

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson #99

COMMENTARY ON: 26:1-12

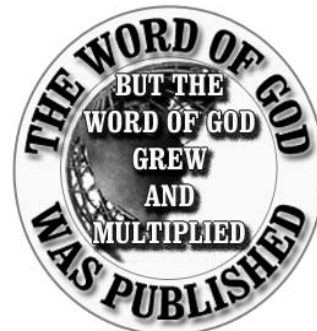
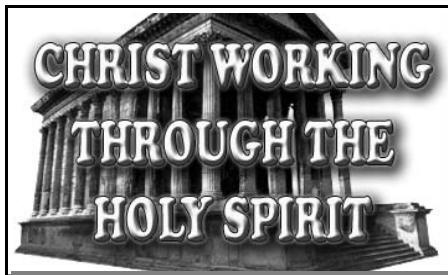
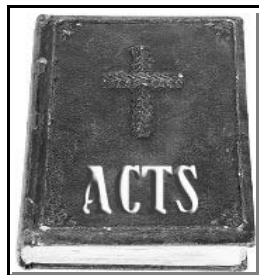
PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE AGRIPPA, #1

Given the opportunity to speak for himself, Paul does not hesitate to do so. He provides an overview of his life, accenting the time when Jesus Christ apprehended him en route to Damascus. It should not surprise us that some professing Christian teachers have criticized this defense, charging Paul with embellishing the account, and misrepresenting what took place when the exalted Christ confronted him when he was on his way to persecute believers. This lesson will confirm the absurdity of that claim. Standing before Agrippa, Paul faithfully presented himself, fellow believers in Christ, and conscientious Jews. He accents the fact of redemptive change, and sets before his audience the fact that he is no longer the man he was. He further places stress upon the centrality of Christ and the hope of the resurrection. This will provide ample proof that he has been misrepresented by his Jewish enemies. The expertise with which he speaks is noteworthy.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

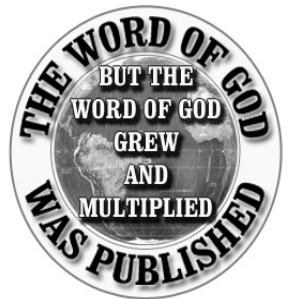
"... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ

The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 99



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED =Amplified Bible (1965), ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV =English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GNB=Good News (1966), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE= International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV= Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

GREEK LEXICON LEGEND

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE AGRIPPA, #1

“ 26:1 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 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 the 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 my voice against them. 11 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. 12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests.” (Acts 26:1-12)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Given the opportunity to speak for himself, Paul does not hesitate to do so. He provides an overview of his life, accenting the time when Jesus Christ apprehended him en route to Damascus. It should not surprise us that some professing Christian teachers have criticized this defense, charging Paul with embellishing the account, and misrepresenting what took place when the exalted Christ confronted him when he was

on his way to persecute believers. This lesson will confirm the absurdity of that claim. Standing before Agrippa, Paul faithfully presented himself, fellow believers in Christ, and conscientious Jews. He accents the fact of redemptive change, and sets before his audience the fact that he is no longer the man he was. He further places stress upon the centrality of Christ and the hope of the resurrection. This will provide ample proof that he has been misrepresented by his

Jewish enemies. The expertise with which he speaks is noteworthy.

GIVING AN ANSWER

Peter admonished believers concerning readiness: *“But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a*

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reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (1 Pet 3:15-17).

First, note that the context of this statement is suffering "for righteousness' sake" (v 14) – i.e. suffering for doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord. First, the declaration is made: "happy are ye." Other versions read, "you are blessed,"^{NKJV} "God will reward you for it,"^{NLT} "you are to be envied,"^{LIVING} "you should be happy,"^{IE} and "[you are] blessed (happy, to be envied)."^{AMPLIFIED} And why is it that those who are suffering because of their righteousness are said to be happy, blessed, or to be envied? **It is because of what the suffering confirms to the heart of the suffering one.**

- ⇒ The fact that they are not of the world has been recognized (John 15:19).
- ⇒ The sufferer is realizing the fellowship of Christ's sufferings (Phil 3:10).
- ⇒ The sufferer is partaking of the sufferings that have been left behind (Col 1:24).
- ⇒ God is with the sufferer "in trouble" (Psa 91:15).
- ⇒ To the degree the sufferings abound in us, so it is with the consolation by Christ (2 Cor 1:5).
- ⇒ The suffering brightens the prospect of reigning with Christ (Rom 8:17).

Second, the suffering ones must not be afraid of their oppressors or their "terror." Nor, indeed, are they to be "troubled" over the circumstances in which they find themselves. They can have "perfect peace" during the circumstance (Isa 26:3), knowing that He that is in them "is greater than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Third, the believer is required to sanctify the Lord God in their heart, making Him their chief joy and unquestionable Master. They are to be prepared at all times to give an answer of the hope that is within them, hereby accounting for their difference.

Fourth, their answer is to be attended by meekness before men, and fear before God. It is also to flow from a good conscience.

Sixth, the appointed outcome is that the persecutors may be ashamed, not being able to establish a legitimate charge against their holy manner of life. They may accuse falsely, and launch what appears to be an effective persecution. But in the end, if not during the process of time, they will ultimately be ashamed for what they have done.

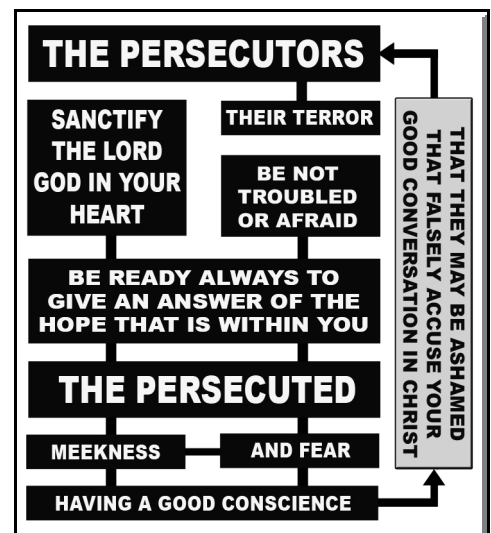
These things are being lived out by Paul. He has conducted his life within the circumference of an acute awareness of God, and has ordered his life so as to maintain that posture. He did this while he was preaching in foreign countries, among the Gentiles. He did it when he was laboring with the Jews. He did it as a free man, and when he was incarcerated as well. He did it when he was received by the brethren, or persecuted by his enemies. He did not alter

his message when men could not receive it. He did not embellish it when men did receive it. He did it when he had all that he needed, and he did it when he was suffering need.

THE EFFECT OF CORRUPT RELIGION

One of the dreadful effects of a corrupt religion is that it leaves the people fundamentally unprepared. Under such influence, the people are not prepared to be persecuted for righteousness' sake. They are not prepared to give an answer for the hope, which may or may not be in them. They are not prepared to serve the Lord. They are not prepared to die. They are not prepared to stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and, they are not prepared for eternity. Additionally, they are not prepared for varied trials. They are not prepared to take advantage of holy opportunities and open doors. They are not prepared for temptation, and, they are not prepared for the complexities of life. If the Lord is calling them, they are not prepared to hear. If the devil is wooing them, they are not prepared to resist. They are not prepared to put on the whole armor of God, and they are not prepared to come boldly to the throne of all grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need. They are not prepared to find the door of escape that accompanies every temptation. They are not prepared to throw down imaginations, and take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ. They are not prepared to fight the good of faith and to lay hold on eternal life.

Is there any person of sound mind who imagines that those whose preaching and teaching has left people in such a shape will be overlooked by the Savior of the body? If a message has



been preached that did not prepare people to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God, will that circumstance be ignored? Speaking of this very thing, the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write, *“Know ye not that ye [plural] are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man*

defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor 3:17). That is not an overstatement, and no person who defiles the temple of God with unsuitable people will escape the judgment that is foretold. This is a solemn warning to be taken seriously.

PAUL IS PREPARED

Having been living by faith and walking in the Spirit, maintaining fellowship with Christ, and fighting the good fight of faith, Paul is fully prepared for the opportunity now set before him. He is ready to give an answer for his hope.

PERMITTED TO SPEAK FOR HIMSELF

“ 26:1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself.”

PERMITTED TO SPEAK FOR HIMSELF

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. . . .” Other versions read, *“You have permission to speak for yourself,”* NIV *“You may put your cause before us,”* BBE *“You’re free to speak for yourself,”* GWN and *“You may speak in your defense.”* NLT

Under Roman law, Paul could not begin speaking on his own. He had to be

granted permission to do so. This was not a privilege he was given when standing before the Jews. However, more is involved here than Paul answering for himself. This is an opportunity to bear witness to the grace of God that was extended to Paul. It is also a chance to testify to the nature of the Lord’s Christ, and to the purpose of God Himself. Paul will seize this opportunity, taking the kingdom by force (Matt 11:12).

THEN PAUL ANSWERED FOR HIMSELF

“ . . . Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself.”

Immediately Paul answers,

speaking for himself. In unparalleled confidence, he stretches forth his hand in a gesture that denoted the sureness he possessed, and the boldness with which he will speak.

As when he spoke to others, he will not come *“with excellency of speech or of wisdom”* recognized by the world (1 Cor 2:1). His speech will be *“seasoned with salt,”* and he will know how he *“ought to answer every man”* (Col 4:6), using *“sound speech that cannot be condemned”* (Tit 2:8). He will *“walk in wisdom toward them that are without”* (Col 4:5), and will *“walk honestly toward them”* (1 Thess 4:12). His answer will be clothed with insight and wisdom.

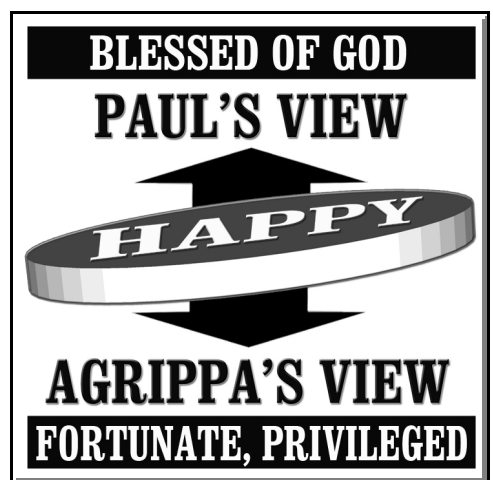
I SHALL ANSWER FOR MYSELF

“ 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.”

