

Acts 26:1-32

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: 2 I 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: 3 especially *because I know* thee to be an expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. 4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5 which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7 unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. 8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? 9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 Which 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 voice against *them*. 11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceeding mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities. 12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 at 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. 14 And 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. 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16 But 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; 17 delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 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. 19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20 but shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. 21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*. 22 Having 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: 23 that 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. 24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. 26 For 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. 27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. 29 And 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. 30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: 31 And 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.”

Introduction

Audio version:

<https://resources.ccpilly.org/teachinglibrary.asp?Book=44>

“Now, chapter 26 will take us now to Paul’s defense, this is the longest address we have from the apostle Paul we have in the Book of Acts, the longest continuous speech recorded from the lips of Paul. It says **“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself.”** so this is an examination, not a trial per se, **“Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I 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: especially 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.” (verses 1-3)** This is Agrippa II, his father was Agrippa I, who killed James and then was felled down and was eaten of worms, his great uncle had slaughtered John the Baptist, his great grandfather was Herod the Great who had killed the innocents in Bethlehem, the babes when [after] the wise men [Parthian Magi] had come from the east, so this family is very well informed relative to the birth of Christ, the prophecies, the attitude of the Jews in Jerusalem, the ministry of John the Baptist and so forth, and Paul acknowledges that, ***‘I know you’re familiar with all of these things, so I especially feel good about being able to defend myself before you, because I know you’re familiar with all of this.’*** Verse 4, **“My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;”** which tells us he came early, probably 12 or 13 years old, **“which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.”** ***‘I lived the most stringent form of Phariseeism in the nation, I was addicted to it and adhered to the Law of Moses.’*** **“And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:”** Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, **“unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.” (verses 4-7)** Look, the tribes [the 12 tribes of Israel] are not lost, Paul says right here, as we hear about the ten tribes in the north being taken into captivity by the Assyrians, Paul doesn’t say *‘you know, the two tribes in the south, and the ten tribes in the north,’* he doesn’t say that, he says **“unto the promise our twelve tribes, instantly” constantly “serving God day and night, hope to come.”** He says it is the hope of the 12 tribes, Paul says, in his day, presently. [Comment: The ten tribes in the north were taken captive by Assyria in 721, and a massive number of them, it has been

historically proven, migrated out of the Promise Land about four years before this Assyrian captivity took place, into the region of Armenia, becoming the powerful Parthian Empire, an Empire which Rome could not subdue or even win a war against. By Paul's time the Parthian Empire stretched from what is now Germany along the northern border of the Roman Empire, east through Armenia and south along the eastern shores of the Euphrates all the way to Persia, which it had conquered. The Magi, the wise men that had visited the baby Jesus were Parthian Magi that had crossed the Euphrates and came into Jerusalem looking for the Christ child (see <https://unityinchrist.com/mathew/Matthew%202-1-23.htm>).

Paul knew, as Jesus did when he said to the disciples "don't go to the Gentiles, but go to the lost tribes of Israel" where those tribes of Israel had migrated to. The disciples went east across the Euphrates, probably a couple weeks march to find them, as Jesus had instructed them. Combining secular history with Biblical Old Testament history proves this and makes a fascinating study, which I have undertaken for this website. See starting at <https://unityinchrist.com/kings/1.html> and particularly at <https://unityinchrist.com/kings/3.html>.] **"I am accused of the Jews."** Now Paul knows what a great testimony it would be to the Jews and to the Church if Agrippa gets born-again, if he gets saved, so no doubt he's right in his niche here. He says **"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"** *'Why should you think that's incredible?'* **"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which 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."** (verses 8-10) take note of that, "the saints, the holy ones." It doesn't say "he gave his voice" he said **"I cast my vote against them"** literally (in the Greek), and there's more than one place that seems to us to insinuate that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, the great ruling body in Jerusalem, though a young man. Isn't it interesting here, he calls them "the saints," he never got over that. Acts chapter 9 as he was converted along the Road to Damascus the Lord said **'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me,'** and Paul is the one who develops the great theology as the Church the Body of Christ. There in that chapter we read about the perception of the saints that were at Jerusalem that he had persecuted. Paul says here **"Which 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 cast my vote against them.” the saints, that’s you by the way, you are the saints. Maybe your wife doesn’t think that about you, but you are the saints. Not the kind that look good on a dashboard, as I look around this room most of you would not look good on a dashboard, I wouldn’t want you on mine, it would be distracting, I’m distracted enough driving. You’re the *hagion*, the ones that are set aside, separated unto God, you are his sons and daughters, his saints the Bible says, through the work of Christ. He said **“And 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.”** (verse 11) he made them blaspheme the name of Jesus, “exceedingly mad” he was insane [the 1611 English word “mad” meant “insane” back then], “strange cities” means “foreign cities,” outside of Israel.

