

MBC – 11/1/2020 – Pastor Doug Thompson
“Paul’s Gospel Witness to King Agrippa”
 Acts 26

If you remember from last Lord’s Day: Paul was on trial before Festus the governor of Judea facing the bogus charges of the Jewish leaders. And Festus was frustrated because he couldn’t find anything wrong that Paul had done. He wanted to just release him, but that would have upset the Jews. Paul finally relieved Festus of making a decision by “Appealing to Caesar,” which was his right as a Roman citizen – and Jesus had promised Paul that he would go to Rome to be a witness for Him there, so this would be his ticket to get there.

But Festus still didn’t have any legitimate charges against Paul that would warrant him sending him to the Emperor, so when King Agrippa and Bernice showed up, he asked for his advice, since he had the title “King of the Jews.” Sometimes you hear this called, “Paul’s trial before Agrippa,” but he’s not on trial here. Agrippa was curious and wanted to hear Paul for himself. And Paul made the most of this opportunity. Let’s read it together—

- Acts 26: ¹So Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense: ²“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, ³especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently. ⁴“My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. ⁵They 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. ⁶And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷to 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! ⁸Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?
- ⁹“I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And 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. ¹¹And 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. ¹²“In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.
- ¹³At 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. ¹⁴And 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.’ ¹⁵And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

- ¹⁶But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’
- ¹⁹“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. ²¹For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²²To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”
- ²⁴And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.” ²⁵But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. ²⁶For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.”
- ²⁸And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” ²⁹And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.” ³⁰Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them. ³¹And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, “This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.” ³²And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

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When “Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense,” the word for ‘defense’ is *apologia*. He wasn’t giving a legal defense, he was witnessing to the King about Jesus Christ! Two things stand out to me and maybe they stood out to you too—

1.) Notice how winsome and respectful Paul is.

He’s not argumentative, or insulting, or challenging. He wasn’t trying to win an argument, he was trying to win people. So throughout this address, he finds **common ground** with his audience, especially the King. He was supposed to be the King of the Jews, so to this Jew he is a Jew, and he appeals to the king on that basis: V.3: “O King, you are familiar with all the customs and

controversies of the Jews!” Now whether he was or wasn’t, Agrippa was certainly nodding his head along with Paul: “Well, yes, of course, go on . . .”

- When you are witnessing to unbelievers, don’t major on your disagreements, find *common ground*: I did this with my barber awhile back, we were both agreeing about how messed up our world is. I said, “You’re absolutely right. It’s just what the Bible says.” And he is nodding his head. I said, “But the guy that gives me the *most* trouble – (he stopped) is that guy in the mirror!” I’m looking at me, but he’s looking at himself! And again, he agreed! Then I said, “That’s why God sent us a Savior.”

Keep people nodding their heads in agreement with what you are saying. . . “yes, that’s reasonable. . . I can see how *you* would believe that . . .”

2.) Paul wove the Gospel into his personal testimony.

Do you see that? He is talking about his own life and experience: before Christ, when Christ saved him, and after Christ saved him, and he brings the Gospel into every part. He doesn’t use a formula here – it’s not a one, two, three and you’re saved deal. Paul is very human here, he’s not some robotic witnessing machine. He’s sensitive to his audience. But he sure gets in the main points of the Gospel as we’re going to see. *And* he got interrupted by Festus, so we don’t know what else he would have said. When did Paul *not* get interrupted? And that’s why it’s a really good idea to think through your own testimony that incorporates the Gospel, and then be ready to share it in one minute, five minutes, and half an hour.

- This is exactly what we used to do when we took our team down to the Redwood Gospel Mission on 6th street in Santa Rosa. Every month a different person would share their own Gospel testimony. It wasn’t a Gospel lecture – it was the Gospel illustrated by how it powerfully saved and transformed Jason, or Jen, or Erroll, or Brandi, or Debbie and Terry. I’ll bet over the years we had 20 or more different people share the Gospel *through* their testimony

So Paul begins by describing his life before Christ, and his point is that he was a faithful Jew in every way. He didn’t become a Christian *in spite of* his Jewishness but *because of it*—

I. Paul – B.C. (vv.1-12).

- Acts 26:4–5 ⁴“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.

