

# 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 # 101

### COMMENTARY ON: 26:24-32

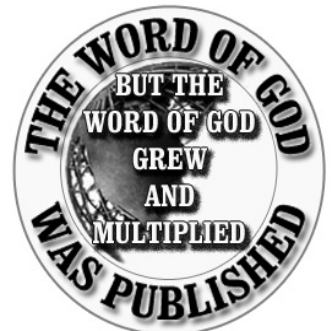
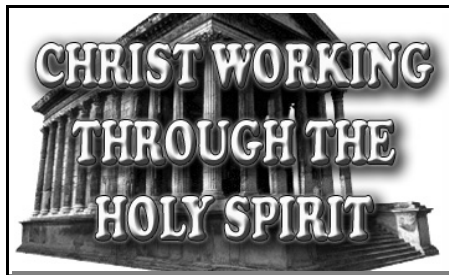
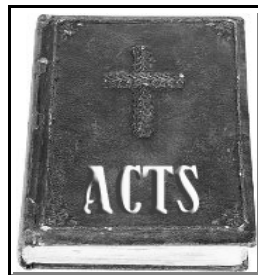
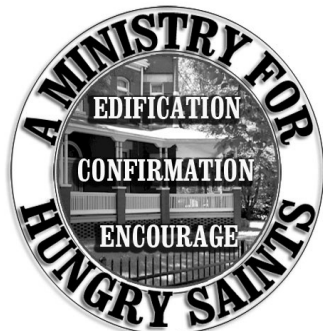
#### RESPONSES BY FESTUS AND AGRIPPA

Upon hearing the testimony of Paul, Festus shouts out in derision that Paul's much learning has made him mad, or insane. Paul answers that he was not mad, and that this ought to be evident, for the things of which he had spoken were done publicly, and not in privacy. He then focuses his attention on Agrippa, he apparently being more alert and sensitive. He asks him if he believes the prophets, also stating that he knows Agrippa does. The king then confesses that he, because of Paul's words, was almost persuaded to be a Christian. Paul then expressed his desire that Agrippa and those with him were altogether persuaded to be as himself - except for his bonds. Agrippa, Festus, Bernice and those who were with them then arose and went into another area privately. Agrippa then acknowledged Paul had done nothing worthy of death, and could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. Little did he know that this was all being worked by God.

### 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)

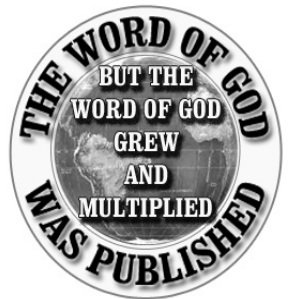


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 101



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).

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.

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

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.

RESPONSES BY FESTUS AND AGRIPPA

“ 26:24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. 26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. 29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. 30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: 31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. 32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.” . . . . . (Acts 26:24-32)

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT  
Upon hearing the testimony of Paul, Festus shouts out in derision that Paul's much learning has made him mad, or insane. Paul answers that he was not mad, and that this ought to be evident, for the things of which he had spoken were done publicly, and not in privacy. He then focuses his attention on Agrippa, he apparently being

more alert and sensitive. He asks him if he believes the prophets, also stating that he knows Agrippa does. The king then confesses that he, because of Paul's words, was almost persuaded to be a Christian. Paul then expressed his desire that Agrippa and those with him were altogether persuaded to be as himself – except for his bonds. Agrippa, Festus, Bernice and those who were with

them then arose and went into another area privately. Agrippa then acknowledged Paul had done nothing worthy of death, and could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar. Little did he know that this was all being worked by God.

LIVING SOLELY FOR THE LORD  
There is only one kind of life that is

Paul's stirring testimony and witness cause responses from both Festus and Agrippa, and they are quite different – by Given O. Blakely

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acceptable to God – one that is lived solely for the Lord. It is written that Jesus “*died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again*” (2 Cor 5:15). This is something that both the novice and the mature can do. **The new convert and the one seasoned in the ways of the Lord can live solely for the Lord.** When it comes to priorities, Jesus said the first things to be sought are “*the Kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (Matt 6:33). No other quest can be allowed to be primary!