I THINK MYSELF HAPPY

“I think myself happy, king Agrippa . . .” Other versions read, *“I consider myself fortunate,”* NASB *“In my opinion, I am happy,”* BBE *“I consider myself highly favored,”* MRD *“I think it is a privilege,”* IE *“I am glad for this chance,”* CEV and *“I can’t think of anyone, King Agrippa, before whom I’d rather be answering.”* MESSAGE

As used here, the word *“happy”* is translated from the Greek word μακάριον, which means, *“of persons characterized by transcendent happiness or religious joy blessed, happy (MT 5:3); without religious connotation fortunate,”* FRIBERG *“pertaining to being happy, with the implication of enjoying favorable circumstances - ‘happy.’”* LOUW-NIDA *“blessed, fortunate, happy usually in the sense of privileged recipient of Divine favor.”* GINGRICH



This is the same word translated *“blessed”* in the beatitudes (Matt 5:5-11). Paul employed the word in regard to unparalleled blessings from the Lord (Rom 4:7-8). James did the same (James 1:12,25). Peter also used the word in this way (1 Pet 4:14; 4:14). But it is also used to denote a state of privilege or advantage in this world

(Rom 14:22; 1 Cor 7:40).

Here the word can be understood both ways. One is from the viewpoint of Paul – being blessed by God. The other is as it is perceived by Agrippa – fortunate or privileged. I understand that Paul used the word so it could be perceived both ways. So far as Agrippa was concerned, Paul considered it a privilege to speak before him. So far as his own heart was concerned, he knew that this was a door opened by the Lord, and was thus a blessing. The manner in which he lived made him adequate.

BECAUSE I SHALL ANSWER FOR MYSELF

“ . . . because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews.” Other versions read, *“make my defense against the accusations of the Jews,”* NIV *“to give my answer before you today to all these things which the Jews say against me,”* BBE and *“am defending myself against all the charges made against me by Jews.”* CJB

In his defense, Paul will conduct himself in strict keeping with the nature of spiritual life. He will not employ the wisdom of this world, nor will he appeal to it for certification of his innocence. On another occasion, when he was being criticized and questioned by some within the Corinthian church, he said he did not even dare to proceed in such a manner. *“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise”* (2 Cor 10:12).

He will not compare himself with others who spend their time boasting and commending themselves. He will not join the

league of those who compare themselves with one another, imagining that such a means of measurement is not flawed to the core. This devastates the ideas of heroes and those who model life after the flesh. All of that is worldly wisdom, and Paul will not descend into the plains of Ono (Neh 6:2) to indulge in such vanity. He will make no attempt to outboast those who are noted for commending themselves, who even *“call their own lands after their own names”* (Psa 49:11).

Neither will Paul speak of things that lie outside the circumference of the ministry to which he had been appointed. As he said elsewhere, *“But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us”* (2 Cor 10:13). That is, he

will not glory in something that lies outside of his own ministry and commission.

A KINGDOM APPROACH

Paul’s approach is that of the Kingdom of God, which is in *“righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit”* (Rom 14:17). This kind of mind-set is rarely seen in our time. This is because of the fierce competition that exists between sectarian bodies and purported ministries. It is not unusual to find scores of “ministries” appealing to the same people for support. This is highlighted by generally confining their appeals to members and organizations belonging to their sect. This very circumstance forces them into making the kind of comparisons Paul intentionally, zealously, and consistently avoided. Such things cannot possibly be right.

I KNOW YOU ARE AN EXPERT

“³ 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.”

Paul introduces his defense by appealing to Agrippa’s knowledge of the customs and questions of the Jews.

I KNOW YOU ARE EXPERT

“Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews . . .” Other versions read, *“customs and controversies,”* ^{NIV} *“all questions to do with the Jews and their way,”* ^{BBE} *“controversies and laws of the Jews,”* ^{MRD} *“customs and speculations that prevail among the Jews,”* ^{IE} *“religious customs and the beliefs that divide us,”* ^{CEV} *“Jewish customs and disputes,”* ^{GNB} and *“Jewish ways and all our family quarrels.”* ^{MESSAGE}

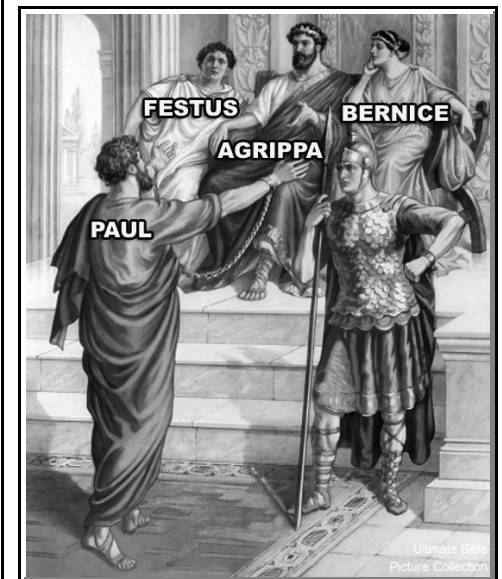
First, note they were a people identified by their manners and controversies – the Jews. They were apparently not caught up in the issues of the day – at least that is not how they were identified. **They had their own social identity, and could be easily distinguished from the rest of the people.** In fact, the very city of Jerusalem was a testimony to the identity of the Jews. It was not a mere tourist attraction, but a place occupied largely by Jews, and was the place where devout Jews

from around the world gathered for special occasions. It was the city where God Himself had placed His name (1 Kgs 11:36). None-Jews who did not live there were referred to as *“strangers.”* The prophet Joel even spoke of a time when such people would not pass through Jerusalem any more. *“So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more”* (Joel 3:17). I realize that has a strange sound, yet, its strangeness is only owing to the adoption of strange spiritual concepts.

Politically speaking, Agrippa was over Judaea, in which Jerusalem was located. Unlike some who had been over the Jews, Agrippa made it his business to know of their religion – of all their *“customs and questions.”* He doubtless did it for political advantage, yet Paul now makes a special note of his expertise in the Jewish way of life, and the kind of controversies they had among themselves. **There was obviously a clear distinction between them and the Gentiles, “which know not God”** (1 Thess 4:5), else there would have been no point to Paul’s words.

Speaking of the time when the veil will be lifted from Israel, the prophets said, *“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that*

is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you” (Zech 8:23). Although this was not fulfilled in Agrippa, we see a type of such inquiry in him. He made it his business to learn the ways of the people over whom he had political authority, and now Paul appeals to that knowledge.



When truth is available to a person, they are responsible for diligently seeking it out. Jesus said that the Queen of the south would rise up in the day of judgment with the generation of that time, *“and shall condemn it: for she came*

from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt 12:42).

When John the Baptist came on the scene, the people came to him (Matt 3:5; Mk 1:5; Lk 3:7; John 3:23).

Those living in the time when Jesus went about "doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil" were responsible to find Him, and hear what He had to say. Indeed, that is what people did (Matt 4:25; 8:1; 12:15; 13:2; 15:30; 19:2; Lk 5:15; 14:26).

The Case of the Lions

Here it is in order to mention an incident recorded in Scripture that reveals something of the Divine nature. **The event relates to people being in God's land that did not know God's ways.** It is recorded in the seventh chapter of Second Kings. Verse twenty-five of that chapter reads, "And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them."

Kgs 17:24). What he did not know is that these people were dwelling in God's own land (Isa 14:25; Jer 2:7). During the beginning of their occupancy of the land, "it came about at the beginning of their living there, that they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them which killed some of them"^{NASB} (2 Kgs 17:25).

Although they were heathen, and quite unlike the people of our nation, the occupants of the land figured out what the trouble was. They said to the king of Assyria, "The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore He hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land" (2 Kgs 17:26). The king commanded to find one of the priests and let him go and dwell in the land "to teach them the manner of the God of the land." Then one of the priests came and "taught them how they should fear the Lord" (2 Kgs 17:27-28).

The people of that text are to be commended for their wisdom. They did not

In the inordinate quest to get sinners into the congregations, could it be that we now have a situation where the people are no longer acquainted with the Head of the church, and what He requires of the people?

During the time of this text, the Lord had "removed Israel" out of the land of Canaan because of their sin, as He said He would do through Moses and the prophets (Lev 18:26-28; Jer 9:19; 16:17; Ezek 36:17-18). Only the tribe of Judah was left in the land (2 Kgs 17:18). Judah, however, did not keep the commandments of God either, but chose to walk in the statutes "which they made" (2 Kgs 17:19). That is when the Lord removed them from the land.

Having overcome Israel, the king of Assyria "brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof." (2

ask the king to send someone to teach them how to trap lions, or show them some way to repel them, or even hunt them down and kill them. They did not ask for the scholars to write a book on "How to Handle an Invasion of Lions," or to have a series of workshops on the subject.

Do you see any similarities to the condition of the churches of our day? Is there not a prevailing ignorance of the Head of the church and of what He requires? And, is it not time for something to be done about it?

In the inordinate quest to get sinners into the congregations, could it be that we now have a situation where the people are no longer acquainted with the Head of the church, and what He requires

of the people? The modern church has hired all manner of professed experts who are basically ignorant of the nature of God and Jesus, the accomplishments and provisions of salvation, and the objectives that are being fulfilled in Christ Jesus. So, in a manner of speaking lions have entered among the people and are devouring them. The youth are in a pitiful condition, marriages are falling apart, an astounding amount of divisions exist, immorality is pouring into the churches, and basic disinterest is sitting on the throne. Entertainment has been vaulted into prominence. Even though faith "comes by hearing," visuals are the thing of the day. The professed church is no longer a token of God's grace, but is rather a disgrace to the name of Jesus, and a cause for blaspheming the Word of God.

All of this has happened because the sheep have not been fed, the church has not been edified and built up, and the stress has been placed on recruitment – which is never mentioned to any of the churches of Scriptural record. These include Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica. No personal letters stress recruitment, including letters to Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Gaius, and the elect lady. **The stress is always placed on edification, strengthening the believers, and growing up into Christ in all things.** No congregation of Scriptural record was ever chided for being too small, or commended for being large. No group of believers was ever rebuked for not bringing others into the fold, or commended for being especially productive in that area. **Yet, such a marked emphasis has been placed upon enlarging the number of people that we now have a sea of spiritual infants who are unlearned and untaught.** They simply do not know the manner of the kingdom.