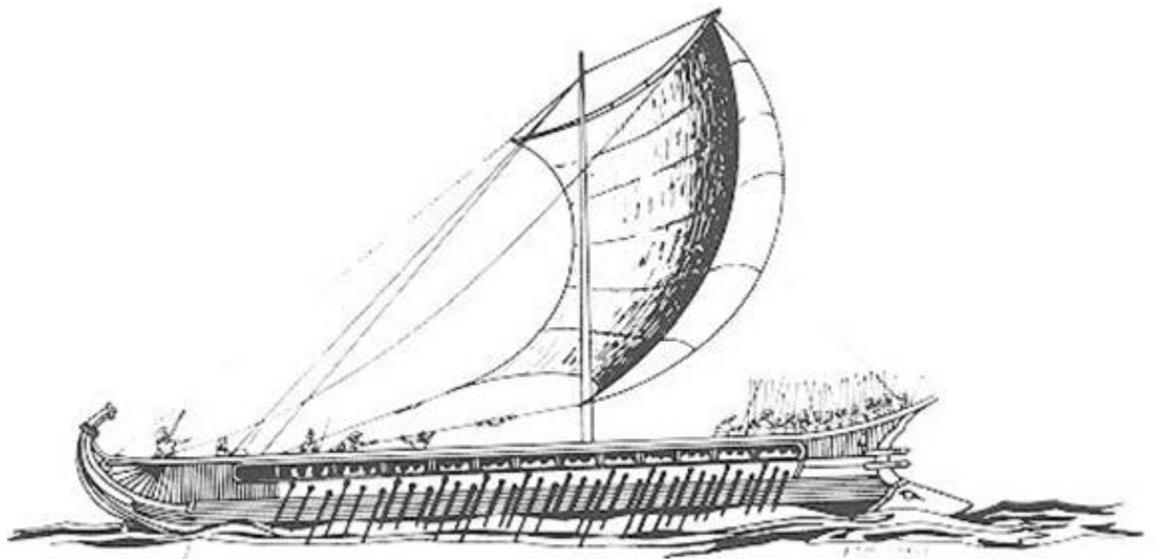
*Paul Witnesses To Agrippa About His Supernatural
Encounter With Jesus, and His Conversion*

“Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday,” high noon, **“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.”** (verses 12-13) notice please “above the brightness of the sun,” any of you guys been to the Middle East, I know we’ve been there many times with the church, the sun in Israel, in the Middle East is spectacular, incredible, but particularly the high desert sun going to the Golan Heights there, going up to Damascus. And imagine a light so bright that it pales the noonday sun, so much so that those who see it fall down, awestruck, the brilliance of that light. He said it was at midday, high noon, and the brightness of that light, **‘it shone around us, exceeding the sun,’** and here’s the only place we have it, **“And when we were all fallen to the earth,”** all the men that were with him, **“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.*”** (verse 14) now he tells us the others heard the voice, but they didn’t hear any diction, no pronunciation, they heard sound

but they didn't hear what was said. Isn't it interesting here, he said **"speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue,"** King James here "in the Hebrew tongue," some scholars think it's Aramaic, but the Greek word here is *Hebraidai*, the word for Hebrew, and it would seem to me that's what the Lord would speak to him, but either way. He said **"I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"** I don't believe this was an angry voice, or a threatening voice, I believe it was tremendous kindness and brokenness on behalf of the Lord as he said this, **'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'** **"it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."** King James, "the goads, the ox-goads," Paul, kicking against the goads. He had been under conviction since the death of Stephen, as he watched Stephen's face glowing like an angel, with stones falling on him, Stephen saying **'O Lord,'** he said **'I see Jesus standing on the right hand of Power,'** he said **'Don't lay this charge to their account.'** Paul had never seen anybody like that, he had never escaped it. As we read his sermons, he stole everything from Stephen. Stephen was his instructor, his mentor, and Paul was Stephen's one convert, but that's a whopper, that is a whopper. **'It's hard for thee to kick against the ox goad, isn't it Paul?'** Interesting, the Psalmist said this **'Be not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held with the bit and the bridle, lest they come near unto thee.'** So Jesus is saying **'Paul, you're as stubborn as an ox, you are as stubborn as an ox, man, O man. It's hard for you to kick against the goads, the ox goad, that's sticking you and sticking you and sticking you and sticking you.'** The ox goad had a point on one end, you remember Shamgar killed 600 Canaanites with an ox goad. It was used to stick the ox, and to poke him and to move him and to guide him, he says **'You're like a stubborn ox, kicking against the goads, I'm ministering to your heart, the sermon of Stephen is ringing over and over in your mind and your heart, Paul, isn't it hard, you are one stubborn ox.'** **"And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet:"** blind, by the way, **"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 these things in the which I will appear"** or reveal **"unto thee;"** (verses 15-16)

‘Paul, I’ve Called You To Be A Minister’ -- What Did Jesus Mean By That?