This solitary manner of living is found throughout the apostolic doctrine. Redemption does not simply set men free to roam in the open field of self satisfaction. It rather frees to live unto the Lord without a condemning conscience, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- ⇒ **WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.** “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also SHOULD walk in newness of life*” (Rom 6:4).
- ⇒ **TO BE MARRIED TO CHRIST AND BEAR FRUIT UNTO GOD.** “*Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye SHOULD be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we SHOULD bring forth fruit unto God*” (Rom 7:4).
- ⇒ **TO SERVE IN NEWNESS OF SPIRIT.** “*But now we are delivered from the law, that*

*being dead wherein we were held; that we SHOULD serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter*” (Rom 7:6).

- ⇒ **NOT LIVE FOR SELF, BUT UNTO JESUS.** “*And that He died for all, that they which live SHOULD not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again*” (2 Cor 5:15).
- ⇒ **TO BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLAME.** “*According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we SHOULD be holy and without blame before Him in love*” (Eph 1:4).
- ⇒ **WALK IN THE WORKS GOD ORDAINED.** “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we SHOULD walk in them*” (Eph 2:10).
- ⇒ **BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH.** “*That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish*” (Eph 5:27).
- ⇒ **ABSTAIN FROM FORNICATION AND KNOW HOW TO POSSESS OUR VESSELS IN SANCTIFICATION AND HONOR.** “*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you SHOULD know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor*” (1 Thess 4:4).
- ⇒ **LIVE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST.** “*Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we SHOULD live together with Him*” (1 Thess 5:10).
- ⇒ **LIVE SOBERLY, GODLY, AND RIGHTEOUSLY.** “*Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we SHOULD live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*” (Titus 2:12).
- ⇒ **THAT WE SHOULD BE A KIND OF FIRSTFRUITS OF HIS CREATION.** “*Of His own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we SHOULD be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*” (James 1:18).
- ⇒ **TO SHOW FORTH THE PRAISES OF GOD.**

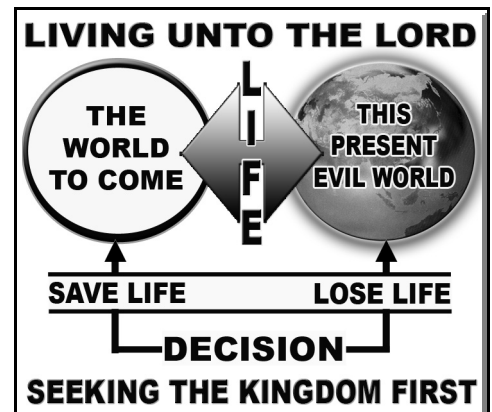
“*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye SHOULD show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (1 Pet 2:9).

- ⇒ **TO FOLLOW IN CHRIST’S STEPS.** “*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye SHOULD follow his steps*” (1 Pet 2:21).
- ⇒ **TO LIVE UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS.** “*Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, SHOULD live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed*” (1 Pet 2:24).
- ⇒ **LIVE THE REST OF OUR TIME TO THE WILL OF GOD.** “*That he no longer SHOULD live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God*” (1 Pet 4:2).

That will suffice to confirm that the intention of salvation has been spelled out in remarkable detail. The question occurs to me if it is even possible to conclude a person is saved if they are consistently lacking the things declared to be the objective of salvation. I understand this is very difficult for some to receive, and I certainly am not going to sit in the Judges chair – at least not until Jesus comes. However, it seems to me that the examination of self should include a survey for the presence of these stated objectives.

### THE POINT OF IT ALL

The point of bringing up these matters is that they were actually lived out by Paul. That is precisely why he was able to seize the opportunity set before him, and give a defense that would glorify God, edify the saints, and convict sinners.



Paul’s stirring testimony and witness cause responses from both Festus and Agrippa, and they are quite different – by Given O. Blakely

Many people are unable to enter open doors set before them because they are not actually living for God. They have adopted an inferior agenda for their lives, and are too close to the world. As a result, they are not able to recognize when an opportunity is placed before them to bring glory to God and be used in His work. In fact, they do not think of life from this perspective.

One of the key aspects of the “falling away” of which the apostle speaks (2 Thess 2:2; 2 Tim 3:1-5) is the impact of false teaching. The fact that it is false, and even a “lie,” is not its only trait. **It also produces lives that are, at the very least, skewed in the wrong direction – toward this present evil world.** Truth sanctifies (John 17:17). The lie defiles and subverts. Whether men wish to acknowledge it or not, the way

professing Christians live is the direct result of the doctrine they have embraced. Their view of what God is doing in Christ directly impacts on how they live.

