

I gotta **thank R. Kent Hughes** - for the **CONCEPT** of this Msg today
- That guy is an **incredible preacher/writer**

We've been in a **Difficult Section** in the **Book of Acts**
AND in the **Apostle Paul's** Life

Since **being arrested** in the Temple **WAY** back in **Acts 21**
Paul has been on one **WILD RIDE**

& **honestly** - it's **about** to get - **WILDER**

But for **5 1/2 Ch's** now (incl'd'g today) - we've been **looking** at
Paul's **Arrest & Imprisonments** in **Jerusalem & Caesarea**

We've seen God ***"At Work - Behind The Scenes"***
We've seen how ***"Our Motives determine our Actions"***
We've seen how God ***"Opens The Doors" . . .***

& **today** - after **ALL** Paul has been thru

Festus (the Gov of Judea) is finally **going to conclude**
"Paul - you must be CRAZY!!"

& **maybe** some people in **YOUR** life
have come to that **same Conclusion**

If you **have** the **Life of Christ** truly flowing out of you
some people are just gonna think - **YOU ARE CRAZY**

But **the question** I'd like us to **ask** today is;
Who's REALLY Crazy Here?

Let's Pray

This weekend is the HARVEST Crusade at Anaheim Stadium
If you haven't been - you can still go TONIGHT at 6:00pm

It's been another Phenomenal Event
with Thousands making commitments to Follow Jesus

But as I was reading in the local Newspaper - Online Edition

I came across some Responses from those who I think
Represent the World's View on Christianity

The Article in The Press-Enterprise
made reference to a person's 401(k) tumbling

But that person was quoted as saying about life ***"It's more than just about money in the bank. Every day my faith gives me hope and keeps a smile on my face."***

& so here is one person's Response - to that Quote: ***"Why did God make her 401(k) tumble. If God was so great, why did she need a 401(k) to begin with? Idiots."***

Here's another comment regarding the Harvest Crusade: ***"So sad to see mind control on this level. Sorry that there are those who prey on the gullible and take their money from them."***

Here's another one: ***"Religion causes more damage to human intellect than all other causes combined."***

& one more: ***"God doesn't exist. It's just a creation of man's sick imagination."***

Comments from a Christian Nation - About Christians . . .
Pretty Hateful comments, right?

Obviously these people think
that anyone who would Follow Jesus Christ - is CRAZY

But I think the Important question is . . .
WHO'S REALLY CRAZY HERE . . . ?

Is it The Christian - for Trusting GOD ?? - - - Or . . .

Is it THOSE who DENY GOD - & choose instead
to trust the Things of THIS WORLD ??

THAT - is actually the Picture we're gonna see in our Text today

Now - this is an EXTREMELY HUGE Text today
& some of it - is review from things we've looked at before

So I'm going to use the NEW LIVING TRANSLATION Today (NLT)
- For TWO Reasons . . .

#1) Because of its Translation Approach - it's got a
Smoother Reading "FLOW"

#2) I love to take the Opportunity to Introduce you to the NLT -
because I love recommending it - as a READING Bible

So - Let's Jump In - & just imagine the scene unfolding before you,
put yourself right there with Paul

TWO Years ago - the PREVIOUS Gov - FELIX
Had Left Paul in Prison in Caesarea

When the NEW Gov - FESTUS took over - He immediately
brought Paul in - to hear the Charges against him

But in what looked like an ODD Turn of Events
Paul ends up "APPEALING to CAESAR" in that Trial

So - The last verse we read in our last message was

Acts 25:12 (NLT)

12 Festus . . . replied, "Very well! You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go!"

The only Problem was - Festus DIDN'T have any real CHARGES
to send to Paul to ROME On

But Luckily - The KING of the Greater Area was about to show up
& so Gov FESTUS decides to bring HIM in on all this

Acts 25:13-21 (NLT)

13 A few days later King Agrippa arrived with his sister, Bernice, to pay their respects to Festus. (cause Festus just took over)

14 During their stay of several days, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. "There is a prisoner here," he told him, "whose case was left for me by Felix.