He says **‘Paul, I’ve appeared unto you for this reason, to make you a minister,’** interesting word, it’s not the normal word just for servant, **“to make you and underling,” ‘Paul,’ he said, ‘you will be my helper.’** It is the word “under-rower” [Greek *Hupomene*, under-oarsman, in the Greek navy, in their biremes and triremes, double level and triple level ramming ships, they had two to three levels of rowers, and the ship had a bronze or iron plated ram on the bow, and they would try to ram and sink the enemy ships by ramming into the side of it. There were no bathrooms on those ships, and in battle, if those over you had to go, it would fall onto the rowers under them, the under-oarsmen. Also if your ship got rammed, being an under-oarsman, you probably couldn’t get out in time before the ship sunk, taking you with it. In the Greek navy they were all free men, no slaves rowing, **but nonetheless an under-oarsman was the lowest of the lowest jobs, and the most deadly.** *Ships of War*



From Bradford Ernle we learn this about the warships of the era, especially the Greek warships: “...the trireme was rowed at three levels and there was one man to each oar. ...’each sailor, taking his

oar, cushion and oarstrap’...what the designers had done was to provide the vessel with an outrigger: an extension beyond the ship’s side that gave the top level oarsmen (*thranites*) a greater leverage. The total crew of a trireme consisted of about 200 men, of whom 170 were oarsmen. The *thranites* at the top numbered 31 on each side (62). Below them came the second bank (*zygotes*) with 27 rowers to each side (54), and at the bottom, also with 27 men each side (54), came the *thalamites*. Both the two lower decks of oars were worked through holes or ports in the side, and it is clear enough that the least enviable position in the ship was that of the *thalamites*. They had little enough chance of escaping if the trireme was holed or otherwise overwhelmed. Aristophanes also makes the joking comment that it could be very unpleasant to be on the bottom tier if someone above decided to relieve himself. The remaining crew consisted of 15 deck hands, fourteen soldiers (some of whom were archers), and a flautist who piped the time for the oarsmen. The helmsmen, whose job was all important on the ‘run-in’ towards an enemy trireme, steered by means of two broad-bladed steering-paddles as had been the fashion for centuries. In command of each trireme was a *trierarch* (master, and sometimes owner)...Although the all-important oarsmen came from poorer classes, they were free citizens—quite unlike the galley-slave labour of later years in the Mediterranean. It was the oarsmen, in fact, who by their predominance in numbers over the rich land-owning citizens were to provide the basic substratum upon which Athenian democracy was to evolve.”

Key facts About Triremes

“[9 feet across at the bottom, 18 feet across at the top, 117 feet long.] The ship itself...was long and narrow-gutted. On a beam of three metres at the bottom, which extended to six metres at the level of the *thranites* on the outriggers, the trireme would have been about 37 metres long (about 117 feet). Such a vessel was clearly unsuited for heavy-weather work and, indeed, there were only about four, or at the least five, months of the year in which a trireme could safely operate. **‘The limitation factor in ancient warfare’**, as I have said elsewhere, ‘was determined not only by the harvest season, when most of the nation’s population was engaged in ensuring the bread supply, **but also by the fact that armies could not be transported, garrisons maintained, or sea battles fought, except in calm weather.**’” “The principal weapon of the period, as of

