

Acts 26 “Call me crazy!”

CONSIDER WHAT PAUL HAD ALREADY ENDURED.

1. He had been arrested in Jerusalem though he had done nothing wrong,
2. He had spoken to an angry mob who wanted to rip him apart,
3. He had addressed the Sanhedrin who wanted him dead on the spot,
4. He had been transferred to Caesarea to avoid assassination,
5. He had been tried before Felix, and now was about to appear before Festus, the new governor. He had not committed any crime, and yet he was a prisoner of the Roman Empire and on the receiving end of false accusations of hateful Jews.

Paul’s life, Daniel’s life, Joseph’s life, **your life** teaches all, that *our disappointments are really God’s appointments*. The merciful providence of God can cause us to rejoice tomorrow in the very same circumstances that today, may be causing us to mourn. **Pray!**

FIRST IT WAS FELIX AND DRUSILLA... now the principle cast of characters include Festus; who took over for Felix, Herod Agrippa and Bernice.

A little more said about this unsavory character Bernice, Agrippa’s sister, who was one year younger. She had once been engaged to Marcus, a nephew of the philosopher Philo. Then she married her uncle – Herod, King of Chalcis. But now she was living incestuously with her full blood brother Agrippa. So notorious was her conduct that when she later became the Emperor Titus’ mistress, he had to send her away because of the moral outcry of pagan Rome. That’s like Hugh Hefner crying out for TV shows to be cleaned of their “sexual immortality”. Agrippa and Bernice were a sick, sin-infested couple.

Acts 25 verse 23 says they entered the amphitheater with “with great pomp”.

Coming from the Greek word *phantasia*, from which we derive our English word **fantasy**. Certainly the event was something of a **fantasy**: Agrippa and Bernice arrayed in **PURPLE**, Festus in **red**, commanders of thousands, rigid legionnaires,

manipulative politicians, and Paul “physically weak, **short** with **bowed legs**, a **long hooked nose**, little hair, and **RUNNY EYES**. appearing even smaller and more insignificant in his chains and prison clothes. **The scene was carefully constructed to intimidate.**

Acts **26 verse 1** Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You are permitted to speak for yourself.” So Paul stretched out his hand **This was a salute, a sign of respect.** and answered for himself: **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, **I’m happy to be here, King! Make yourself comfortable while I set the record straight.** **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.

Jon Courson adds, “Being half Jew and half Edomite, the Herods had a tremendous fascination with all things Jewish. They studied Judaism. They read Jewish history. They were intrigued by Jewish culture. Paul knew this. “I’m happy to talk to you, King Agrippa,” he said, “because I know you understand our culture, our traditions, and our religion.” Agrippa did—but when push came to shove, this same Agrippa would, in A.D. 70, join Titus in helping to destroy Jerusalem and the temple. Thus, his interest was intellectual rather than heartfelt.”


4 “My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. **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. **Note: Paul cares less about giving his defense as he does giving the gospel... Boldly and creatively he proclaims the good news of Jesus!** **6** And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. **Agrippa knew that the promise to**

which he referred was Messiah. 7 To this *promise* our 12 tribes, earnestly serving *God* night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. **8 WHY SHOULD IT BE THOUGHT INCREDIBLE BY YOU THAT GOD RAISES THE DEAD?** 9 "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 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*.

"My vote", clearly implies that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, having a vote against Christians who were tried before the Sanhedrin. 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 (1 Corinthians 7:7-9), it may mean that Paul's wife either died or deserted him when he became a Christian.

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. 12 "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 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. 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.*' **Goads were sticks farmers used to prod their oxen into submission. Therefore, when the Lord said to Paul, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads," He was implying that Paul was a dumb, stubborn ox who could be guided no other way.**

15 So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 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. 17 I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 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.' 19 "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 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.

 **Repentance is changing one's mind. Regeneration is changing one's heart. Redemption is changing one's state—trading the kingdom of darkness and death for the kingdom of light and life. "This was my message," said Paul.**


21 For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill *me*.

Why did the Jews want to kill Paul?


Because he preached repentance!

- **NOAH DIDN'T STAND ON THE STEPS OF HIS ARK AND SAY. "Something good is about to happen to you."**
- **Amos was not confronted by priests who threatened to kill him because he was preaching, "I'm okay. You're okay."**

- Jeremiah was not cast into the dungeon because he said, *“It’s ok to live that way, God made you that way”*
- DANIEL WAS NOT THROWN TO THE LIONS FOR SAYING. *“Smile, God loves you.”*
- John the Baptist wasn’t beheaded for having a *“Honk If You Love Jesus” bumper sticker.*

 The message of Noah and Daniel, Amos and Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, was singular. The message was:

REPENT.


 As Courson says, “The message of repentance is not a popular message because it says people who think they’ve got it together—**don’t**. People who think they’re okay—**aren’t**. People who think they’ll make it to heaven on their own—**won’t**.”

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— 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.” **These were the three main points to Paul’s preaching: Jesus’ death, resurrection, and the preaching of gospel to the whole world, without respect to either Jew or Gentile.**

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!” **Paul you are “Loco en la cabeza”** AS HUGHES COMEDICALLY COMMENTS... **“This is a pastor’s nightmare – preaching with enthusiasm, hoping for great results, when suddenly someone stands up and shouts, “Pastor, you’re crazy!” and those around nod their assent.”**

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:18: *the message of the cross is foolishness*


to those who are perishing but the power of God to those who are being saved. So if this is “crazy” to you guess what? You are perishing!

 One commentator notes, “Paul never gets to finish a sermon! He is always interrupted. Before the session ended, Paul became the judge, and Festus, King Agrippa, and Bernice became the defendants! Paul was indeed defending himself, but at the same time, he was presenting the truth of the Gospel and witnessing to the difference Jesus Christ can make in a person’s life.”