What we sorely need is faithful men who have the mind of Christ, who know the Lord, and are acquainted with the manner of the Kingdom. **Unless the people are taught of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Head of the body, the lions that have been loosed upon the church will continue to consume them.**

I know full well that this will not set well with some people, but these things still have to be said. **The wrong people are leading the thinking of the Christian masses, and their fruit confirms that to be the case.** At some point, the right people

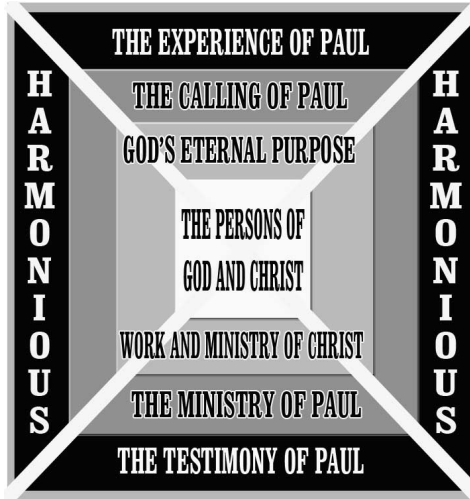
have to be asked about the situation – like those of the house of Chloe inquired of Paul (1 Cor 1:11).

HEAR ME PATIENTLY

“... wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.” Other versions read, “listen to me patiently,”^{NIV} “give me a hearing to the end,”^{BBE} and “hear me with indulgence.”^{MRD}

The word “patiently” comes from the Greek word μακροθυμῶς, which has the following lexical meaning: “with longanimity.”^{THAYER} and “therefore I beg you to listen to me without interrupting’ or ‘... without stopping me.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

The idea here is not merely enduring a lengthy speech, but permitting the presentation to be made in its entirety. The reason the request is made is that the words of Paul will be an intricately woven tapestry of thought. It will all fit together, being perfectly cohesive. The facts that are related will not only fit together in a logical manner, they will also be



perfectly harmonious with the nature of the God he serves and with the eternal purpose into which he had been called.

One of the great incongruities found in contemporary preaching and

teaching is that a considerable percentage of it is out of harmony with the nature of God and Christ, the eternal purpose of God, the work and ministry of Christ, and the various ministries that have been placed in the

church. Firmly resolved to bring help to people, as opposed to doing the will of God, men do not often ponder the Divine nature, what God has purposed, what Christ has and is doing, and the intention of the gifts placed within the body of Christ. **Having adopted another agenda, and given priority to other things, much labor is expended just as though God did not exist, and His purpose had never been determined.**

Therefore, in a quest for the glory of God, Paul pleads with Agrippa to hear him without interruption as he testifies to the nature of his calling, his life, and his ministry. It will all blend perfectly with both the nature and the purpose of God.

MY MANNER OF LIFE FROM A YOUTH

“⁴ My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews.”

Here we are exposed to a Jewish family whose lives were shaped around the Law and identity with God. **This is how the Jews were divinely cultured – to be around their own people, and learn the manner of life taught under the Law.** Solemnly they were told not to learn the way of the heathen (Deut 12:29-30; 18:26-30), or intermarry with them (Ex 34:16; Deut 7:3-4; Josh 23:12-13). When they about to enter the promised land, God commanded the people, “When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, **thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations**” (Deut 18:9).

In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, many Israelites had failed to live isolated lives from the heathen, and a point was made of it by those noble leaders (Ezra 9:1-7; Neh 13:23-28). They had lived in contradiction of the manner of the Jews – a manner that God had commanded.

The American church has not done well in teaching this kind of

mindset. In fact, they have brought the ways of the world into the church. Worldly concepts of music have been brought in, together with a worldly manner of dress. There was a time, for example, when harlots were known by the way they dressed –i.e. “The attire of an harlot” (Prov 7:10). In our time, however, and even in some congregations, it would be difficult to distinguish a harlot from some of the other women in the congregation. This is not to mention importing the world’s manner of raising money, appealing to the minds of people, and many other such things.

In the thunderous words of Paul it is written, “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father*

unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor 6:14-18).

One can hardly misunderstand such a strong affirmation – written to the **church** at Corinth. **God’s reception of them as sons and daughters was conditioned on their separateness from unbelievers.** There may be those who feel this is too strong, but it is nevertheless the truth, and they will be judged by it in the day of the Lord.

My point here is that Paul was reared with this kind of perspective. Those who are sloppy about their association with the ungodly – no matter who they are – are far beneath the manner in which the family of Paul lived. This is not to mention how men are to live within the conscience framework of the New Covenant. The notion that you must become friends with worldly people to win them to Christ is wholly unsupported by the Word of God. It is nothing more than the utterance of worldly wisdom which is **not** from above.

Paul now founds his defense on his separateness from the heathen from the time he was a child. **If this was an unwise**

manner in which to have been raised, it would certainly not have been a good way to testify before king Agrippa. The effects of Paul's testimony will demolish any imagination that sees the manner in which he was raised being an unwise and unproductive one.

MY MANNER OF LIFE FROM MY YOUTH

"My manner of life from my youth . . ." Other versions read, *"from my youth up,"*^{NASB} *"ever since I was a child,"*^{NIV} *"from my early years,"*^{BBE} *"from my childhood,"*^{GENEVA} *"the earliest days of my youth,"*^{GWN} *"from my earliest childhood,"*^{LIVING} and *"since I was young."*^{GNB}

Paul testified to this period of life before the Jews who at first had accused him. This opposition was fomented by the Jews from Asia, who probably were not acquainted with Paul's past life. *"I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day"* (Acts 22:3).

The word "youth" is translated from the Greek word νεότητος. The lexical definition of this word is "youthful age . . . boyhood,"^{THAYER} and "an early period of life, youth."^{FRIEBERG} This word is also used to describe Timothy: *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"* (1 Tim 4:12). If this is considered according to the flesh, it would be the final stage of youthfulness. However, even with Timothy. It was his rearing when he was a child that is accredited with making him *"wise unto salvation"* (2 Tim 3:15).

The rich young ruler who asked Jesus what to do to obtain eternal life was told to keep the commandments. When Jesus specified some of them, the young man replied, *"All these things have I kept from my youth up"* (Matt 19:20; Mk 10:20; Lk18:21). The word that describes the man being "young" at the time is a different word: νεανίσκος. This word is said to be descriptive of a man under forty years of age.^{STRONG'S} and is lexically defined as "a young man."^{THAYER/UBS} "a young man beyond the age of puberty, but normally before marriage - 'young man.'"^{LOUW-NIDA}

However, the word used in our text accents the period of life prior to manhood –

a time beyond infancy, and when the mind could be shaped by being subjected to the teaching of the Law.

Another example of someone who

versions – namely, that Paul was brought up among the Jews in Jerusalem, specially at the feet of Gamaliel.

Of course, this is a strange sound to

I have observed over the years the damaging effects of children not being among God's people. While there are varying views on this subject, the people of God are to take the greatest care concerning the influences brought to bear upon their children.

was raised among the people of God and according to the Law from a very young age was Samuel (1 Sam 1:22-28; 2:18).

AT JERUSALEM

" . . . which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem . . ." Other versions read, *"was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem,"*^{NASB} *"in my own country and also in Jerusalem,"*^{NIV} *"among my own people and in Jerusalem,"*^{NRSV} *"among my own nation in Jerusalem,"*^{DARBY} and *"among my own nation at Jerusalem,"*^{GENEVA/NAB/PNT/RWB/TNT/WEB/ILT/EMT/LITV/MESSAGE}

There is a difference in the way the various versions represent this verse. Some read, *"in my own country AND also at Jerusalem."*^{NIV} Other versions reflecting this view include the following: NASB, NRSV, RSV, ASV, BBE, CJB, CSB, ERV, ESV, GWN, MRD, NAB, NAS, NAU, NET, NIB, NJB, NLT, LIVING, IE, WEYMOUTH, WILLIAMS, MONTGOMERY, CEV, GNB. Those representing the text as saying the people among whom he was raised were "IN" or "AT" Jerusalem include the following: KJV, NKJV, DARBY, DOUAY, GENEVA, PNT, RWB, TNT, WEB, NLT, AMPLIFIED, EMTV, LITV, MESSAGE.

Earlier, when speaking to the Jews, Paul specified more of the details, saying that he was *"brought up in this city [Jerusalem] at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers"* (Acts 22:3). The distance from Jerusalem to Tarsus was slightly more than 376 miles. That would make it highly unlikely that there were seasonal visits to Jerusalem. I take it that the text means precisely what is represented by the older

the average professing Christian of our time, just as the raising of Samuel and Timothy. Professing Christians are sorely lacking in their perception of influences upon their young children. Paul does not say he was raised among mere relatives, but among his people at Jerusalem. That is not the manner in which relatives according to the flesh would be described.

I have observed over the years the damaging effects of children not being among God's people. While there are varying views on this subject, the people of God are to take the greatest care concerning the influences brought to bear upon their children.

A mind shaped by the Word of God is more disciplined, versatile, and is more apt to serve the Lord. This is because the most advanced expression of thought is found in Scripture, which is God-breathed. Oh, that more professing Christian parents were keenly aware of this.

KNOW ALL THE JEWS

" . . . know all the Jews." Other versions read, *"all the Jews know,"*^{NKJV} *"the Jews all know,"*^{NIV} *"is known by all the Jews,"*^{RSV} *"all the Jews have knowledge of,"*^{BBE} *"the Jewish leaders are well aware,"* and *"is known by all the Jews; [they are aware]."*^{AMPLIFIED}

Just as Timothy, when young, was known among all the brethren (Acts 16:1-2), so Paul in his youth was known among all the Jews. With the help of proper parental direction, he had been given the advantage of the spiritual resources available to him – and all of the Jews knew it. That is why those who stoned Stephen laid their garments at his feet as the stoning began (Acts 7:58).

THEY KNEW, IF THEY WOULD TESTIFY

“⁵ Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.”

Paul is building a case that

found in the Temple, talking to the doctors of the Law, at the age of twelve (Lk 12:42-47). **Judaism was a framework in which such a youthful posture was encouraged, and for which abundant provision was made.** If men took due

Other versions read, *“if they were willing to testify,”* ^{NKJV} *“and can testify if they are willing,”* ^{NIV} *“if they would give witness,”* ^{BBE} *“if they want to,”* ^{IE} and *“if they would but testify to it.”* ^{WILLIAMS}

The argument Paul is presenting is simply this: what he has said is glaringly obvious. He is not boasting in himself, but stating the obvious. He made it obvious elsewhere that he refused to boast in something about himself that was not true. Thus he wrote.

The modern Christian culture is not even conducive to this kind of development. Provisions for the young are by no means found in men of the caliber of Gamaliel. There are rather game rooms, retreats of pleasure, and a plethora of activities in which the teaching of Scripture is a strange thing.