Paul sets a sterling example for us, maintaining his faith under great duress, and immediately laying hold of the opportunities set before him. Now, we will see the effectiveness of his insightful defense.

## FESTUS SAID WITH A LOUD VOICE

<sup>26:24</sup> **And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.”**

Keep in mind what Paul has just

Thus Paul’s defense is interrupted. And at what point was this? What was Paul saying that moved the interruption to take place? Here is what he had just finished saying. *“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing*

*“You rave.”*<sup>LITV</sup>

This is the same charge some of the people made against Jesus (John 10:20). When Rhoda reported to the disciples that Peter, who had been imprisoned, was at the door, they responded, *“Thou art mad”* (Acts 12:15). Paul said if a stranger or unbeliever came into their assembly, and they all were speaking in tongues, the stranger would *“say that ye are mad”* (1 Cor 14:23). What does this expression mean?

This expression simply means Festus thought Paul was not in control of his mind. He was not in his right mind, and was not being rational or logical in what he was saying. To Festus, Paul’s presentation was not reasonable. That was the assessment of Festus when he heard of a vision of a risen Jesus, the commission of one who had died, and of angels, and the resurrection of the dead. **Perhaps if there was more talk about these things today, we would find that this kind of assessment is still quite common.** That is because the truth concerning Jesus Christ does not fit within the framework of human opinion. It is something that has to be received by faith, not by human reasoning.

### THY MUCH LEARNING HATH MADE THEE MAD

*“ . . . much learning doth make thee mad.”* Other versions read, *“much learning is driving you mad,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“your great learning is driving you insane,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“too much learning is driving you insane,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> *“your great learning has made you unbalanced,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“too much study is driving you mad,”*<sup>CSB</sup> and *“much study hath enraged thee.”*<sup>MRD</sup>

**With a brashness that is fostered by unbelief, Festus writes off everything Paul has said by alleging that he is out of his mind.** He also charges that

**Now, Festus can be quiet no longer. He has heard so much about Jesus, His apprehension of Paul, and His commission to Paul, that he cannot hold his peace.**

finished saying! He has outlined how Jesus apprehended him, and what He commissioned him to do. He has provided a summation of what the Prophets and Moses said about Jesus, and has testified concerning what he consistently preached. He has addressed no exhortation to the crowd before him – unless it be that Agrippa listen to what he said without interruption. He has offered no invitation. He has not diagnosed the crowd before him, or sought to psychoanalyze any of them. In a sense, what he said was not personally about them. He made no offer to them. He held forth no promise to them. He did tell them that everyone was required to repent, turn to God, and do works appropriate for repentance. Now, how will all of this set with the people – particularly Festus and Agrippa?

### HE SPAKE FOR HIMSELF

*“And as he thus spake for himself. . . .”* Other versions read, *“as he thus made his defense,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“while Paul was saying this in his defense,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“just as he reached this point in his defense,”*<sup>BBE</sup> and *“As Paul was defending himself in this way,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“as he thus proceeded with his defense.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

*both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles”* (Acts 26:22-23).

Later Paul will say of the Lord, *“whose I am, and whom I serve”* (Acts 27:23). That, in effect, is what he has said to this group of dignitaries. Further, he has said it for himself, not requiring someone else to speak for him, as the Jews did when they brought Tertullus to state their case against Paul before Felix.

Now, Festus can be quiet no longer. He has heard so much about Jesus, His apprehension of Paul, and His commission to Paul, that he cannot hold his peace.

### THOU ART BESIDE THYSELF

*“ . . . Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself . . . .”* Other versions read, *“you are out of your mind,”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“you are mad,”*<sup>RSV</sup> *“you are off your head,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“you’re crazy,”*<sup>GWN</sup> *“you have lost your mind,”*<sup>NET</sup> *“you are insane,”*<sup>NLT</sup> and

what he had learned had made him insane.

It ought to be noted that the expression “*much learning*” does not refer to advanced education in the schools of men. What schools of men ever have taught them to rely upon what Moses and the Prophets said would come to pass? What secular education majors on Jesus Christ, or testifies to His resurrection, or the resurrection of all of the dead? The “*learning*” to which Festus refers included his Jewish upbringing, and exposure to Moses and the Prophets. There is not one whit of evidence in Scripture that Paul was ever trained in the schools of the heathen.