the centuries before, was the vessel itself. It was the great underwater ram in the bows which was the forerunner of the cannon and guns of later days. The trireme was in fact launched at its opponent like a giant arrow. The moment of impact was 'the moment of truth' for all aboard...The tactical use of the ram later became the paramount factor in any sea battle. Ideally, of course, the objective was to catch the enemy beam on, breaking clean into the ship's side and holing him [below the waterline]. But the ram could also be used by clever maneuvering to run right down the side of the opponent snapping off the oars like matchsticks (the looms of the oars leaping back under the impact and killing or maiming the rowers). Having thus disabled the opponent, the trireme could then back off and, almost at leisure, come in and administer the *coup de grace* by holing the stricken enemy. It was, one might say, the far-distant, man-impelled, precursor of the torpedo." [Thermopylae, Bradford Ernle, pp. 75-78] [The word that shows up in the King James Bible for "minister" is most often taken from this Greek word *Hupomene* which translates into English as "under-oarsman," and indicates what a true minister of Jesus Christ is to be like in service to those he ministers to.] You remember Ben Hur, you remember the scene where he's chained in the bottom of the boat and they're in that sea-battle, and the guys are ripping their hands off trying to get out of the shackles, the under-rowers [in Romans galleys, where they used slaves as rowers] were the guys who were chained down in the bottom of the boat, he said **'Paul, I've called you to do that, you're going to be an underling, under-rower, under-oarsman, you're going to be the guy down in the bottom of all this, rowing and rowing and rowing.'** And Paul's attitude is **'Anything Lord, anything, how glad I am to serve you, to do whatever you ask of me.'** He said **"to make you an under-rower and a witness"** that's a martyr, so neither one of these sound real appealing to us, **'you've been called to be an under-rower and a martyr, a witness,'** **"both of these things which thou has seen, and of those things in the which I will reveal unto you,"** So Paul, it was never his own message, the Lord appears to him, and Paul realizes **'This is the Messiah of Israel who I hated, who I persecuted, these are his saints who I put to death and hauled off to prison? This is the name I caused people to blaspheme, and he's come to me with the blood the Church on my hands, and revealed his grace and his love, and asked me to be his servant, his helper, his witness, anything Lord, anything Lord, anything.'** what a great man, what a great man. You know, you would think, as you read through the New Testament, that John would be the man that would teach us about grace. Isn't it interesting? If you read the Gospel of John, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John and the Book of Revelation, in all of those writings the apostle John

only uses the word “grace” seven times, in all of those writings combined. And what he says is we see grace in the face of Jesus Christ. That’s what he says, **‘Grace and peace have been revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ.’** He uses the word “Jesus” more than the other Gospels put together. But grace, he spares the word and he pours it out like ointment. Peter uses it very sparingly, and when Peter talks about grace he talks about “the manifold grace of God,” twice. That word in the Greek, “manifold” is “very-colored,” has various tones to it. And that’s the kind of grace Peter needed, because Peter had a day when he was red hot, he had a day when he was blue, he had a day when he was yellow when he was running, you know, Peter needed a very-colored grace, with his emotional makeup and his foot in his mouth and hacking off ears, denying the Lord, he just said **“the manifold grace of God hath appeared.”** But Paul uses the word “grace” 120 times, 120 times. And personally I believe his outstanding definition is in **Titus 2:11-13**, when he says **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ...”** Paul says grace brought us to salvation, grace keeps us today, and grace is the only thing that could cause us to look forward to the *parasia*, the appearing of the great coming of our God and Saviour. How could we look forward to that without grace, men and women like you and I? And as he describes what he had done in his life and the whole scene here, it comes together. You know, Jesus said the one he forgives the most is the one who loves him the most, and Paul was in love with his Saviour, he was in love with his Saviour.

Jesus Lays Out The Purpose For Paul’s Calling

The Lord said to him, **“But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister [*Hupomene, under-oarsman*],” an underling, and a martyr, “and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people,” from Israel, the Jews, “and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,” and here’s why he’s sending him, “to open their eyes,” Paul understood that one**

completely, **“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.” (verses 16-18)** Jesus speaking to him. What a remarkable thing to unpack here, he says **‘to open their eyes.’** Paul had already written the Corinthian letter and he said this, **“If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world”** speaking of Satan **“hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”** The light is not physical light, it is spiritual light. Look, the New Testament says that the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, is effectual. If you want to know how to pray for your relatives that are unsaved, Paul tells us here, the problem is the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe, lest they see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ. So when you pray for your unsaved relatives, say **“Lord, let them see the light, not physically, let them see Lord, the light of the glorious gospel,”** it’s an internal thing, it’s something that happens within us. [I’ve prayed that for my adoptive and real kids, and they just put on real dark glasses, welding glasses.] God has given us light, we’re told. It tells us, that if we walk in the light, that’s not how we walk it’s where we like to walk, and as he is in the light we have fellowship with him. We’re told in Ephesians that in regards to our lives, **“Anything that doth make manifest”** now you know to make manifest means to bring it into the open, **“is light.”** Let me say this to you, if you’re struggling with a weakness in your life, if you’re struggling with an area in your life and you know the Lord’s dealing with that area, and he wants you to deal with that, you know, Satan is going to condemn you about that. As failings and things that need to change come to your view, don’t let that happen. Because Paul says **“Anything that doth make manifest is light.”** The only reason you can see the things that need to change in your life is because God in his grace is shining a spiritual light on those things, so that they are manifest to you, not him, he knows of them. We’re to walk circumspectly, it tells us *akribos*, in the same place, like an acrobat. That’s the world we’re in, I mean, there’s all kinds of things to the right and to the left, we’re to watch how we walk. And we’re to know as we do that, and we’re failing, we’re struggling, we’re wanting to get victory, that God is not condemning us, he’s making those things manifest so we can see them by shining his light on them. We have been brought from darkness into the light. Think of all of the things, I think of the things I did before I was saved, that I somehow justified. And you’re brought into the light, and it’s so evident those things need to change, that they’re not in step with a holy God who loves us. It has nothing to do with religion, it’s over relationship. He says here that