⇨ **REMAINING WITHIN THE CONFINES OF HIS COMMISSION.** *“But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you”* (2 Cor 10:13). The Amplified Bible reads, *“We, on the other hand, will not boast beyond our legitimate province and proper limit, but will keep within the limits [of our commission which] God has allotted us as our measuring line and which reaches and includes even you.”*

accounts for his moral and spiritual change. Yet, it did not change the fact that he was living in all good conscience before God, unless it be that this was clarified and enhanced by the newness of life. This explanation will serve to show the falsity of the charges laid against him.

THEY KNEW ME FROM THE BEGINNING

“Which knew me from the beginning . . .” Other versions read, *“from the first,”* ^{NKJV} *“for a long time previously,”* ^{NASB} *“for a long time,”* ^{NIV} *“for quite some time,”* ^{CSB} *“from the outset of my life,”* ^{DARBY} *“heretofore,”* ^{GENEVA} *“from the start,”* ^{NAB} *“from time past,”* ^{NET} *“that I have always been,”* ^{LIVING} *“of old,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“have always known,”* ^{GNB} and *“who watched me grow up.”* ^{MESSAGE}

When was *“the beginning”* to which he refers? It is the time when he was a youth, brought up in the city of Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel. He was apparently the kind of young man that stood out, noted for his seriousness, attentiveness, and devotion.

Occasionally, in our society, unusual children can be noted who devote themselves to some noble pursuit. However, it is most unusual when such a youth can be found that is devoted to religion – particularly a study of the Scriptures. Yet, this is the kind of person Paul was from a youth. In this respect he bore a marked resemblance to the Lord Himself, who was

advantage of it, a Joseph could assume significant responsibilities at the age of seventeen, and an Aaron, Miriam, or Moses could be raised to lead. A young Samuel could serve in the tabernacle. A young David could be ready for exploits while still in his teens. A young Josiah could be reared for kingship. If there was no other reason for this manner of culturing, Jesus Christ was reason enough.

The modern Christian culture is not even conducive to this kind of development. Provisions for the young are by no means found in men of the caliber of Gamaliel. There are rather game rooms, retreats of pleasure, and a plethora of activities in which the teaching of Scripture is a strange thing. In other words, even though the era of the New Covenant is one of superior provision and opportunities, the Gentile church has managed to occupy a position that is much lower than that which existed under an inferior covenant. **All of this has happened under the watch of a supposedly professionally trained and educated clergy.** It will be a sad day, indeed, when they are called to give an account for the environment they produced, either directly or indirectly. One thing is for sure, **Paul would have had no decided advantage in the nominal church of our day, or the educational institutions associated with it.**

IF THEY WOULD TESTIFY

“ . . . if they would testify . . . ”

Integral to his commission was the insight he had been granted concerning God’s eternal purpose, the nature of justification by faith, the accomplishments of Jesus, etc. **He did not speak about things he did not understand, or that he had not been given to see.** When Jesus made Paul a minister *“to make all men see,”* He first illuminated Paul. What was made clear to Paul is what he labored to *“make all men see”* (Eph 3:2-12).

⇨ **NOT BOASTING IN ANOTHER MAN’S LABORS.** *“Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men’s labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly”* (2 Cor 10:15). The Amplified Bible reads, *“We do not boast therefore, beyond our proper limit, over other men’s labors, but we have the hope and confident expectation that as your faith continues to grow, our field among you may be greatly enlarged, still within the limits of our commission.”*

In this regard, Paul was not

propagating a movement that someone else had started – a practice that is common in our day.

When the person speaking for God confines himself to what he has been given to see, and refuses to boast in what someone else has done, he will be used of God to strengthen the disciples and minister to those who are of a humble and contrite spirit. He will also be blessed by the Lord, who remains with those He has illuminated and sent out. **This circumstance changes the way a person looks at, what is called, a theological education.** While there is certainly a place for benefitting from what others have seen, all preaching and teaching must be confined to what the speaker has personally seen and heard from the Lord.

All of this has a great deal to do with Paul's defense, for he is going to show that he was not motivated by a hatred for the Jews, or a desire to oppose their customs. He was doing what he had been commissioned by the Lord to do.

I LIVED A PHARISEE

“ . . . that after the most strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.” Other versions read, “strictest sect of our religion,”^{NEJV} “that division of our religion which is most regular in the keeping of the law,”^{BBE} “the most exact sect of our worship,”^{YLT} “the strictest of Pharisees when it comes to obedience to Jewish laws and customs,”^{LIVING} and “the Pharisees obey the laws of the Jewish faith more carefully than any other group of Jewish people.”^{IE}

McClintok and Strong's Cyclopedia says of the word Pharisee, “. . . properly denotes one who is separated, i.e., by special practices; or, as the dictionary called *Aruch* (s.v.) defines it, “one who separated himself from Levitical impurity and Levitically impure food” (comp. also Talmud, *Chagigah*, 18 b; *Sabbath*, 13 a). The derivation of it from פָּרָשׁ, in the sense of *unfolding, explaining*, and the assertion that the followers of this sect were called *Pharisees – interpreters of the Bible*, in contradistinction to the Sadducees, who adhered to the letter of the Scriptures.”

In his former life, Paul even excelled as a Pharisee, which was the most disciplined part of the Jewish family. Many of these men gloried in appearance, appearing righteous outwardly, but inwardly full of dead men's bones (Matt 23:28). However, there is no record of Paul, when Saul of Tarsus, being such a man. His life was marked by an acute consciousness of God (Acts 23:1). He advanced “in the Jews’

religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.” (Gal 1:14). He not only excelled among the Jewish populous, but among the Pharisees themselves.

While many professed servants of God point out their immoral and iniquitous past, Paul pointed out his zealousness among the Jews, and wholehearted devotion to the Lord. Elsewhere he affirms he “was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Tim 1:13). The instant he was confronted with the risen Christ, he ended his campaign against him. Paul will testify powerfully to this fact.

The point here is that Paul was never known for being a profligate, hypocritical, or causing a tumult among the Jews. **Charges against him that affirmed such things could not be substantiated in any phase of his life – before or after his conversion.**

Paul's defense will rest upon the powerful witness of moral and spiritual change – even when the past involved a zealousness for God that is marked by ignorance. We have among us some who earnestly sought to please God while entertaining a misapprehension of the nature of God and of His requirements for men. Such people are not at all common in our time, but methinks they are duly noted

becoming a new creation. Someone who is “weak in the faith” is not noted for immorality and ungodliness. That condition is one that describes a deficiency in understanding, as expounded in the fourteenth chapter of Romans (Rom 14:1-15; 1 Cor 8:1-7).

When it comes to immorality, or the outward overflow of iniquity, we are told, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, **let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.** For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them” (Eph 5:3-7). **There is to be a total intolerance of such expressions in the household of faith** (1 Cor 5:9-12). This is not a sign of weakness in the faith, but of the dominance of the flesh, which was crucified when we were baptized into Christ (Rom 6:6; Gal 5:24).

Had Paul formerly been an immoral person who indulged the sins of the flesh, his testimony would have been less strong. However, as all Jews knew, he was noted for his devotion to the Lord and commitment to Jewish manners. It is not likely that a man such as this would be

While many professed servants of God point out their immoral and iniquitous past, Paul pointed out his zealousness among the Jews, and wholehearted devotion to the Lord.

in the heavenly realms.

A word ought to be said concerning the hypocrisy of a claim of being a professing Christian, yet remaining basically unchanged. **When a person is more like the world than Jesus, it is questionable that they have been converted.** Nothing in Scripture suggests a continuance in worldly ways follows being born again, or

noted for agitating and denigrating the Jews “throughout the world,” as the Jews had charged (Acts 24:5). Not only were their charges unfounded, they contradicted the life and conduct of Paul from the time of his youth.

How we raise our children can be a distinct advantage or disadvantage to them when they come of age.

THE HOPE OF THE PROMISE

“ 6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers.”

Paul will now show that he has actually embraced what was promised by God to the Jewish fathers – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Rather than being a renegade Jew who had abandoned Jewish manners, he was really a genuine Jew who had taken the promise of God seriously and embraced what was made known of it to him. **By inference, this means that the Jews who were accusing him were actually the renegades, who had refused to believe the promises, even though Paul himself had declared the fulfillment of them to the very crowd that was accusing him.**

THE HOPE OF THE PROMISE

“And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise . . .” Other versions read, *“because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers,”* ^{NIV} *“on account of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors,”* ^{NRSV} and *“on the ground] of the hope of that promise made to our forefathers by God.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul’s life was ordered by his embrace of the promises God made to the fathers. It was the interpretation of that circumstance that dictated the charges raised by the Jews. What they had seen in Paul was his zeal for the promise. What they thought, is that it was opposition to the Jews.

Some, because of their own ignorance, view this as a total misrepresentation of the charges leveled against Paul. However, this is in perfect keeping with the circumstances. Paul’s life was ordered by his embrace of the promises God made to the fathers. **It was the interpretation of that circumstance that dictated the charges raised by the Jews.** What they had seen in Paul was his zeal for the promise. What they thought, is that it was opposition to the Jews.

The phrase *“the hope of the promise”* is an interesting one. It not only speaks of believing *“the promise,”* but of shaping one’s life around it, so that the

whole of life is lived in expectation of what God promised. From Adam to Abraham (approximately 1900 years), the godly lived in anticipation of the fulfillment of a single promise: *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Gen 3:15). Ironically, this word was delivered to the devil, with the whole human race being present. Technically, Adam and Eve overheard this word, but they apparently took hold of it, and passed it along to succeeding generations, keeping hope alive.

Technically, “hope” is produced by believing the promise of God. In our text, it is specifically, *“the promise”* pertaining to the coming Seed of Abraham, and to His administration of the New Covenant. Thus Peter declared, *“Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days”* (Acts 3:24). Paul also preached this powerfully in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia: *“And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,*

God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David” (Acts 13:34).

There are other references to this promise.

⇨ *“And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as **He spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which***

have been since the world began” (Luke 1:69-70).

⇨ *“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm **the promises** made unto the fathers”* (Rom 15:8).

⇨ *“And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make **the promise** of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of **promise**: but God gave it to Abraham by **promise**”* (Gal 3:17-18).

The prophets were given to see various aspects of the promise made to the fathers, and they declared it, even though its fullness was not known to them (1 Pet 1:11-12). Here is a brief sampling of their words.

⇨ **MOSES – A PROPHET.** *“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken”* (Deut 18:15; Acts 3:22-23).

⇨ **DAVID – A KING.** *“Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee”* (Psa 2:6-7; Matt 3:17; Heb 1:5).