15 When I was in Jerusalem, the leading priests and Jewish elders pressed charges against him and asked me to condemn him. (meaning - to DEATH)

16 I pointed out to them that Roman law does not convict people without a trial. They must be given an opportunity to confront their accusers and defend themselves.

17 "When his accusers came here for the trial, I didn't delay. I called the case the very next day and ordered Paul brought in.

18 But the accusations made against him weren't any of the crimes I expected.

19 Instead, it was something about their religion and a dead man named Jesus, who Paul insists is alive.

20 I was at a loss to know how to investigate these things, so I asked him whether he would be willing to stand trial on these charges in Jerusalem. (remember - that was the 'turning point')
21 But Paul appealed to have his case decided by the emperor. So I ordered that he be held in custody until I could arrange to send him to Caesar."

So Festus lays out the problem to King Agrippa
But instead of Giving him Council - King Agrippa says in

Acts 25:22 -23 (NLT)

22 "I'd like to hear the man myself," Agrippa said. And Festus replied, "You will—tomorrow!"

23 So the next day Agrippa and Bernice arrived at the auditorium with great pomp, accompanied by military officers and prominent men of the city. . . .

& so - the STAGE is SET for Paul to be brought before the King
Just as Jesus said would happen in

Matthew 10:18 - Jesus Said (NLT)

18 You will stand trial before governors and kings because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell the rulers and other unbelievers about me.

That's exactly what Jesus SAID would happen
& THAT'S exactly what PAUL is about to Do

But 1st - we've GOT to get the FULL PICTURE in our Mind

In the Picture that's about to UNFOLD - The Rulers & Dignitaries Represent the "Mind-Set" of the World

Gov FESTUS Represents the Roman Empire

The Roman Empire Worshipped
POWER, PROMINENCE, & SUCCESS

They were - in a word - MATERIALIST'S
They lived for what they could GET out of this world

& certainly - Festus would Represent MANY in our World today

In all this Pomp & Circumstance
Festus would've been Wearing his "Commander's Red Robe"

With his Roman Legionnaires standing at attention all around him

& He would've brought in his Fellow Politicians
& some Very Important Peep's (V.I.-PEEP's)

You know - like In the Front Row - & in Line Of Sight of the Camera
Would've been Brittany Spears & Oprah Winfrey
Discussing World Philosophy together

& All the THINGS of the WORLD - Would've been ON DISPLAY

& then - there was KING AGRIPPA & his SISTER - BERNICE

King Agrippa was the Latest in the HEROD Dynasty

His GRANDFATHER was the Herod who Murdered all the Male
Children in Bethlehem - when Jesus was born

His UNCLE was the **Herod** who Murdered **John the Baptist**
& **Mocked Jesus** during his initial Night of Trials

His **FATHER** was the Herod - who had **Executed James**
& who was then **eaten by WORMS** there in Caesarea
for **making himself** out to be a **god**

& **THIS Herod Agrippa** (Because he was a **HEROD**) was **appointed**
as **Roman Curator** over the **Jewish Temple**

That means - **HE APPOINTED** the **High Priest**
& had **CHARGE** over the **Temple Treasury**

& **there** he sat - in all the **GLORY** of **ROME**
with his **Sister-Wife** - **BERNICE**

BERNICE was **initially married** to her **UNCLE**
But she was **now married** to her **BROTHER**

& **These Two** were **SO Notoriously IMMORAL**
that later the **EMPEROR TITUS** would **send Bernice** away
Because she was **TOO IMMORAL** for even **Pagan Rome**

These Two represent all the **IMMORALITY** of the World
Covered up with Massive amounts of **MONEY** & **CORRUPTION**

& **SO** - between the **Celebrated Immorality**
of **KING AGRIPPA** & **BERNICE** . . .

& the **Worship of Materialism** - of **FESTUS** & **ROME**

What we **have here** - is a **Picture** - of **THE WORLD**

It's a Picture of The WORLD - that will think YOU are CRAZY
if you become a True Follower of Jesus Christ

& so Now - with the "Stage Set" we continue with our text

Acts 25:23(b)-27 (NLT)

23 (& now) . . . Festus ordered that Paul be brought in.