Do you see that Paul has them all nodding their heads? Yes, they knew all about Paul’s fanatical Judaism – they had seen him sitting at Gamaliel’s feet, they knew what a scholar he was of their OT Scriptures, and his personal righteousness:: he must have been a lot like Martin Luther when

he was still an Augustinian monk in the Catholic church, he was the poster boy for Roman Catholicism. That was Paul: He was a Jewish fundamentalist

They couldn't disagree with that, in fact they had to admire him – especially his fellow Pharisees. And in fact, his faith in Christ wasn't a deviation from his Jewishness, it was the completion of it—

- Acts 26:6–7 ⁶And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷to 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!

He's saying: "I'm really on trial for being an exemplary Jew and believing in our own Scriptures!"

- And all the Pharisees would be fist pumping and whispering "Amen!" Again: *common ground* – finding where he *agrees* with his audience.

But what is this "*hope in the promise made by God to our fathers?*" It goes back to God's promise to Abraham to make him the father of a multitude (including Gentiles), and to send the Messiah to bring in His kingdom. Every Jew had this hope – conservative Jews still have this hope. Now they completely miss the part about Gentiles, and about Jesus being the Messiah, but Paul is still finding common ground. But then he turns from Agrippa and gestures to the whole audience—

- Acts 26:8 ⁸Why is it thought incredible (or "against the faith") by any of you that God raises the dead?

What an amazing question! Sounds like the way Jesus used to stump the religious leaders. Judaism believed in a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked – well, the Pharisees believed that, the liberal Sadducees didn't: remember when Paul divided the Sanhedrin by bringing up the resurrection? But the Scriptures taught that a resurrection was coming, and even Festus and the Romans in the audience would have to agree that if there actually is a Creator God, then it's not unreasonable He can certainly raise the dead.

- Where the Jews *didn't* agree with Paul was that the resurrection had already begun with Jesus Christ. If they admitted that, then they would have to accept that they crucified their own Messiah, and that Jesus is alive and is Lord. And if you believe that – you are a new creature in Christ! They aren't there yet, but Paul's point is that he can't be accused of being some *heretic* for believing in resurrection, when that is the hope of all Scripture-believing Jews.

Then Paul returns to his B.C. days – he was just like them, he didn't believe in Jesus as Messiah or that He rose from the dead, and he violently persecuted anyone who did. He even tried to

get Christians to blaspheme the name of Jesus – wow! Can you imagine the regrets that brought to Paul after he was saved?

*This is the part of your testimony where you relate to unbelievers by saying, “I get where you’re at, because I was there myself! I was just like you: I didn’t believe. I mocked Christians. But something happened to me. I wasn’t looking for it, I didn’t want it to happen to me, but it did, and the only explanation is that Jesus did this to me.” That’s where Paul goes next—

II. Jesus converts and commissions Paul (vv.13-18).

A. Jesus converts Paul.

- Acts 26:13–14 ¹³At 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. ¹⁴And 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.’

Paul was on his way to *persecute* the followers of Jesus, when Jesus appeared to Paul in blinding glory – it was as if Paul looked straight at the sun! Jesus blinded Paul *physically* to show him how *spiritually* blind he had been! And Jesus said, “When you persecuted My people – you persecuted Me!” That phrase about “kicking against the goads” was a Gk. figure of speech that meant to oppose the gods. Paul didn’t know it but he had been fighting against the true God. And like the old preacher said, “Your arms are too *short* to box with God!”

