

A. SERMON SLIDES

Gospel Resistance

Acts 25-26:16

Acts 26:1-15 (ESV)

So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

"I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'"

B. GROUP DISCUSSION

1) Read Acts 25-26. What are your questions of the text? What do you learn personally from these difficult "trial" passages of Paul? How do you feel, and where do you put yourself in the story, and why?

2) The Bible tells us that we can have abundant life if we follow Jesus. (John 10:10) How is Paul experiencing this life with Jesus? Why is his life not more powerful or rich, or beautiful, or in control? Is he doing something wrong, or have we misinterpreted our ideas of what Jesus is giving to us?

3) How is the "goad" giving us a "better" life? What does our submission or lack of submission mean in regards to our pain, or joy or purpose?

4) What does it mean to think about what Jesus did in regards to our inability to be submissive to the "goad?" What did He have to go through and endure? Why did He have to?

5) Prayer and praise