'I'm sending you to open their eyes,' the Lord says, *'I so longingly want them to receive with their eyes open,'* **"to turn them from darkness to light,"** and man, oh man, I was involved in some of that, weren't you? **"from darkness to light,"** defines it another way, **"and from the power of Satan unto God,"** look, we thought, for awhile, as we lived how we wanted, that we were free, that that was freedom. I can go where I want, I can smoke what I want, I can snort what I want, I can punch you if I want, I can sleep with who I want to sleep with, I can spend what I want to spend on. That's not freedom, it says here that's the power of Satan. It's just a different form of bondage. It's just a different form of bondage. There was one Kingdom, until Satan said ***'I will be like the Most High,'*** until a will, ***Isaiah 14***, was raised against the Kingdom of God. There's two kingdoms now, there's no freedom, there's a Kingdom of light and there's a kingdom of darkness. In the kingdom of darkness you're blinded, you're deceived, somebody's calling the shots. Again, you know, I was a young man, coming through the 60s, I didn't decide what the menu was, the music was handed to us. The drugs, handed to us. I didn't decide that pants should be wider at the bottom than they were at the top, bellbottoms, that was handed to us, the way you dress, all of that was on the menu, we weren't free, that was all handed to us. Don't laugh because you ain't either. A different time, but there is the kingdom of Satan, it's not freedom, he is exercising a will. How wonderful to come from darkness into the Light, and then have a desire to give our lives to a different Master. No longer mastered by drugs or by alcohol or by pornography or those things. The pursuit of life is to find the right Master, and there's something in us that rebels against that. Ya, money, great servant, cruel master to serve mammon. Alcohol, cruel master [the Bible allows drinking in extreme moderation, but drinking to excess brings you into slavery to alcohol, and yes, very cruel master]. If it were a good master alcoholics would be the happiest people on the planet. Sex, cruel master, if not, prostitutes would be the happiest people on the planet. Drugs, cruel master, you think heroine addicts are the happiest people on earth? They're not. We come into the Light, we find a Master who hung on the cross for us, who laid his life down for us, who shed his blood for us, we finally come to the right Master, and what freedom in fact there is. Look at what it says here, this is God's heart, to give us sight, to give us light, to give us forgiveness, to give us an inheritance in heaven [in the kingdom of heaven, which will end up on earth, cf. Revelation 21:1-23]. That's his motive, that's his motive. And isn't it interesting, I know people were witnessing to me before I was saved, I was thinking *'Oh man, I don't want to be a Bible-thumper, I don't want to be doing what they're doing, I don't want to do that.'* And then you come, and you realize *'no, no, what's God's heart*

towards me? God wanted to give me sight, I didn't have it, I once was blind, now I see.' God wanted to give me light, I was in darkness, God wanted to give me forgiveness, and I didn't have it, I'd have died in my sins, and in my life there were enough times I could have died. When I look back after I got saved, I could see the hand of God in a number of places, keeping me alive [me too, once when I was 9-years-old, see <https://unityinchrist.com/author.htm>]. And not only to give me forgiveness, but then to give me an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, that's reserved in heaven for us. That's his motivation, that's his heart, a right Master. Jesus says to Paul **'I want you' "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."** (verse 18)

*Paul Explains To Agrippa That He Then Followed Jesus'
Marching Orders For Him -- Repentance Looks Like
Something*