24 Then Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are here, this is the man whose death is demanded by all the Jews, both here and in Jerusalem.

25 But in my opinion he has done nothing deserving death. However, since he appealed his case to the emperor, I have decided to send him to Rome.

26 "But what shall I write the emperor? For there is no clear charge against him. So I have brought him before all of you, and especially you, King Agrippa, so that after we examine him, I might have something to write.

27 For it makes no sense to send a prisoner to the emperor without specifying the charges against him!"

Now we understand WHY Gov FESTUS has gone to all this Trouble

He doesn't want to be seen as an IDIOT for sending Paul to Rome without any real CHARGES against him

So he sets up this Display of Worldly Power
to try to get something on Paul to write against him

Acts 26:1- (NLT)

1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may speak in your defense."

I (with some of you) have been privileged to STAND where this event may very well have taken place

In the Great Theater in Caesarea by the Sea
Just uncovered in the early 1960's

& it would've been DAUNTING to Paul

Standing - in his "Prisoner Garb"

Far BELOW where the Dignitaries were Seated

Them in their POMP & WEALTH - Him in his CHAINS

& it is in THAT position - that Paul begins an Incredibly SIMPLE
& an Incredibly POWERFUL presentation
of the Good News of Jesus Christ

& the Representatives of the World
Are gonna think - HE is CRAZY

But the Question we have to ask ourselves today is;
WHO is REALLY Crazy Here ??

Acts 26:1(b)-7 (NLT)

1 . . . So Paul, gesturing with his hand, started his defense:

2 "I am fortunate, King Agrippa, that you are the one hearing my defense today against all these accusations made by the Jewish leaders,

3 for I know you are an expert on all Jewish customs and controversies. Now please listen to me patiently!

**King Agrippa was considered an Expert on Jewish customs -
because he was in the line of the Herod's**

4 "As the Jewish leaders are well aware, I was given a thorough Jewish training from my earliest childhood among my own people and in Jerusalem.

5 If they would admit it, they know that I have been a member of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion.

6 Now I am on trial because of my hope in the fulfillment of God's promise made to our ancestors.

7 In fact, that is why the twelve tribes of Israel zealously worship God night and day, and they share the same hope I have. Yet, Your Majesty, they accuse me for having this hope!

Paul opens up - by TYING the Gospel to the O.T.
& then - Paul gets to the CRUX of His HOPE

Acts 26:8 (NLT)

8 Why does it seem incredible to any of you that God can raise the dead?

That's REALLY what it comes down to, isn't it ?
It was for PAUL - & it should be for US

Jesus Christ Conquered Death & the Grave !!

It's a Historically PROVEN Fact

& He is Definitely the ONLY ONE who's ever done it

& the Gospel message CENTERS around - THIS TRUTH

So Paul Quickly states his M.I.P. (Most Important Point)

& now he's going to give his Own Testimony (just like we can)

Acts 26:9-18 (NLT)

9 "I used to believe that I ought to do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus the Nazarene.

10 Indeed, I did just that in Jerusalem. Authorized by the leading priests, I caused many believers there to be sent to prison. And I cast my vote against them when they were condemned to death.

11 Many times I had them punished in the synagogues to get them to curse Jesus. I was so violently opposed to them that I even chased them down in foreign cities.

12 “One day I was on such a mission to Damascus, armed with the authority and commission of the leading priests.

13 About noon, Your Majesty, as I was on the road, a light from heaven brighter than the sun shone down on me and my companions.

14 We all fell down, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic (or, the Hebrew Dialect), ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is useless for you to fight against my will.’

15 “ ‘Who are you, lord?’ I asked. “And the Lord replied, ‘I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting.

16 Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and witness. You are to tell the world what you have seen and what I will show you in the future.

17 And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles

18 to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God’s people, who are set apart by faith in me.

THAT (right there) is the PURPOSE of the GOSPEL

God is SENDING US into an Unbelieving World:

So that they may turn from Darkness to Light
& from the Power of Satan to God

So they may receive Forgiveness for their sins

& be Given a Place among God’s People

who are Set Apart BY FAITH in Jesus Christ

The **CENTER of the Gospel** - is the **RESURRECTION**
The **PURPOSE of the Gospel** - is right **THERE** !!