- Paul’s point is this: “Jesus did this to me!” It wasn’t my scholarship, or my righteous life in Judaism that turned me around. Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now, I see. It’s supernatural. There’s no other explanation for how a Jesus-hating, Christian-killing Pharisee would suddenly become a lover of Jesus and His people.”

And they couldn’t argue against his own personal experience! All they knew for sure was that he was *not* the person he used to be. *Something* had happened that had *drastically* changed him. So maybe his explanation of what that was – is true! Let’s keep going. Jesus saved Paul for a purpose—

B. Jesus commissions Paul.

- Acts 26:15–17 ¹⁵And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you

Jesus saved Paul to be a *servant* and a *witness* – and that’s true for every person Jesus saves. It’s true for every one of us here. Jesus saved you to serve Him with everything you are and everything you own: you are in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. And He calls everyone He saves to be a *witness* for Him. The other day someone asked me a fair question: “How are we supposed to be witnesses of Jesus and His resurrection when we weren’t there and we haven’t seen Jesus?” Good question. Let me show you the answer—

- John 15:26 ²⁶“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about me.

You say, “But it says the *Spirit* will bear witness of Jesus. What does that have to do with me?” Duh, He bears witness of Jesus through *your* lips! The Holy Spirit does not have lips! You learn something new every Sunday, don’t you? He bears witness through you and me.

The Holy Spirit was there at Calvary, at the empty tomb – *He is an eyewitness*, and when He uses your lips to bear witness of the living Lord Jesus, He gives it a fresh, firsthand, eyewitness power! So that—

- Matthew 10:20 ²⁰For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

So loosen thy tongue, and see what God will do! And then we read Jesus Himself, in His own words, describing the transforming power of the Gospel—

- Acts 26:18 ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

People can’t see Jesus. You can tell the story well, but until the Spirit opens their eyes, it’s just like those who were with Paul when Jesus appeared to him—

- Acts 22:9 ⁹Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me.

It was just light and noise, and that’s because—

- 2 Corinthians 4:4 ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

It’s a spiritual blindness! It’s not lack of intelligence – it’s a lack of spiritual illumination that keeps them in spiritual darkness—

- 1 Corinthians 2:14 ¹⁴The natural person *does not* accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly (lit. *moronic*) to him, and he is *not able* to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

That was Paul until Jesus opened his eyes – and it was you and me! Unbelievers can't see Jesus, they can't hear His voice – and they cannot understand the Gospel in order to be saved. It's not just that they *will* not. They *can* not, until the Spirit of God removes those barriers, and opens their spiritual eyes. Isn't that just what He did for Lydia back in chapter 16?—

- Acts 16:14 ¹⁴One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

Just what Jesus commissioned Paul to do! —*“to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.”*

- Colossians 1:13 ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.
- 2 Corinthians 4:6 ⁶For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- 2 Timothy 2:26 ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Salvation is a *turning!* But God is the one who does the turning, right? From darkness to light and from the power of Satan to the power of God. Maybe you tried to turn, for years. Didn't work. Until God opened your eyes to see and hear Jesus in the Gospel, then you turned. And when you turned you received forgiveness of all of your sins, and an inheritance waiting for you in heaven! There's nothing on earth better than that. If you've got it, you need to tell someone else about it.

So I want you to follow Paul's defense: The old Paul was trapped in spiritual darkness and it showed in his life: He hated Christ and His people. But the new Paul showed the unmistakable evidence of his Jesus-changed life—

III. Paul's transformation (vv.19-23).

- Acts 26:19–20 ¹⁹“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

Well King Agrippa certainly knew this about Paul – all the Jews did. They didn't know *why* he suddenly switched teams, but he just explained that part to them: Jesus did it! And notice that he explains again what it looks like when Jesus does this. Jesus is the cause, but here is the effect—

- that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

When Jesus saves a person, they will repent = *metanoeo* = to completely change your mind. About what? About your sins, and about Jesus. But this word also means a change of mind that results in a change of life. It's not just thinking differently, it's living differently. That's why Paul goes on to say "repent, and *turn* to God:" repentance is always turning from sin, back to God – "*performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.*" Wow. Really? You have to do that? No, you will do that, if Jesus saved you. Just like Zacchaeus did, remember that wee little man? And a wee little man was he!—

- Luke 19:8–9 ⁸And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." ⁹And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house!"