And Paul says **"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:"** (verse 19) talking to Agrippa, you know, he considered himself at this point the prisoner of the Lord. **"But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."** (verse 20) He says, you know, **'Repentance looks like something. I'm encouraging Jews, Gentiles, the Roman world, that there should be repentance.'** Look, repentance is a great word, *metanoia*, to change the mind. What a wonderful thing, when the Lord gets to our heart and he brings us into the Light, we can change our mind, we can look and say *'Now that was stupid, that was the wrong way to live, it was destructive for me, it was destructive for the people I was getting over on, it was the wrong way.'* And we're allowed *metanoia*, to repent, change the mind and turn our life in his direction. It says "to repent and turn to God," from the way we did live, and then to "do works meeting" fitting "for repentance." Wiest, the Greek scholar from Moody Bible Institute translates it this way **"and be doing works that weigh as much as the repentance they profess."** [*walking the walk, not just talking the talk*] to be doing works that weigh

as much as the repentance they profess. Listen, repentance looks like something. Don't tell me *'Oh yea, I repented, Jesus is my Saviour,'* and you're still living the way you're living? No, no, no, repenting means to change the mind, turning to God, and then to do the works that weigh as much as the repentance you profess. There's a change in our lives, I don't know about you guys, I was glad to be set free. I mean, there was lots of reasons. But I was glad to be set free. I was a vegetarian for a number of years, now vegans, calm down. But I did it for the wrong reasons. I was into Babaramda [all this Indian religious stuff]...and was dropping acid the whole time to help me out there on the astroplains. But I remember getting saved, and saying grace, and eating two hot dogs and a ham sandwich, I was so thankful. I had all these Hippies telling me *'You'll get sick, you eat that processed meat after not eating meat all these years, you're gonna have a reaction!'* I did have a reaction, I wanted more as soon as I was done. I was praising the Lord, I was happy, I was free. I was free. I was so thankful. It changes our lives, the drugs were gone, the violence was gone, to be set free. To wake up in the morning, I remember waking up and being alive. I remember, I got saved at night, and the next day waking up and the sky was blue, and the trees were blowing in the wind and the birds were singing, I'd never seen any of it, it had been there my whole life, I'd never seen it, I was alive, I was alive.

'For These Causes The Jews Sought To Kill Me'

He says **"For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me."** he says, **"Having 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:"** (verses 21-22) now the help from God was Claudius Lysias, the Tribune, by the way it's the same for you, having obtained help from God, we continue to this day, our next breath is in his hand, here we are alive tonight studying his Word, because we've received help from God, it's a wonderful thing, it's a great program. Saying **"saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come"** he's a fundamentalist, **'I don't say anything else but what the Scripture says.'** What a great message. And he continues this discourse, next verse, **"that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead,**

and should shew light unto the people [i.e. the Jews], **and to the Gentiles.” (verse 23)** “that he should suffer,” the Jews stumbled at that, they couldn’t receive it [that the Messiah was supposed to suffer, guess they never read Psalm 22 or Isaiah 52 and 53]. Notice that, that we’re in line, **“he’s the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.”** Now we’re going to have to leave off here, because there’s a great scene that comes up, and I don’t want to jump into Festus flipping out here...so, we’ll go back there. Festus is going to say, **‘You’ve lost your mind, Paul’** he can’t take it anymore, Paul says **‘I’m not crazy, I know Agrippa knows that, this didn’t happen in a corner, he knows,’** He says to Agrippa **‘I know,’** the Greek is, **‘I know for sure you believe these things, don’t you.’** And Agrippa says, **‘Paul, almost you’re making me a Christian.’** Read ahead into that. Because I want you to know something tonight, an almost a Christian ain’t a Christian. That’s like saying *‘My parachute almost opened,’* that don’t do you much good, *my bulletproof vest almost worked,’* *‘I almost became a Christian.’* I remember reading something in the newspaper awhile ago, it was a survey of spirituality in America, and it said something like 80 percent of Americans claimed to be Christians, and something like 62 percent claimed to be born-again Christians. Well, there ain’t any other kind of Christian but a born-again Christian. What is there, born-again Christians and dead Christians? If you ain’t born-again, you ain’t a Christian. People always ask *‘How do we join this church?’* You don’t join, you gotta get born into it, I’ve got four kids at home, none of them joined, if they’d have joined you’d have cancelled a few memberships along the way, they didn’t join. They were born into the house, born into the family [his family]. You want to be a Christian, you can’t join, you can get born into the family of God, and you can do that tonight...