& **the world** says - to **Commit** your life to those things - **is CRAZY** !!

BUT as **I LOOK** at all the **Benefits** of **Faith in Jesus Christ**
I have to ask - ***“Who is Really Crazy here?”***

Paul cont’s in - Acts 26:19-23 (NLT)

***19 “And so, King Agrippa, I obeyed that vision from heaven.
20 I preached first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and
throughout all Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that all must
repent of their sins and turn to God—and prove they have
changed by the good things they do.***

Again - a wonderful **SUMMARY**
of what it **MEANS** (or looks like) to **FOLLOW CHRIST**

***21 Some Jews arrested me in the Temple for preaching this, and
they tried to kill me.***

***22 But God has protected me right up to this present time so I can
testify to everyone, from the least to the greatest. I teach nothing
except what the prophets and Moses said would happen—***

***23 that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the
dead, and in this way announce God’s light to Jews and Gentiles
alike.”***

Paul **STARTED** with a Focus on the Resurrection
& here he **RETURNS** to a Focus on the Resurrection

This is a **Incredible Presentation** of the **Gospel Message . . .**

Right up to when Paul experiences . . .

A **PREACHER’S WORST NIGHTMARE . . .**

When I stand up here - Things can go Very Bad, Very Quickly
& they seem to - - - far too often

But at least - most of my critics (in some type of Politeness)
wait until AFTER the sermon to share their Insults

AND - they Almost Always Only Share their INSULTS
with OTHER people - & NOT with me . . .
(So - I've got that goin for me) . . .

But Paul is NOT so Lucky here

Instead - A Key member of his Audience
SHOUTS OUT his INSULT - Right in the Middle of his Message

Acts 26:24 (NLT)

24 Suddenly, Festus shouted, "Paul, you are insane. Too much study has made you crazy!"

Well - There it is . . .

The World has Determined - that Paul is CRAZY

& if YOU will SHARE Paul's FAITH - & His PASSION
There will be some in this World - that will Shout
this same insult at YOU

You - are INSANE - You are CRAZY !!

To believe that GOD - came to earth - IN the Flesh

To LIVE a Perfect Life in YOUR Place

To DIE a Sinless Death in YOUR Place

To BECOME your Sin - in YOUR Place

To PAY the Full Penalty of your Sin in YOUR Place . . .

& **THEN** - To Give you HIS **Righteousness** - in order to Present you to **The Almighty God** - as HIS own **Son** or **Daughter**

& **THEN** - To **SHARE** His **Eternal Inheritance** **WITH** you tho you could **NEVER EVER** Deserve - **ANY** of it

Is It Crazy To **BELIEVE** That ??

Or . . . Is It Crazy To **NOT BELIEVE** That ??

*Who is **REALLY** Crazy here ??*

Is it **PAUL** - Putting his faith in God's Plan & the **PROVEN** Work of Jesus Christ ??

Or is it **the World** - Putting their **Faith** in **THEMSELVES** & in what **THIS World** has to offer ??

You tell **ME** - ***WHO'S Crazy Here ??***

Guys - It's **NOT** Paul & I believe **BOTH Festus & Agrippa** **SENSED** that

& I believe **THAT** is why **everything** takes a **CRAZY TURN** right here

Suddenly - this is **NOT about** whether the **Accusations** against Paul are **TRUE** or **NOT**

This is **NOW about** whether what **Paul** is saying about **Jesus Christ** is **TRUE** or **NOT**

& so **Festus** Gets Nervous - & throws out a **SMOKE BOMB**
"Paul - you are CRAZY"

& **Guys** - when you start getting “**Close**” to someone re: **Jesus Christ**
They will **OFTEN** throw out a **SMOKE BOMB**

They'll **Get Defensive**

& they'll Start **Deflecting** & **Changing** the Subject

That's **Exactly** What **Festus** has done here

& that's **Exactly** what **King Agrippa** is **ABOUT** to do

Because **Paul** is going to get **very, very close** to seeing **BOTH**
Festus & Agrippa - **MOVED** by his message

& **Agrippa** is also going to have to **DEFLECT** - & **throw out**
a **Smoke Bomb** - so they can **BOTH** get **OUT** of this situation

So - **Festus** Yells out - that Paul is **INSANE** . . .