⇨ **ISAIAH – A GLORIOUS BRANCH.** *“In that day shall the Branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel”* (Isa 4:2; 11:1; Jer 33:5; Zech 3:8; 6:12; John 1:14).

THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER. *“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.*

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa 9:6-7).

⇒ **JEREMIAH – A MEANS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS.** *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer 23:5-6; Rom 3:22; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9).*

⇒ **EZEKIEL – A SHEPHERD.** *“And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd” (Ezek 34:23; John 10:11; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4).*

⇒ **DANIEL – ONE WITH DOMINION.** *“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan 7:13-14; Matt 28:18; 1 Cor 15:27; Eph 1:20-22; Phil 2:9-11; 1 Pet 3:22).*

⇒ **MALACHI – HEALING AND RESTORATION.** *“But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall” (Mal 4:2; John 1:4,8; 8:12; Acts 13:47; 26:18; 1 John 2:8).*

When promises such as these are believed, they generate a hope that does not make ashamed.

The promise and the promises were all summarized in a person: The Lord Jesus Christ. Commensurate with His exaltation the “day of salvation” began, the New Covenant was inaugurated, and a state of imputed, yet genuine, righteousness was found in those who were joined to Him. The promise would culminate in the resurrection from the dead, when the last remnants of Adam, the body, would be exchanged for an immortal body – “a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the

heavens” (2 Cor 5:1).

MADE OF GOD UNTO OUR FATHERS

“ . . . made of God unto our fathers.” Other versions read, “what God has promised our fathers,”^{NIV} “made by God to our ancestors,”^{NRSV} “made by God to our forefathers,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “that promise Made to our forefathers by God.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The words translated “the fathers” (τοὺς πατέρας) has the following lexical meaning: “literally, nourisher, protector, upholder . . . properly, equivalent to generator or male ancestor . . . the founder of a race or tribe, progenitor of a people, forefather so Abraham is called”^{THAYER} “originator.”^{LEH}

As used here, there are several things inherent in the word “fathers” (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), of whom, Abraham was the progenitor, or the one from whom the Jewish race came.

⇒ **PROTECTOR.** It was the remembrance of Abraham that kept these people from being destroyed, even though were a wicked and gainsaying people. There were times when Israel’s protection was traced to God remembering “his covenant with Abraham” (Ex 2:24; 32:13; Psa 105:42; Deut 9:5,27; Mic 7:20).

⇒ **UPHOLDER.** The promise of the Jews in the working of the Lord was largely owing to Abraham. He is the one with whom the covenant was originally made. It was the covenant made with Abraham that was renewed to Isaac and Jacob (Lev 26:42; 2 Kgs 13:23).

When it comes to the matter of God revealing His purpose, He does not reveal it directly to everyone. That is why our text says that Paul and others lived

When it comes to the matter of God revealing His purpose, He does not reveal it directly to everyone. That is why our text says that Paul and others lived in the hope of the promise – a promise that was given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They held on to that ancient promise, and to the periodic development of it by the prophets.

⇒ **PROGENITOR.** Abraham is the one from whom the race came. Isaac and Jacob were the ones through whom the race was narrowed. This was a miraculous beginning, for Abraham “was as good as dead” when the promise was given to him (Heb 11:12). Yet, his faith was strong, and he “being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom 4:20).

⇒ **NOURISHER.** Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were the nourishers of the race, because the root-promise was given directly to them (Ex 3:6; 4:5; Matt 22:32; Acts 3:13). This circumstance is what accounts for “the root and fatness” of the natural olive tree of Israel (Rom 11:17).

in the hope of the promise – a promise that was given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They held on to that ancient promise, and to the periodic development of it by the prophets.

In this defense, Paul gives no recognition to Jews who were not holding to the promise, and living in the hope of its fulfillment. He knew very well that “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom 9:6). While this may appear to be a small point, it does reveal the manner of the Kingdom. This is also true of all of his writings. He never gives official recognition to those who have no evidences of belonging to Christ. His letters, however, are written so that such people must evaluate themselves, or examine themselves to see if they are in the faith. He does not go out of his way to condemn those whose lives are questionable. He does, however, speak and write in such a manner that will never leave the indolent and disobedient thinking they are approved.

INSTANTLY SERVING GOD DAY AND NIGHT

^{7a} *Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.*

OUR TWELVE TRIBES

“Unto which promise our twelve tribes . . .” Other versions read, *“to this promise our twelve tribes,”* ^{NKJV} *“our whole twelve tribes,”* ^{DARBY} *“the twelve tribes of Israel,”* ^{NLT/LIVING/GNB/MESSAGE} and *“all the twelve tribes.”* ^{IE} The literal translation of this clause reads, *“into which the two-ten tribes of us.”* ^{INTERLINEAR}

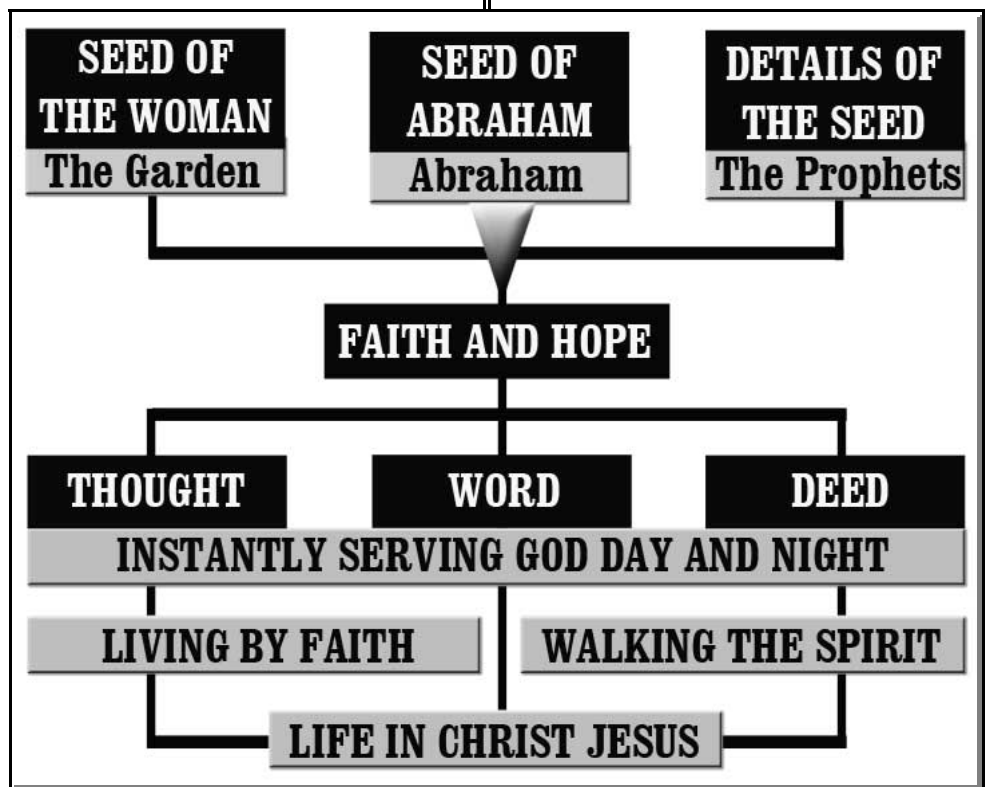
The idea here is that all of the true Israelites with the twelve tribes have been focused upon the fulfillment of the promise of reference. This equates with the expression, *“all the tribes of the children of Israel”* (Rev 7:4), *“all Israel”* (Rom 11:26), and *“the whole house of Israel”* (Ezek 37:11). The commitment of God is this, *“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins”* (Rom 11:26-27). Jeremiah related this to the New Covenant. *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: **If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.** Thus saith the*

LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD” (Jer 31:31-37).

This is a high view, and Paul is speaking in strict accord with the revelation of God concerning Israel. In the Revelation, Jesus revealed to John that the earth would not be destroyed until the servants of God were sealed. He then heard a voice saying

“they earnestly serve God,” ^{NKJV} *“Earnestly worship,”* ^{NRSV} *“working and waiting,”* ^{BBE} *“serving incessantly,”* ^{DARBY} *“worship with intense devotion,”* ^{GWN} *“with earnest prayers,”* ^{MRD} *“fervently worship,”* ^{NAB} *“constant in worship,”* ^{NJB} *“zealously worship,”* ^{NLT} *“assiduously serving,”* ^{WEB} *“intently night and day serving,”* ^{YLT} *“strive night and day,”* ^{LIVING} *“intense devotedness,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *“fervently worship [without ceasing] night and day.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Every professing Jew was not living



that 144,000 were sealed as God intended. **This vast number was specifically identified as “all the tribes of the children of Israel.”** Showing the completeness of the work, each tribe is said to have had 12,000 who were sealed. This is a picture of all Israel being saved – that is, the true Israel that was within the fleshly Israel. This is not a prophecy of the Gentiles, but of the natural olive tree into which they have been grafted.

INSTANTLY SERVING GOD DAY AND NIGHT

“... instantly serving God day and night . . .” Other versions read, *“earnestly*

in such a manner – but the real Jews were – everyone who was *“a Jew inwardly”* (Rom 2:28).

HOPE TO COME

“... hope to come.” This was the hope related to the coming Messiah through whom the Abrahamic promise of blessing would be realized.

Conscientious Jews were alert, and watching for the fulfillment of the promise. When Jesus was born, aged Anna was present when Simeon blessed Mary, Joseph, and the Holy Child. Immediately she

left the Temple and “spake of Him that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Lk 2:38). When John the Baptist commenced to prepare the way of the Lord, “the people were in expectation” (Lk 3:15). After Philip had heard Jesus he found Nathanael, “and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). When the woman of Samaria had conversed with Jesus at the well of Jacob she said, “is not this the Christ?” (John 4:29). When other Samaritans had heard Jesus they said, “we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).

Now Paul is identifying himself with those who believed the promise and were waiting for its fulfillment. He testifies of the ideal, not the faltering. He does not recognize those who are not serving God in this hope as legitimate Jews, even though their lineage went back to Abraham.

This is now a foreign way of

MARKS OF THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS

None of these are declared to be things those in Christ **should** be. They are not a statement of goals, but of reality. These are distinguishing traits that have resulted from the “operation,” or working, of the Lord.