That was the proof, right? And this is what John the Baptist preached down at the Jordan—

- Luke 3:8–9 ⁸Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. . . Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Oh, we should tell people this! Jesus and John didn't tuck this away in the fine print. And neither did Paul. Nope, it was right up front: Turn from your sins, turn to God, through faith in Jesus Christ – and prove it by living a radically different life. A changed life.

- *Has your life changed since Christ saved you? So much so that when you tell people that Jesus saves and transforms sinners, they can look at your life and see the proof?
- Acts 26:21–23 ²¹For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. (Because he proclaimed this message of Christ to Gentiles too). ²²To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

He says: "I believe the same Scriptures that you believe" Again – common ground. It's in their own OT Scriptures that Messiah would suffer: Ps.22, Ps. 69, Isa.53. They didn't see it because they didn't want to believe that this would ever happen to their Messiah!

And even Jesus' resurrection was in the OT Scriptures, but it was veiled – the Jews didn't see it, even Paul didn't see it until Christ saved Him. But then Paul says something that is just wild, and we can read right past it:

- and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, He (who? Jesus!) would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

Who is preaching and proclaiming the Gospel throughout the Book of Acts? *The risen Lord Jesus*, through the lips of Peter, and John, and Philip, and Stephen, and Paul. And the risen Lord Jesus is still proclaiming the light of the Gospel today through our lips, when we are faithful to open our mouths and speak of Him! And notice – because Paul's audience certainly did – this Gospel is being proclaimed to both Jews and also Gentiles.

IV. Response and invitation (vv.24-30)

So at this point, things are getting personal and very awkward, and Festus has had enough, and I believe he wants to rescue his guests from this uncomfortable situation, so he interrupts Paul. Just cuts him off—

- Acts 26:24 ²⁴And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind.”

“Resurrections? Dead men speaking? This is getting weird” – the truth is, it was getting *personal* and the guests were squirming. Now I think as he is saying this, he's looking over at Agrippa, like, “Don't worry King, I'll put a stop to this babbler.”

But Paul isn't fazed! He keeps his cool, and replies with complete confidence—

- Acts 26:25–27 “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. (And then he turns to Agrippa) ²⁶For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.

Paul nailed Agrippa: He did know all about Jesus, from His birth to His death and resurrection. And he knew about the Gospel – remember, Paul had shared about faith in Jesus, righteousness, self-control and the coming judgment with his sister, Drusilla. Surely she told him and Bernice everything. He knew. And Paul knew that he knew!

But Agrippa just sat there stone-faced, trying not to show any emotion whatsoever. Then Paul addressed him, the King of the Jews, with a direct question—

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

I think the crowd gasped when they heard Paul speak like this to Agrippa – He had just put him on the hot seat: He is the King of the Jews, he ought to know the OT prophets! And if he did, then he would have to concede that all Paul said about Jesus was true. The reality is that like many politicians, his religion was just for show. He had heard of “2 Chronicles,” but he had never read it!

This is embarrassing. He doesn’t want to show his ignorance in front of this crowd – so he completely evades Paul’s question and thinks of a clever way to turn the attention away from him, back to Paul – and I think he says this with a smirk on his face, while looking around at his guests—

- Acts 26:28 ²⁸And Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade *me* to *be a Christian?*”

Different Bibles translate this verse differently, but he is saying, “So Paul, do you really think that in just a few words you are going to persuade me – the King of the Jews – to become a follower of your Nazarene carpenter?” And he looks around the crowd and they are smiling and chuckling at such a preposterous idea!

