadducees would be the elitists. If we defined them based on Biblical belief

the Pharisees gave equal authority to oral tradition equal to the Tanach. The Tanach is according to Jewish Virtual Library is:

“Though the terms "Bible" and "Old Testament" are commonly used by non-Jews to describe Judaism's scriptures, the appropriate term is "Tanach," which is derived as an acronym from the Hebrew letters of its three components: Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim”.

“Torah; Five Books of Moses

Nevi'im Books of the Prophets

Ketuvim Writings IE: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Kings etc.”

The Sadducees were more conservative in this matter and believed in a “literal interpretation” of the Law and Prophets. To the Sadducees if it wasn’t written in the Law and Prophets then it was dismissed.

Perhaps the biggest divide was in the “after life”. The Pharisees believed in angels, demons and life after death. The Sadducees believed the death led to oblivion with no life after death.

In the next few verses Paul will lean on the Pharisees belief in “being raised from the dead”. That indicates to me that Paul believed that King Agrippa would align with the Pharisees understanding of scripture on life after death.

Paul will masterfully pull Agrippa to that message as he links that belief to the Messiah and His resurrection.

6And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come.

The hope Paul speaks of is life after death, not just life but life with Christ for eternity.

For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. 8Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

Paul is drawing Agrippa along in the idea of first life after death for those who believe as Jews but will meld in the resurrection of Jesus, the first born of the dead.

Paul will now admit to his hatred of the “way” and its founder Jesus of Nazareth. Paul admits that he imprisoned many and had many killed all under the authority chief priest and by the very people that were looking to kill him now.

9I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*. 11And I punished them oft

in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities.

Paul has laid the groundwork to show he was a loyal subject of the Jewish Religion and Political system, having carried out their orders. But now Paul will relate what brought about his change not only of opinion but to his very life. Face to face with the Risen Messiah.

12Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

Acts 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

13At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. 14And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 15And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

There is no testimony as powerful as first-hand knowledge of an event. Each of you that has been saved has that firsthand testimony of your own salvation. In other words, you are an expert in your own salvation, no one else can tell it like you can, due to it being your own first-hand knowledge.

Paul relates his conversion away from Judaism to Christianity.
From the Law to Grace.

16But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

Acts 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

In verse 16 of this chapter, we see Paul blend into one statement that which in its original took several days to accomplish. It is his story so he can tell it how best reveals what happened to him.

If we read Acts 9:6 we see that Paul is blinded on the road and told to go to Damascus. Paul is told by Jesus in other accounts to go onto Damascus and wait there for a message from Jesus. That is where Ananias meets Paul at Jesus direction. That meeting leads to Paul being given his sight back and his commission to the Gentiles.

It is really of no issue that Paul combined these 3 days together as his time was limited in his own defense. All of what he tells Agrippa is the truth, he simply leaves out the timeline as it is both irrelevant and does not change the essence of the facts.

17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

“From the people” Paul is quoting Jesus and was a direct command that Paul had to not go to the Jews “the people” but instead go to the Gentile Nations with the Good News.

18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Here we have the Good News in a single verse, vs 18.

1. Open their eyes; the lost.
2. Turn the lost; darkness to light.
3. Turn the lost; from the power of Satan to the Power of God
4. The lost; to receive the forgiveness of sins
5. The lost; to receive the inheritance of eternal life
6. Believers to; receive Sanctification by Faith in Jesus Christ.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

Paul points out that he has received direction and authority from a higher power than that of the Jewish religion and its leaders. Paul is telling King Agrippa he had no choice but to obey God. The same God that the Jews were to serve.

20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

The great commission that Jesus laid before the original Apostles Paul now declares that it was his task to carry out. Paul again leaves out some timelines but again for expedience but still factual.

21For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*.

Paul tells King Agrippa that is due to his following God's command that the Jews now seek his death. Of course, to the Jews they would claim blasphemy by Paul because their eyes were still closed and could not see the truth. They still saw Jesus as a problem to their power, not as the Coming Messiah they had all waited for. Again, they wanted the Messiah to be a waring King to save them from the Romans.

22Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

Paul says to Agrippa that he has seen the words of Moses and the Prophets fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Paul did not add to or take away from the words of the Prophets.

As an example, from the Prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 42:1Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

3A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

4He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

5Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

6I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

7To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

8I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

9Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

One of many direct references to the Messiah to come and Paul is declaring to Agrippa that this Jesus is the One that was spoken of by Moses and the other Prophets.

23That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

To a Pharisee this would ring true as a statement about life after death. Even though they would not agree that Jesus came back to life the idea of life after death still set with their beliefs.

Festus Interrupts Paul's Defense

Festus is one who has no knowledge of what Paul speaks of, so he makes the allegation that Paul has lost his mind from all his studying.

24And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

Paul responds to Festus but obviously Agrippa would hear Paul's comments to Festus.

25But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

Again, Paul directs his response toward King Agrippa.

26For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. 27King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

Paul boxes King Agrippa in with commenting on the King's knowledge of the facts of the Prophets that Paul cited. One can only imagine the tugs on King Agrippa's heart of the things he

learned in his youth, flooding back into his mind as Paul drew him in. Openly declaring that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, the Jews killed Him and now He had risen from the dead, the first of many fruits. All fulfilling the Prophets.

28Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

We are not told that Agrippa says this in jest, but it seems quite sincere. How does one almost get persuaded to ask Christ into their heart and then withstand the moving of the Holy Spirit? The world is filled with people like this. I would think that this room is filled with such people that we all rebuffed Christ as our Savior for a time. Perhaps some as children simply believed and led not a life of rejection but I am not one of those. I was as Agrippa was on many occasions in my youth. Rejecting the Truth about Jesus.

29And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

Paul with a true heart of Love and Grace speaks his heart to Agrippa and all present. His desire is that all come to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

30And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

31And when they were gone aside, they talked between

themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. [32](#) Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

King Agrippa wants to set Paul free as they find nothing worthy of death. The only thing standing in Agrippa's way was Paul laying out the Roman citizen card and demanding an audience with Caesar. One might think, oh if Paul would have just waited on the Holy Spirit and not asked to see Caesar. I think this is exactly what the Holy Spirit wanted so He could take Paul to the Lion's den and share the Good News with thousands more. All the while protected from the Jewish Christ haters.

From Got Questions:

"The prison epistles—[Ephesians](#), [Philippians](#), [Colossians](#), and [Philemon](#)—are so named because they were written by the apostle Paul during one of his incarcerations. Paul mentions this imprisonment in each of the prison epistles: [Ephesians 3:1](#) and [4:1](#), [Philippians 1:13](#), [Colossians 4:3, 18](#), and [Philemon 1:10](#). It is generally accepted that Paul wrote the prison epistles during his first Roman imprisonment."

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