- ⇒ They have a new heart (Ezek 36:26).
- ⇒ They have a new spirit (Ezek 36:26).
- ⇒ Their stony heart has been removed (Ezek 36:26).
- ⇒ Their hearts have been circumcised (Deut 30:6; Phil 3:3; Col 2:11).
- ⇒ They are the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13-14).
- ⇒ They have forsaken all to follow Christ (Lk 14:33).
- ⇒ They are taught by God (John 6:45; Eph 4:20-21).

- ⇒ They have crucified the flesh (Gal 5:24).
- ⇒ They have been raised up and made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph 2:6).
- ⇒ They are created for good works (Eph 2:10).
- ⇒ They worship God in the Spirit (Phil 3:3).
- ⇒ They rejoice in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:3).
- ⇒ They have no confidence in the flesh (Phil 3:3).
- ⇒ They are complete in Christ (Col 2:10).
- ⇒ They are dead, and their lives are hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3).
- ⇒ They have been made partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14).
- ⇒ They have been enlightened (Heb 6:4).
- ⇒ They have tasted of the heavenly gift (Heb 6:4).
- ⇒ They have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4).
- ⇒ They have tasted of the good word of God (Heb 6:5).
- ⇒ They have tasted of the powers of the world to come (Heb 6:5).
- ⇒ God’s laws have been put into their minds (Heb 8:10).
- ⇒ God’s laws have been written upon their hearts (Heb 8:10).
- ⇒ They know the Lord (Heb 8:11).
- ⇒ They have been illuminated (Heb 10:32).
- ⇒ They are “not of them that draw back unto perdition” (Heb 10:39).
- ⇒ They are come “unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant,

However, there are certain evidences that a person is a real follower of Christ, and has really been accepted by God. It is not fashionable to review such matters, and some even think it is intrusive to do so, charging the person who looks for such evidences as being judgmental.

thinking. Today, people **assume** others are believers, living in hope, without any substantial evidence of such a condition. In fact few people look for any kind of confirmed evidence of people being in Christ. It is enough that they are identified with a particular sect.

However, there are certain evidences that a person is a real follower of Christ, and has really been accepted by God. It is not fashionable to review such matters, and some even think it is intrusive to do so, charging the person who looks for such evidences as being judgmental. **However, through Moses, the Prophets, the Lord Jesus, and the Apostles, the Lord has addressed this matter, and it is our business to be knowledgeable of what has been said, and to receive it without doubting or equivocation.**

- ⇒ They have been chosen out of the world, therefore the world hates them (John 15:19; 17:14,16).
- ⇒ They are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom 8:9).
- ⇒ They are washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor 6:11).
- ⇒ They are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).
- ⇒ They are the children of God by faith (Gal 3:26).
- ⇒ They have been baptized into Christ and put on Christ (Gal 3:27).
- ⇒ God has sent the Holy Spirit into their hearts because they are sons (Gal 4:6).

and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:22-24).

- ⇒ They have been born again (1 Pet 1:23).
- ⇒ They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a peculiar people (1 Pet 2:9).
- ⇒ They are strangers and pilgrims in the world (1 Pet 2:11).
- ⇒ They have “*escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*” (2 Pet 1:4).
- ⇒ Being saved by hope (Rom 8:25), they are purifying themselves even as Jesus is pure (1 John 3:1-3).
- ⇒ They do not remain in sin, and cannot go on sinning (1 John 3:9).
- ⇒ They have passed from death unto life (1 John 4:14; John 5:24).
- ⇒ They love others who are begotten of God (1 John 5:1).
- ⇒ They overcome the world (1 John 5:4).

Is it possible to be a child of God who is in Christ Jesus, or accepted by God, yet any of these be missing? Is there a single one of these benefits that make the saints vulnerable, or contribute to a slothful manner of life? Do any of them encourage sin, excuse sin, and leave one susceptible to the devil?

- ⇒ They do not live in sin, they keep themselves from sin, and the wicked one does not touch them (1 John 5:18).

Is it possible to be a child of God who is in Christ Jesus, or accepted by God, yet any of these be missing? Is there a single one of these benefits that make the saints vulnerable, or contribute to a slothful manner of life? Do any of them encourage sin, excuse sin, and leave one susceptible to the devil? **Is it remotely possible that such marvelous things could be possessed, yet emit no evidence of their presence?** It is true that there is growth in these matters. However, that does not erase the fact of their

presence.

If they are true – and that is unquestionably the case – they will assist in fulfilling the Divine requirement: “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*” (2 Cor 13:5). **If they are too difficult to receive, then do whatever is necessary for them to be received without doubting or equivocation.**

A people without an identity is not a people. Yet, the modern church is increasingly being noted for a near-total lack of evidence of being indwelt by Deity and possessing a motivating hope.

ACCUSED FOR THE HOPE

^{ab} **For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.**” Other versions read, “*and for this hope,*”^{NASB} “*because of this hope,*”^{NIV} “*concerning this hope,*”^{ASV} “*in connection with this hope,*”^{BBE} and “*and for that hope.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

As I have already pointed out, some commentators are persuaded that Paul misrepresented his case in these words. But they are wrong – seriously wrong. Paul is not looking at his arrest from the Jews point of view. **Rather, he is considering the actions to which they have objected as springing from his hope.** He is viewing the events through the lense of spirituality reality.

Hope – the kind of hope that is based upon the revelation of Divine intention in the Scriptures – has a vivifying impact upon the soul. John says that it compels the one possessing it to “*purify himself even as He is pure*” (1 John 3:3). Elsewhere, Paul says that we are “*saved by hope*” (Rom 8:24).

That is, the life of the saved is shaped by what they are anticipating at the coming of the Lord. At that time they will be loosed from the bondage of corruption – this vile body (Phil 3:20-21). Spiritual haziness and knowing in part will be a thing of the past (1 Cor 3:12). All of the effects of sin will be removed, including tears, pain, sorrow, death, crying, the curse, and night (Rev 21:4; 22:3-4).

Such things as being confessed by Jesus before God and the holy angels (Lk 12:8; Rev 3:5), being praised by God (1 Cor 4:5), and Jesus coming forth to serve us (Lk 12:37) compel us to live differently. Those who live in hope ponder reigning with Christ (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 22:5), judging the world and angels (1 Cor 6:2-3), and receiving the kingdom (Dan 7:18,22,27; Lk 12:32). When they look at the difficulties and vicissitudes of this life, they conclude that they “*are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Rom 8:18). Their minds have been so impacted that they think

of “*whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*” (Phil 4:8). Their affection is set on things above, and not on things on the earth (Col 3:1-2), and they are looking “*for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*” (Heb 11:10). They are willing to forfeit all competing interests to “*win Christ,*” and be “*found in Him*” not having a righteousness of their own (Phil 3:7-9). Because of their hope they “*abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul*” (1 Pet 2:11). When they consider life, they conclude that it is better to be “*absent from the body and present with the Lord*” (2 Cor 5:8).

Peter reminds us that God “*according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (1 Pet 1:3). Paul tells us that the same grace

that saves us teaches us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts, living *“soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,”* all the while *“looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ”* (Tit 2:11-13). Further *“having no hope”* is a mark of those who are *“without God in the world”* (Eph 2:12). There simply is no excuse for a failure to proclaim this hope, or for it to be absent within the professing Christian.

PAUL’S HOPE MADE HIM WHAT HE WAS

Paul was not a political reactionist, nor was he a religious sectarian. He did not bring a rabble-rousing message, nor had his attention been captured by political or social circumstances. Whether it was coming to Jerusalem, going into the Temple, or attending the synagogues – it was his hope that compelled him to do as he did.

He would not have lived or spoken as he did were it not for the hope he possessed. That is precisely why he said his hope was the cause for which the Jews had falsely accused him.

THE MODERN ABSENCE OF A

DOMINATING HOPE

The absence of this dominating hope within nominal Christendom is a betrayal of its alienation from God. Preaching about the coming of the Lord and the consequent glory to be enjoyed by the elect is nearly a thing of the past. Songs of heaven are disappearing from the song books – at least where Christians dare to use hymn books, refusing to cave in to the demands of spiritual juveniles – and that is the most polite way of referring to them.

The modern church has shifted its focus from the body to the individual, and from conformity to the image of God to the resolution of personal problems. The earthly family has now upstaged the family of God, and husbands and wives are now given more attention than Christ and His betrothed bride. The world is stressed more than the world to come, and involvement in politics has been deemed more important than involvement in the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Is all of this simply an innocent departure from the most noble. Is it something the church has been commissioned to do? Indeed not! This is

evidence that the masses of professing Christendom had removed themselves from the one who called them into the grace of Christ, just as surely as the Galatians (Gal 1:6). God is known less now than He was at the commencement of the church. The incident involving Ananias and Sapphira appears to be totally acceptable when compared with what the conditions that are being made known in the modern church. In today’s society they probably would have been counseled about stewardship. However, their offense would certainly not have been viewed as a critical one.

This is the era of religious talk and powerless form. The body of Christ is no longer viewed as the vehicle through whom Christ is working. Now it is a body of people that contribute to career development and the amassment of riches.

And why is this so? **It is because of the absence of hope – sanctifying hope!** It may be affirmed in creedal statements. However, if a person is not purifying himself, it is because he is lacking hope. If he is steadfast, it is because he has the anchor of hope, firmly fixed in the heavenly realm. We are, indeed, saved by hope.

WHAT IS SO INCREDIBLE ABOUT IT?

“ 8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”

The candor of Paul is refreshing. He is speaking with a king and before a number of political and military dignitaries. Yet, he reasons with them without any apparent restraint. This is because stands up under any kind of assault, and it challenges the greatest of intellects. There is no cause for any believer to fear affirming the truth before those who are skeptical of it.

WHY SHOULD IT BE THOUGHT A THING INCREDIBLE?