25 But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. **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. **27** King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.” **28** Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” Of course, **ALMOST** being a Christian means that you **ALMOST** have eternal life and will **ALMOST** be delivered from the judgment of hell; but **ALMOST** isn't enough.

→ Why was Agrippa only **almost** persuaded?

1. Maybe the negative peer pressure from Bernice. She was a sinful, immoral companion, and he may have rightly realized that becoming a Christian would mean losing her and his other immoral friends. He was unwilling to make that sacrifice! My sin is too dear to me!
2. Maybe his friend Festus - a man's man, a no-nonsense man, a man who thought Paul was crazy. Perhaps Agrippa thought, "I can't become a Christian! Festus will think I'm crazy too!" And because he wanted the praise of men, he rejected Jesus.


 **Spurgeon powerfully said,** “Alas, how many are influenced by fear of men! Oh, you cowards, will you be damned out of fear? Will you sooner let your souls perish than show your manhood by telling a poor mortal that

you defy his scorn? Dare you not follow the right through all men in the world should call you to do the wrong? Oh, you cowards! You cowards! How you deserve to perish who have not enough soul to call your souls your own, but cower down before the sneers of fools!"

What in fact is a Christian? What had Agrippa **almost** become? Acts 26:18 describes 5 things that happened to Paul when he became a Christian.

1. A Christian has their eyes opened.
2. A Christian has turned from darkness to light.
3. A Christian has turned from the power of Satan to God.
4. A Christian has received forgiveness of sins.
5. And a Christian has an inheritance among those set apart to God.

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." **With a dramatic gesture, Paul shows that even though he is in chains, he has more freedom in Jesus than any of the royalty listening have.**

 **As Spurgeon so wonderfully said, "O that men were wise enough to see that suffering for Christ is honor, that loss for truth is gain, that the truest dignity rests in wearing the chain upon the arm rather than endure the chain upon the soul."**

30 When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; 31 and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains." 32 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar." Maybe! but he would not have "preached the gospel before **KINGS.**


"Call me crazy!" It made no sense to him for Paul to choose a path that not only

brought the apostle **less pleasure but more suffering!** When the apostle asserted that the resurrection of a man named Jesus was the nexus of his argument and appeal (vv. 22-23), it was simply too much, and the Roman Festus shouted, “Paul, you are **crazy!** Your long studying has broken your mind!” (TLB).

Call me crazy but what really matters to me is the truth and eternal life! That which others treasured, **Paul called waste!**


Philippians 3:5-8 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish (poop, dung!) that I may gain Christ. **“CALL ME CRAZY!”**

In Philippians 1:21 Paul also wrote, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”. Those on the outside said, **“That’s crazy!”** Subsequent Paul’s have suffered the same stigma.



In 1913 when Willian Borden, age 26, a graduate of Yale and Princeton, left his magnificent home near Chicago’s Lake Shore Drive, giving away over \$500,000 to become a missionary to the Muslim world, many of his contemporaries thought he was **crazy**. And when he died 6 months later from cerebral meningitis amidst the flies and heat of a Cairo hospital, some were sure he was **crazy**. **CALL HIM CRAZY! God did not share their opinion.**

The world system has always thought Pauls were crazy! But actually it is the world that is insane. But without doubt God would say, “I would like to see more of this blessed madness.”



Hughes again adds, “Or consider the insanity seen when society mourns the terrible epidemic of AIDS and other diseases due to sexual immorality but mocks those who suggest that the solution is chastity. To be earnest about wealth or power or science or pleasure or athletic

championships is not crazy from the world's viewpoint. But to be fervent about spiritual things is called madness.”

WANNA KNOW WHAT'S CRAZY? A 30-second advertisement during this year's game costs a cool \$5 million. That's an average of \$166,666 per second.

Some day when we get to heaven we will see just how sane Paul really was... for the only thing that will last forever is the “word of God” and the “souls of men”!

Agrippa was the crazy man! Sadly, if he never came to Christ, he will have all eternity to consider the madness of his response.

Call him crazy... **David Livingstone** born in a small town in Scotland. Small town where he grew up there is a museum. In the museum resides his diary which speaks of his devastating and painful loneliness after wife died.

What kept him in Africa when he could live a comfortable life in Scotland **HE ANSWERS**, speaking at University in Glasgow.

One **arm useless** because of a Lion's attack
27 bouts with Jungle fever (body racked with suffering)
The students knew this was **no ordinary man**.

“Shall I tell you what sustained me amidst the trials and hardships and loneliness of my exiled life? It was a promise, the promise of a gentleman of the most sacred honor; it was this promise, **“Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”**”

At Livingstone's death, they found his body bent in prayer as he knelt by his bed, beside him a small, well worn N.T. opened to Matt. 28, in the margin beside verse 20 was this notation; **“The word of a gentleman”** Did Livingstone feel, though, that he had made a great sacrifice? Not in the least. He answered that very issue by saying,

“People talk of the sacrifice I have made spending so much time in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paying back a small part of a great debt owing to our God which we can never repay? (Reasonable service). Is that a sacrifice which brings its own best reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view and with

such a thought, It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say, rather it is a privilege."

Livingstone's life motto was, "I will place no value on anything I have or possess, except in its relationship to the Kingdom of God." He lived it!!!

CALL HIM CRAZY!

What would Paul say to people today? To unbelievers, he would say, "I wish you knew Christ like I do." To those who know Christ, he would say, "Even if others think you are crazy, be radical for Christ!"

Degarmo and Key "All the losers win"

**You think that all is far too much to give That's
what Jesus gave so that this loser could live**

**Here's to all the losers that lose all guilt and sin
Here's to life in Jesus, where all of the losers win**