In Review From Last Week

Here Paul, if you remember, is in front of Festus and Agrippa and Bernice. He is giving his 3rd and longest defense, it is the longest address we have of Paul in the Book of Acts, and these are very specific. The last one before Felix and Drusilla, very pointed, just point by point, God gives us this defense, very specific things being said, so I think an encouragement to you and, in the way that we share our faith, and the things that need to be included as we challenge others to believe in Christ. He had spoke of the fact that

he had determined to destroy the faith, personally, how he had persecuted them, how he had had them hauled off to prison, and voted his approval when they were put to death and at the point of a sword made them blaspheme the name of Jesus, just no doubt looking at Festus and Agrippa and Bernice, realizing *'Lord, you love them as much as you love me, I got up that morning, never dreaming by the end of the day I'd be your disciple, I was the number 1 persecutor of the Christian faith, got up determined, thought I knew what I was doing, and by the end of the day I was a broken man, I was changed, I was your disciple. And Lord, with all of the problems, and immorality and tyranny that they demonstrated in their lives, Lord, they were not haters of the Church as I was. And Lord if you loved me and saved me, no doubt with great passion.'* And he is sharing before these three, and a number of Tribunes that were there, and the main influential people of the city of Caesarea are there, no doubt in the Amphitheater. And he is saying that the Jews had sought to kill him, we had followed him that far, the Lord appeared to him on the Road to Damascus, what the Lord said to him, how then he was obedient to the heavenly vision (verses 16-19), and he said the Jews were hostile to him in Jerusalem, that he hadn't defied any Jewish law, he hadn't started any trouble, he said he shared none other things, ***'verse 22, than those things which the Prophets and Moses did say should come, and that was the Messiah should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and that should show light unto the people, that's Israel [the Jews], and to the Gentiles,'***

Paul's Testimony Was Getting To Festus & Agrippa

"And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." (verse 24) as he was giving his defense, as it were. Festus, who is a man who is inexperienced in all of these things, who had called Agrippa because he knew Agrippa was familiar with all of the things that were taking place in that part of the world, Festus no doubt under great conviction, he says with a loud voice, **"Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." 'you're schizophrenic, you're mad, you're conflicted, much learning doth make thee mad.'** Again, this man would be dead within two years, he was fairly young, Festus would die of natural causes, and of course we would do an autopsy, they didn't find out what that

was, but it was God's timing, and here he has this incredible testimony, no doubt Paul pouring out his heart, standing in front of him, and he would be gone into eternity in two years. **"But he said, I am not mad most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."** (verse 25) he is respectful as he answers, **"but speak forth"** notice **"the words of truth and soberness."** Soberness is the word here that means "soundness," ***"these words are true, they're healthy, it's sound, it's true, the words that I'm speaking, I'm not mad."*** **"For 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."** (verse 26) he's speaking of Agrippa. Now when he had started this speech, he said ***'Agrippa, I'm glad you're here, because you know everything in the traditions of the Jews and so forth.'*** Josephus tells us in his writings that Agrippa helped him, as he wrote *The Wars of the Jews* to the point that as it was finished he sent Agrippa a copy, he said that Agrippa had written to him no less than 62 times, Agrippa, well versed in all that's going on in this part of the world, from the fact that his great grandfather, again, had slaughtered the innocents in Bethlehem, was Herod the Great, his great uncle had killed John the Baptist, his father had killed James and had fallen down, eaten of worms and died. The point is, his family, the Idumeans, all of them from this area, he knew everything that was going on, he knew of the ministry of the birth of Christ, he knew the ministry of John the Baptist, he knew of the miracles, he of the crucifixion, he knew now of the rumours of Jesus being risen, and all of this was familiar to him. And Paul says, **"For the king"** Agrippa **"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."** (verse 26) this whole part of the world knows about this. **"King Agrippa,"** Paul now putting him on the stand, putting him on trial, **"believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."** (verse 27) so what he does is he asks Agrippa a question, and answers for him before he can say anything. You know, ***'King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know you believe the Prophets,'*** and **"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."** (verse 28) Scholars argue the term is difficult, is he deriding saying *'You think with such a brief address you're going to convince me to be a Christian?'* or *'Paul, just in this summary you've almost brought me to the point of being a Christian,'* however you interpret it [I take the second interpretation], it seems to indicate that Agrippa realizes he's so close to being convinced. Whether he's thinking *'Paul you could do it easily'* or whether he's saying *'you've almost got me to that point.'* But almost is what will determine his