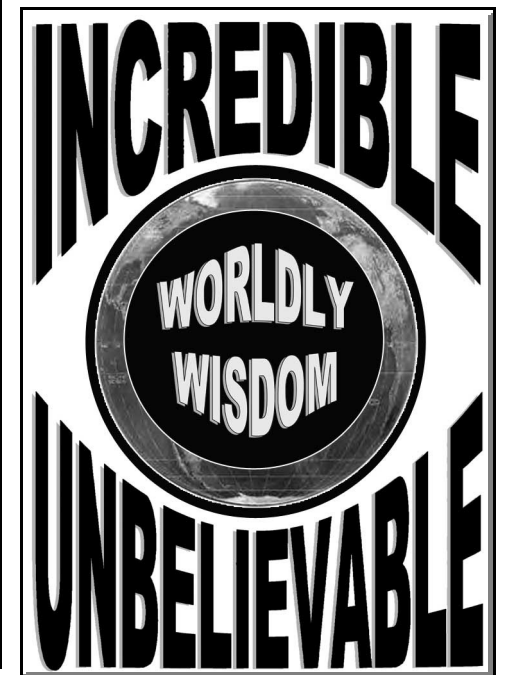
“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you . . .” Other versions read, *“incredible among you?”* ^{NASB} *“why should any of you consider it incredible?”* ^{NIV} *“thought incredible by any of you?”* ^{NRSV} *“why is it judged incredible with you?”* ^{ASV} *“Why, in your opinion, is it outside belief?”* ^{BBE} *“Why do you people consider it incredible,”* ^{CJB} *“Why do all of you refuse to believe?”* ^{GWN} *“Why is it thought unbelievable*

among you,” ^{NAB} *“But is it a crime to believe in the resurrection of the dead? Does it seem incredible to you”* ^{LIVING} *“Why do you think it is impossible,”* ^{IE} *“Why is it deemed with all of you a thing past belief,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“Why should any of you doubt,”* ^{CEV} and *“I can’t see why it’s a criminal offense to believe.”* ^{MESSAGE}

The word *“incredible”* is translated from the Greek word *ἀπίστων* which is the negative of faith: not faith, or unbelievable. It’s lexical meaning is, “1- not to be trusted, perfidious; 2- incredible; 3- incredulous,” ^{THAYER} and “impossible to be true . . . untrustworthy, substantially unreliable.” ^{FRIBERG} Something that is *“incredible”* is perceived as outside the boundary of human reasoning. That is why no significant thought is given to the matter thought to be so classified. English synonyms are, “incogitable, inconceivable, insupposable, unbelievable, unimaginable, unthinkable.” Related words are specified as “absurd, outlandish, preposterous, ridiculous; impossible, untenable.” ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}

Worldly wisdom cannot extend one millimeter beyond the creation. The domain

from which it gathers temporal. The sole



Perhaps of the resurrection of the dead was actually preached as it should be, we would find that many people claiming to be Christian think it is an incredible thing. After all, there were some in Corinth who said “there is no resurrection of the dead”

means of acquiring valid information is the human senses. Confined to such a realm, and to senses related exclusively with the body, the man of this world considers anything outside of that domain to be “incredible,” or “unbelievable.” Worldly wisdom does not think within the context of Almighty God. It has no access to faith, which enables the one possessing it to believe God without any equivocation whatsoever.

Unbelief is to be challenged, for it is totally unreasonable. This is particularly true because of how God views worldly wisdom – as “foolishness.” Thus it is written, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain” (1 Cor 3:19-20). Rather than attempting to establish the wisdom of God, Paul simply asks why anyone would think what God has affirmed is incredible.

THAT GOD SHOULD RAISE THE DEAD

“. . . that God should raise the dead?” Other versions read, “that God raises the dead,”^{NKJV} “if God does raise the dead,”^{NASB} “for God to make the dead come to life again?”^{BBE} and “that God can bring dead people back to life?”^{GENEVA}

This is the that offended the Athenian philosophers, causing some of them to mock what Paul preached (Acts 17:18,21). Throughout the book of Acts, much is said about the resurrection of the dead being preached, with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead being pivotal (Acts 2:31; 3:15; 4:2,33; 17:18,32). The apostles also make a point of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 6:14; 15:12-57; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:10-11,21; 1 Thess 4:14-16; 2 Tim 2:18; Heb 6:2).

One cannot help but wonder why so very little is being said these days about the resurrection of the dead. Perhaps it is because it seems to incredible to be the subject of preaching. I have noticed over the years that as soon as the theological spotlight is turned to things beyond this world, many preachers and teachers become noticeably uncomfortable. They do not appear able to traffic in the realms of the unseen, or deal with matters that follow death and the passing of the present heavens and the earth.

I remember several years ago when I attended a local Preaching and Teaching. Various topics had been assigned to each speaker concerning the fundamentals of the faith. One speak had been assigned the subject of the resurrection of the dead. When

this up-and-coming preacher began to speak, he stated that if he had a choice in the matter, he would have chosen a subject that was more relevant. In a classic error of judgment, he allowed the speaker to continue.

Actually, that young man had given utterance to the opinion of many better known preachers who rarely, if ever, speak on the subject of the resurrection of the dead. The Master Teacher, Jesus Christ the Lord, addressed this subject several times (Matt 22:23-32; 24:31; 25:1-13; Mk 12:18-27; Lk 14:14; 20:27-38; John 5:21,25,28-28; 6:49,40,44,54; 11:23-25; 14:19).

If God is going to raise the dead, that fact alters how life is viewed.

- ⇨ It means men will give an account for how they lived.
- ⇨ It means God will be vindicated in everything He has said.
- ⇨ It means that the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished.
- ⇨ It means that death does not end it all.
- ⇨ It implies that it is on the part of wisdom to prepare for the resurrection. Or, as Paul put it, to “attain to the resurrection of the dead” (Phil 3:9).

Perhaps of the resurrection of the dead was actually preached as it should be, we would find that many people claiming to be Christian think it is an incredible thing. After all, there were some in Corinth who said “there is no resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor 15:12).

CONSCIENTIOUS IN OPPOSITION

“⁹ I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”

I THOUGHT WITH MYSELF

“I verily thought with myself. . . .” Other versions read, “I myself thought,”^{NKJV} “I thought to myself,”^{NASB} “I too was convinced,”^{NIV} “I myself was convinced,”^{NRSV} “truly, I was of the opinion,”^{BBE} “I used to think,”^{CJB} “I myself supposed,”^{CSB} “I indeed

did formerly think,”^{DOUAY} “at first, resolved in my own mind,”^{MRD} and “I myself indeed was [once] persuaded.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul is confessing to a former way of thinking. With him, this was not merely a matter of hatred, or objecting to a message that was contrary to what he had embraced. **This was a matter of conscience – conscience toward God.** Individuals who live for themselves alone will not be able to comprehend what motivated Paul. Even

though his view was wrong, he held it as a proper view before God Almighty. This confirms the truth of what he had formerly confessed to the Jews who sought to kill him: “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1).

The extreme rarity of this kind of mind-set in our time makes it most difficult for some to receive what Paul is saying. He was living purposefully for the Lord, and

considered it his duty before the Lord to *“do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”*^{NIV} **He was wrong, but he was not hypocritical.** His conclusions were incorrect, but they were not the result of a devotion to sectarianism.

THAT I OUGHT TO DO MANY THINGS

“ . . . that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” Other versions read, *“had to do many things hostile,”*^{NASB} **“ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth,”^{NIV} **“it was right for me to do a number of things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth,”^{BBE} **“it was my duty to do all I could to combat,”^{CJB} and **“I must do many things against.”**^{IE}******

Saul of Tarsus thought he was doing what was right. He knew what the Law had said about false prophets, and felt

that Jesus of Nazareth was in that category. Concerning false prophets, Moses wrote: *“But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die”* (Deut 18:20).

Concerning those who followed other gods, the Law was clear. *“If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare,*

neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people” (Deut 13:9). In his former mindset, Paul thought he was carrying out those Divine mandates in arresting those who were followers of Jesus. This accounts for the words that follow. He had never set out to be a trouble maker, but one who served God.

The historical account of his activity confirms his zeal in this matter. *“As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word”* (Acts 8:3-4). And again, *“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest”* (Acts 9:1).

I SHUT THE SAINTS IN PRISON

“ 10a 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.”

With great power Paul is bearing witness to a former way of thinking – one that he had long ago abandoned, having seen the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

I DID IT IN JERUSALEM

“Which thing I also did in Jerusalem . . .” Other versions read, *“this is just what I did in Jerusalem,”*^{NASB} *“and in Jerusalem I did so,”*^{CJB} *“this I actually did in Jerusalem,”*^{CSB} and *“that was how I acted in Jerusalem.”*^{WEYMOUTH}

Paul not only thought he should do whatever he could against the name of Jesus of Nazareth, **he conducted his life in strict harmony with his conviction.** He did this *“even in Jerusalem,”* where a mighty move of God had taken place, and where he was well known, having been brought up there.

“ . . . and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests.” Other versions read, *“many of God’s people,”*^{CJB} *“many Christians,”*^{GWN} *“the holy ones,”*^{NAB} *“God’s holy people,”*^{NJB} *“many believers,”*^{NLT} and *“many of the [faithful] saints (holy ones).”*

AMPLIFIED

Here again, the sloppiness of some of the versions is made known: i.e. *“Christians,”*^{GWN} and *“believers.”*^{NLT} The words translated *“the saints”* are τῶν ἁγίων, which means, “pure, sinless, upright, holy . . . set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively his . . . saints,”^{THAYER} “as human beings belonging to God; saints, God’s people,”^{FRIBERG} “pertaining to being holy in the sense of superior moral qualities and possessing certain essentially divine qualities in contrast with what is human - ‘holy, pure, divine,’”^{LOUW-NIDA} and “set apart for God . . . holy . . . pure upright.”^{GINGRICH} There is no way the Greek words used here can be properly translated *“Christians”* or *“believers.”* There are specific Greek words for these terms, and they are not even remotely connected with the word used here.

Observe how Paul refers to the people he once opposed: *“saints,”* or *“holy*

ones.” This is certainly not how Paul thought of them when he persecuted these people – even though that is precisely what they were. He now saw them as they really were – so closely knit to the Jesus, whom he formerly thought he should oppose. That very Jesus said of Saul’s persecution of them, *“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?”* (Acts 9:4). Paul now has *“the mind of Christ”* concerning His people, and therefore refers to them as they really are.

THE SAINTS IMPRISONED BY AUTHORITY FROM THE CHIEF PRIESTS

Other versions read, *“did I lock up . . . in prison,”*^{NASB} *“put many . . . in prison,”*^{NIV} and *“threw many . . . in prison.”*^{CJB}

This was done in Jerusalem by authority of the chief priests. The record of this persecution does not detail the matter of

It appears that Paul was designated by the Jewish officials as the leader of a persecution against the saints in Jerusalem. Later he will say that he expanded the persecution by obtaining letters of approval to go into other regions.

imprisonment, although it is inferred. It is written, he had *“authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name”* (Acts 9:14).

It appears that Paul was designated by the Jewish officials as the leader of a persecution against the saints in Jerusalem. Later he will say

that he expanded the persecution by obtaining letters of approval to go into other regions that were in other countries, extending the persecution..