But Paul isn’t flustered one bit. He plays off of what Agrippa just said. I imagine him pausing until the crowd gets really quiet, so that they can all hear what he says. Then he speaks slowly and deliberately—

- Acts 26:29 ²⁹And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.” (as he points down to his feet.)

What a great answer: “King Agrippa, queen Bernice, and all of you high-class dignified people: You probably think that I want to trade places with you, but I’m telling you that it’s my prayer that whether it’s right now or sometime later, you all would become just like me – a new creature in Christ – with the exception of these chains!”

- Now you are free to disagree, but I picture the crowd applauding – “Clever answer Paul – well done. Touche’!” And that’s the end of the evening’s entertainment, they all rise and go home.

And I think Paul nailed it. He could have gotten all John the Baptist on Agrippa: “I asked you a question Agrippa, will you bow the knee to Jesus as your Lord and Savior, or not? It’s heaven or hell, turn or burn – which will it be? Choose this day!” And that might have cost him his head.

- Paul didn’t do that. He *didn’t* paint Agrippa in a corner, and box him in so that he had no way out of this without losing face. He took a lighter touch here, he *de-escalated* the

pressure. He said, “I’m not trying to force a decision from you. But whether now or later, I pray that Jesus would do to you what He did to me: open your eyes so that you may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God so that you too might receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus.”

And then saying: “Except for these chains,” that was a touch of humor, I’m convinced, to take the pressure off. And because of Paul’s tact, there was no riot that night and Paul kept his head and lived to preach another day. But believe me, the seed of the Gospel had been planted in their hearts! They thought about Paul’s word as they went to their homes.

- I still remember the definition of evangelism I heard as a baby Christian: *Evangelism is sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God. (repeat)*

God saves sinners! We don’t. And if you truly believe that, you don’t need to twist arms or manipulate people to believe in Christ. Your only job is to be faithful to plant the seeds – maybe someone else will come along and water – but only God can cause the growth.

Paul is such an example to us in this chapter of how to be winsome and sensitive in witnessing to others. Acts 26 is the illustration of what Paul wrote to the Colossians in—

- Colossians 4:5–6 (NASB95) ⁵Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. ⁶Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Look for Gospel opportunities, be ready, and speak with grace: “as though seasoned with salt” = be interesting, don’t be a gospel robot just spouting out some memorized speech. Make it fit the moment—

- Janice and I were at a thrift shop in Clearlake yesterday – high end shopping – and the owner starting talking about his cats. He said, “Yeah, me and the good Lord have a deal: He let’s me in heaven, and I will take care of all the cats there!” I’m just thinking, buddy if you see a bunch of cats, you’re not in heaven! But my wife was ready, she said, “You know, Jesus is our ticket to heaven, it’s not doing good things, even taking care of His creatures . . .” She was ready.

Well this is the way the chapter ends—

- Acts 26:30–32 ³⁰Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them. ³¹And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, “This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.” ³²And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

We will pick it up again next Sunday, but there are two takeaways from this chapter—

#1.) If you have never repented of your sins and come to Jesus as Lord and Savior, you've heard Good News this morning! This day you can turn from darkness to light. Your sins can be forgiven. Don't put it off like Agrippa did. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved! And I speak especially to you who have been brought up in a church, with a religion – just like most of Paul's audience: that religion won't save you until you get personal with Jesus Christ: tell Him that you want to turn from your sins. Ask Him to forgive your sins by that sacrifice He made on the cross. And receive Him as your Lord and your Savior!

#2.) Be ready to share the Gospel. Paul was ready. You can't make the most of the opportunities that God brings you if you aren't ready. Peter said the same thing—

- 1 Peter 3:15 ¹⁵but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense (apologia – same word used in v.1 of Paul's defense) to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

And let me leave you with this: Learn how to do just what Paul did: weave the Gospel into your own personal testimony. i.e., show people how God used the Gospel in your own life.

It was almost 45 years ago. . . Me and Tom Brown