eternal destiny [and there are various beliefs about eternal destiny within the greater Body of Christ, to view some of these see <https://unityinchrist.com/plaintruth/battle.htm>]. Because Paul then answers **“And 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.”** (verse 29) he says **‘Agrippa, you’re right, almost, and I wish you were across the line, altogether, and everyone else as I am, except in these bonds,’** he must hold up his chains, and says **‘I don’t want you to experience my bondage, I want you to experience my freedom, I don’t want you to experience my pain, but my joy, I want you to experience what I’ve experienced in Christ, yes, I wish you were altogether as I am.’** But Agrippa’s response, that sets that off, is **‘You’ve almost persuaded me.’** And again, we talked about this, this morning. There’s no such thing as almost a Christian, that’s just enough to get you sent to hell, almost a Christian. We don’t tolerate that in any other facet of life, do we, *‘I almost won the lottery,’* so what. Who cares. You ask your wife, *‘Honey, let’s go, we gotta go, we’re late.’ ‘I’m almost ready,’* that’s not good news, it may be another hour [you’re sleeping on the couch tonight, Pastor Joe], ah, the parachute almost opened. I’m thinking about in terms of being Philadelphians, ok, *‘The Eagles almost won the Superbowl a bunch of times in the last five years.’* I don’t want to hear that again in 2009, 2010, almost is not enough... *‘my wife almost stayed faithful to me our whole married life,’* I don’t want to hear that, we don’t tolerate that anywhere else. Almost a Christian is lost. Paul said clearly here, listen, what is necessary is for God to grant sight, to open our eyes so that we can see, so that we then can respond to that, we can turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan, Jesus said this, from the power of Satan to God (verses 18, 23), he sees people that are lost under the power of Satan. There are only two kingdoms in this world, in the universe, the Kingdom of God and there’s the kingdom of the enemy. Satan took Jesus up to a high place and tempted him and said **‘Look, here’s all of the kingdoms of this world, all the power and the glory of them, they’re given to me’** Satan said, **‘and to whoever I will give them, if you bow down and worship me I will give them to you.’** The prince of the power of the air is at work, and the battle-lines are being drawn in our culture. James tells us **‘The tongue itself is set on fire of hell, Gehenna,’** that’s how Satan mostly finds his way into our world, that’s how he propagates hatred and bigotry and legislation, is through the tongue. But there’s the prince of the power of the air, he’s working behind everything. And Jesus says what’s necessary, and why he’s sending Paul to the world, is so that they might receive sight, spiritual sight, not physical sight, and

when they see they can make a decision and turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and Jesus says that their sins might be forgiven, that's what he wants. It says it in **'verse 18, that their sins might be forgiven, and that they might receive an inheritance amongst those that are sanctified, Jesus says that for mankind that's lost, my desire is sight, light, forgiveness and glory,'** that's what he longs for us. There's not a selfish motive in that, he wants everything for us, and nothing from us, and here's Agrippa, almost, he makes his decision close, but never entering, to turn away from those things, almost. Again, push for a decision, we live in the Last Days, your friends, your relatives, decision time, that's where we live. [Now far more so than in 2010 when this was given, with the corona virus as I type this having killed almost 130,000 in the US alone, with a corresponding collapse of the world's economies, and the re-emergence of the Civil Rights movement from the 1960s exploding on the scene, now called Black Lives Matter, and they do matter, it's a righteous social justice cause, but these things threaten our nation almost as much as the Civil War did back in the 1860s. As everyone is desperately waiting for a successful vaccine or a number of them to be developed, so the world economies can get going again. That's the times we live in right now, my guess, right before a huge Christian revival, and then the coming of World War III, the Tribulation of Matthew 24:15-31 (see

<https://unityinchrist.com/Does/Does%20God%20Exist.html>

and

<https://unityinchrist.com/prophets/Zephaniah/REVIVAL.htm>

1)] Agrippa said to Paul **'You've almost persuaded me to be a Christian,'** and Paul said **'And I would to God that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds, these chains.'** lifts them up and shows them. **"And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up,"** no doubt he couldn't take it anymore, **"and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:"** (verse 30) that means the meeting's over, when the king gets up and starts to walk away, **"And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds."** (verse 31) Festus must be thinking *'Thanks, I knew that, that's why I had you here,'* **"Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar."** (verse 32) So Agrippa's not being much help at all in getting Paul off the hands Festus. Festus now is going to send him to Rome because he's appealed to Caesar. The problem is, Festus, as a new Procurator, this is the first difficult case he's handling under a new administration, he has to send charges with Paul, if it's serious enough for him to send him to Caesar, taking

Caesar's time, there has to be the charges right now. His problem now, there are no charges, really, worthy of death, worthy of any of the things made against him. So he struggles now, to put Paul in custody and now to send him finally, after two years, to Rome. Remember Acts 23:11, Jesus appeared to Paul in the prison, in the Antonio Fortress, and said **'Paul, you've given a good testimony, and you will also give testimony at Rome,'** that was over two years before this. Now, as we come to chapter 27, Paul will finally get on his way...[transcript of a connective expository sermon on Acts 26:1-32, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

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Where were the other 10 tribes of Israel during the time of Jesus and Paul's ministry? See
<https://unityinchrist.com/mathew/Matthew%202-1-23.htm>
and <https://unityinchrist.com/kings/1.html> and
<https://unityinchrist.com/kings/3.html>