I GAVE MY VOICE AGAINST THEM

^{10b} **... and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.** Other versions read, *“and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them,”* ^{NKJV} *“and when they were put to death, I gave my decision against them,”* ^{BBE} *“and when they were put to death, I brought the sentence,”* ^{DOUAY} *“I voted to have them killed every time a vote was taken,”* ^{GWN} and *“when they were put to death by them, I took part with those that condemned them.”* ^{MRD}

This describes Paul activity in Jerusalem. The record in Acts reads, *“As for*

Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3). Pointing out that this went on for an extended period in Jerusalem Luke reports, *“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord . . .”* (Acts 9:1).

Speaking of his past, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *“I persecuted the church of God”* (1 Cor 15:9). He wrote to the Galatians, *“I persecuted the church of God and wasted it”* (Gal 1:13). To the Philippians he wrote of

his past life, *“concerning zeal, persecuting the church”* (Phil 3:6). He testified to Timothy, *“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief”* (1 Tim 1:13).

Perhaps you have heard some refer to Paul as a former murderer. It is interesting to note that he is never so identified in Scripture, nor does Paul confess to ever having killed a Christian. Such a thing may be possible, but a point is never made of Paul being such a man.

I PUNISHED THEM, COMPELLED THEM TO BLASPHEME, AND PERSECUTED THEM

¹¹ **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.**

Paul now provides some details that are not provided by Luke in earlier accounts. The extent of his persecution is a testimony to how zealous he was, even though it was wrongly directed.

I PUNISHED THEM OFT IN EVERY SYNAGOGUE

“And I punished them oft in every synagogue . . .” Other versions read, *“I punished them often in all the synagogues,”* ^{NASB} and *“many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished.”* ^{NIV}

It is estimated by Josephus that there were fifty-eight synagogues in old Jerusalem. ^{WIKIPEDIA} It is not certain how many synagogues existed in Jerusalem during the time of Saul’s persecution, but it appears as though there were many.

Those who oppose believers gathering in special buildings often say the early church met in the homes of individuals.

That this did occur cannot be denied (Acts 2:46; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phile 1:2). Those references, however, hardly justify the development of a teaching that confines the gathering of the people of God to a house. Believers are also said to have gathered in the Temple (Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46; 5:42). In this text we find they were also known to meet in the synagogues.

Saul was relentless in his opposition of the followers of Christ. He pursued them *“in every synagogue,”* where they were apparently prone to meet. Many of them no doubt bore witness to their faith, else I do not know how Saul would have been able to identify them. The synagogue did provide an environment in which the people could speak and testify to what they had seen.

I COMPELLED THEM TO BLASPHEME

“ . . . and compelled them to blaspheme . . .” Other versions read, *“tried to force them to blaspheme,”* ^{NASB} *“tried to make them blaspheme,”* ^{NRSV} *“I strove to make them blaspheme,”* ^{ASV} *“forcing them to say things against God,”* ^{BBE} *“forced them to curse the name of Jesus,”* ^{GWN} *“I punished them in an attempt to force them to*

blaspheme,” ^{NAB} and *“I was constraining them to speak evil”* ^{YLT}

The word *“compelled”* means *“to constrain by force and threats.”* ^{STRONG’S} **It appears that here the emphasis is on the intention of Saul rather than the accomplishment of that intention.** It may very well be that a few weak souls did actually deny Christ, but I doubt that it was many, if, indeed, any at all. Else there would be little point to referring to the saints being imprisoned and finally put to death.

BEING EXCEEDINGLY MAD AGAINST THEM

“ . . . and being exceedingly mad against them . . .” Other versions read, *“exceedingly enraged,”* ^{NKJV} *“furiously enraged,”* ^{NASB} *“obsession against them,”* ^{NIV} *“in raging fury,”* ^{RSV} *“burning with passion,”* ^{BBE} *“wild fury,”* ^{CJB} *“more and more against them,”* ^{DOUAY} *“violently opposed,”* ^{LIVING} *“crazed against,”* ^{IE} and *“in my bitter fury.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The words *“exceedingly mad”* are translated from a single Greek word (περισσως). Its lexical meaning is, *“over and above, more than is necessary, superadded . . . superior, extraordinary, surpassing, uncommon,”* ^{THAYER} *“of what exceeds usual expectation extraordinary, remarkable.”*

In other words, this was not simply an authorization to arrest followers of Chris, but a mandate to do so. It appears that the chief priests designated Saul to head up this mission of opposition.

FRIBERG Like a blazing inferno that intensified in heat, so the opposition of Saul of Tarsus to *“the saints”* kept growing, and never waned. This was not the rage of maniac, but a calculated and intelligent opposition that looked for opportunities to harass the followers of Christ.

Saul did this out of devotion to God, thinking that this rapidly spreading movement was an encroachment upon the truth that had been vouchsafed to the Jews. He was

increasingly zealous in his opposition, but it was not a good cause. By the grace of God, he was forgiven of this outrageous conduct, because he did it *“ignorantly and in unbelief”* (1 Tim 1:13).

This confirms what ignorance and unbelief can prompt an otherwise devoted person to do.

I PERSECUTED THEM UNTO STRANGE CITIES

“ . . . I persecuted them even unto

strange cities.” Other versions read, *“foreign cities,”* ^{NKJV} *“far-away towns,”* ^{BBE} *“cities outside the country,”* ^{CJB} *“cities out of our own land,”* ^{DARBY} *“cities outside Jerusalem,”* ^{GWN} *“cities in foreign lands,”* ^{LIVING} *“other towns,”* ^{IE} and *“distant towns.”* ^{WILLIAMS}

Here again, some of the versions do little more than document the ignorance of the translators. Inappropriate expressions include *“cities outside Jerusalem,”* *“other towns,”* and *“distant towns.”* The reference is to cities outside of *“the land of the Jews”* (Acts 10:39). The next verse will name one of those cities, which was in Syria.

It ought to be noted that following Saul’s conversion, and commencing with him being referred to as *“Paul,”* this same man was as zealous to strengthen the people of God as he once was to oppress them. He focused his energy on another cause.

I WENT TO DAMASCUS WITH AUTHORITY

“¹² Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests.”

I WENT TO DAMASCUS WITH AUTHORITY AND COMMISSION

Other versions read, *“authority and orders,”* ^{BBE} *“authority and power,”* ^{CJB} *“authority and permission,”* ^{DOUAY} *“authority and license,”* ^{MRD} *“authorization and commission,”* ^{NAB} and *“full powers and a commission.”* ^{NJB}

The lexical meaning of the word translated *“commission”* is “full authority to carry out an assignment, commission, trust.” ^{FRIBERG} **In other words, this was not simply an authorization to arrest followers of Chris, but a mandate to do so.** It appears that the chief priests designated Saul to head up this mission of opposition.

The actual account of this commission reports that Saul was on the initiative to seek such authority. *“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem”* (Acts 9:1-2). Paul also referred to this when testifying before the Jews who had dragged him from the Temple, initiating this whole episode. *“As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished”* (Acts 22:5).

Although the circumstance is anything but ideal, we see here how

the chief priests sought to protect the sanctity of synagogue gatherings. They granted the needed authority, as well as orders to carry out the mandate, to interrupt synagogue proceedings by arresting and binding those who were of *“this way”* – the path involved in following Jesus Christ.

Those who heard of his mission said that he *“destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?”* (Acts 9:21).

Early believers were alert to the dangers facing them, and communicated with one another concerning them. This is indication of how they were knit tightly together – a circumstance that is rarely found in our time. Today, the shift has been made to individuals rather than the body.

CONCLUSION

The whole point of Paul’s testimony is that he has changed. He has always been devoted to God, as those who knew him could testify. However, something has altered the way he thought, and he has

become another man. It is that change that accounts for what he preached and how he went about it. That is what brought an end to his opposition of *“the saints.”* He now had embraced the Jesus whom he once opposed.

We are now living in an era in which moral and spiritual change is, for all practical purposes, ignored. Were Paul to be accepted into a modern recovery group, he would be required to say,

"I am a persecutor, that is my nature, and I confess I am unable to control this tendency." He would probably become a part of a special "persecutors" group that was struggling with overcoming this wretched tendency that continued to dominate them.

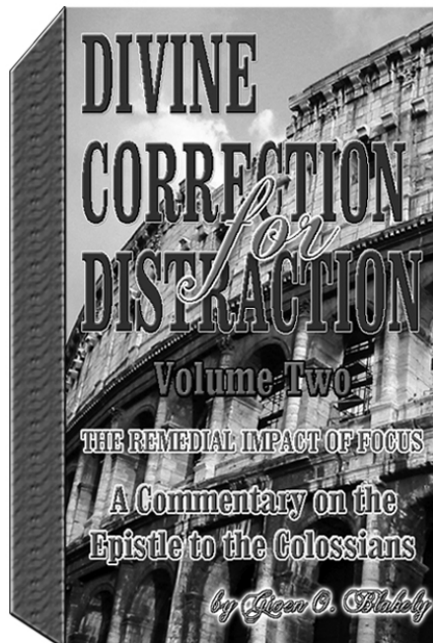
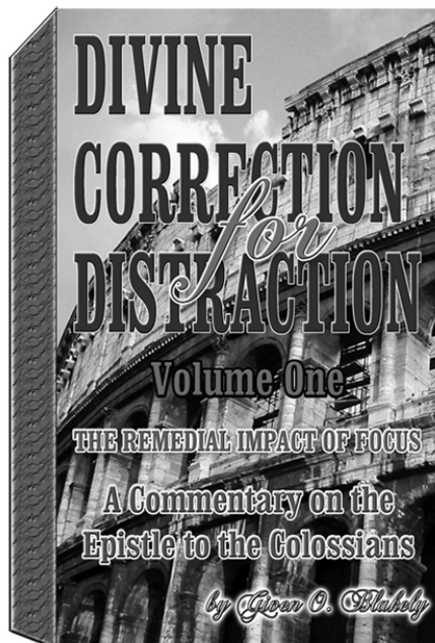
If all of that sounds ridiculous, it is because it is. Paul not only ceased to be a persecutor, he became the most prolific edifier and strengthener of the body of Christ the world has ever known. He was genuinely changed, given a new heart and a new spirit. His heart

had been circumcised, and he had been made a partaker of Christ. That is the point he is making in this defenses, and it is a point that was beyond all controversy. Such is the manner of the Kingdom.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 7/30/10. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The one hundredth lesson will cover verses 13 through 23 of the twenty-sixth chapter: "PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE AGRIPPA, #2." Paul provides a rather detailed account of his apprehension and commission by Jesus Christ. He does not address the charges against him directly, but shows in a most effective way how his entire life was a testimony to the absence of self-centeredness and opposition to the Jews. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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