& then in Acts 26:25-27 (NLT)

25 But Paul replied, “I am not insane, Most Excellent Festus. What I am saying is the sober truth.

26 And King Agrippa knows about these things. I speak boldly, for I am sure these events are all familiar to him, for they were not done in a corner!

27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do -”

THERE it **IS** - Paul just **BACKED** King Agrippa

Right into a **CORNER**

King Agrippa is a **HEROD** - in the Line of Herod's that **BUILT**
the **Current Temple**

& All the **Jewish Leaders** are sitting right there -
Listening to his every **word**

& Paul has just asked Agrippa what the Courts call
“A Leading Question”

Agrippa KNEW where Paul was Going

He KNEW if he said YES to THIS Question . . .

the NEXT Question was gonna be - ***“If you believe in the Prophets,
then do you believed in the FULFILLMENT of the Prophets?”***

Agrippa was in a **“Tight Spot”** - But he was a Good Debater
& so he DEFLECTS - & Returns a Question with a Question

Acts 26:28 - (NLT)

28 Agrippa interrupted him. “Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so quickly?”

Agrippa KNEW Exactly what this **“Trial”** had become

Paul wasn't on Trial here anymore - It was Agrippa's Personal
CHOICE about Jesus Christ - that was NOW on trial

& so he DEFLECTS with a Question - **A SMOKE BOMB**
& Paul DOESN'T MISS a BEAT

Acts 26:29 - (NLT)

29 Paul replied, “Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains.”

Watch & Learn guys - From the Apostle PAUL - -
Does he have a **ONE TRACK Mind** - Or **WHAT** ??

Paul is **NOT** on **Trial** Here anymore -

He's **Leading** the **First Harvest Crusade** in **Caesarea** !!

& His **ONLY** Goal - is to take **THIS** Opportunity

to **SHARE** the **Gospel Message** with the **Unbelieving** World

& he **certainly** Accomplishes **THAT**

But **it was** all **TOO MUCH**

For these ***“Representatives of the World”*** to **TAKE IN**

& so **they DID** - what we **often see** people **DO**

Acts 26:30 (NLT)

30 Then the king, the governor, Bernice, and all the others stood and left.

They **COULDN'T Face** the **Truth** about **Jesus Christ**

But they **Definitely KNEW** the **Truth** about **PAUL**

Acts 26:31-32 (NLT)

31 As they went out, they talked it over and agreed, “This man hasn’t done anything to deserve death or imprisonment.”

32 And Agrippa said to Festus, “He could have been set free if he hadn’t appealed to Caesar.”

Really - is this **“POOR PAUL”** ??

Who **COULD HAVE** been **SET FREE** ??

WHO in this scene - actually **NEEDED** to be **SET FREE** ?

Was it **Paul** ?? - Or was it the **Representatives of the World**

Paul may've still been in **Physical Chains**

But he was **More Set Free** than these guys would **EVER** be

& these **RULERS & DIGNITARIES** (*Representatives of the World*)
who **THOUGHT** they were **FREE** . . .

They were actually in **TOTAL BONDAGE**
TO the things they **THOUGHT** made them **FREE**

It was **Paul** who was **FREE in Christ** -
Whether he was in **Physical Chains** or **NOT**

Paul **KNEW** - These **CHAINS** were **JUST** his **TICKET** - **To ROME !!**

& so **the Question** - *One More Time is . . .*

WHO'S CRAZY HERE ?? - - **Who is REALLY Crazy ??**

Is it those who have put their **FAITH**
in the **Solid Assurance** of **Jesus Christ** ?

Or **is it those** who are **Clinging** to the **Things of This World**
as their **ONLY HOPE**

I pray - the **CORRECT Answer** - is **Crystal Clear** to you

Let's Pray