**What Prompted this Response of Festus?**

What would move a political official to shout out such thing? He was evidently stirred by what Paul had said – not the way he said it, or the intonation of his voice, but the actual words that he said.

Consider Paul’s defense, and behold how the governor Festus was offended by it. Here is a classic example of the flesh’s response to truth.

- ⇒ Paul has testified of his strict upbringing (26:4-5).
- ⇒ He has declared his hope in the promise made by God to the Jewish fathers, which hope was common among all believing Jews (26:6-7).
- ⇒ He asked Agrippa and those with him why it should be thought incredible that God would raise the dead (26:8).
- ⇒ He testified that he once thought it was proper to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore zealously persecuted those who believed on Him (26:9-12).

- ⇒ He declared Christ’s apprehension of him, and of the vision that attended it (26:13-16a).
- ⇒ He related the commission Jesus delivered to him (26:16b-18).
- ⇒ He affirmed he had not been disobedient to the heavenly vision (26:19-20).
- ⇒ He told how the Jews caught him in the

most magnificent natural light to which men are exposed.

- ⇒ The words and commission of a Living Man who was dead, and had raised from the dead
- ⇒ A vision from heaven.
- ⇒ The resurrection of the dead.
- ⇒ Being turned from darkness to light,

**As Paul declared these things in a spiritually expert manner, and in words that were taught by the Holy Spirit, the listeners were divided into classes: those with good inclinations toward the truth, and those with no interest in the truth.**

Temple while he was carrying out the commission Jesus gave him (26:21).

- ⇒ He affirmed that he had obtained help from God to continue to that very day faithfully witnessing to both small and great (26:22a).
- ⇒ He detailed the message that he preached, declaring that it was in strict conformity with the things the Prophets and Moses said would come to pass (26:22b).
- ⇒ He summarized the Gospel concerning Christ (26:23).

**Observe the unnatural things to which Paul had testified – things that were foreign to the way flesh thinks.**

- ⇒ A supernatural light greater than the

and from the power of Satan unto God.

- ⇒ Receiving an inheritance that was not specified, yet was declared to belong to all who had faith.

As Paul declared these things in a spiritually expert manner, and in words that were taught by the Holy Spirit, the listeners were divided into classes: those with good inclinations toward the truth, and those with no interest in the truth. What Paul said will be used to reveal the hearts and preferences of men. It is the peculiar prerogative of truth to make such distinctions.

Additionally, it is quite possible it irritated Festus that Paul did not directly address him as he did Agrippa during his defense (26:2,7,19,27). It is the nature of flesh to be proud, and to be irritated when it is not afforded the attention it desires.

**WORDS OF TRUTH AND SOBERNESS**

**“<sup>25</sup> But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”**

Paul is quick to respond to the outburst of Festus, yet his answer is tempered with godly wisdom, and saturated with his love of the truth. He recognizes that

Festus is a political dignitary, yet is not hesitant to deny that there was any truth in what he said. **This is something someone who fears man cannot do.** He knew what Solomon had said, perhaps even better than Solomon knew it: “*The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe*” (Prov 29:25). It is never

right to fear man, and it is never wrong to fear God.

**I AM NOT MAD**

“*But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus . . .*” Other versions read, “*I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus,*” <sup>NASB</sup> “*I am not insane,*” <sup>NIV</sup> “*I am not off my*

head,"<sup>BBE</sup> "No, I am not 'crazy,' Festus, your Excellency."<sup>CSB</sup> and "I am not deranged, excellent Festus."<sup>MRD</sup>

Sometimes it is good to simply deny false charges: "I am not . . ." I am aware that this is the way the worldly-minded also replies to allegations made against them. Often, however, the charges are verified by some evidence that contradicts such denials. However, this is not the manner of the Kingdom. **In Christ Jesus, the evidence always perfectly accords with the claim.** There is no such thing as a real salvation that is controverted by the way those claiming to possess it speak and live. Tritely the carnal will spout, "You cannot judge a book by its cover." You will never hear such benighted souls say, "You cannot judge a tree by its fruit." Of course, there is such a thing as the appearance contradicting the claim. But that is only when corruptness is within, and the claim is false. That is never said of those who are clean within having a contradicting and worldly appearance. Those who insist on saying that such a condition does exist – clean within, yet defiled without – are simply wrong. Were such a thing possible, the work of God would be properly maligned.

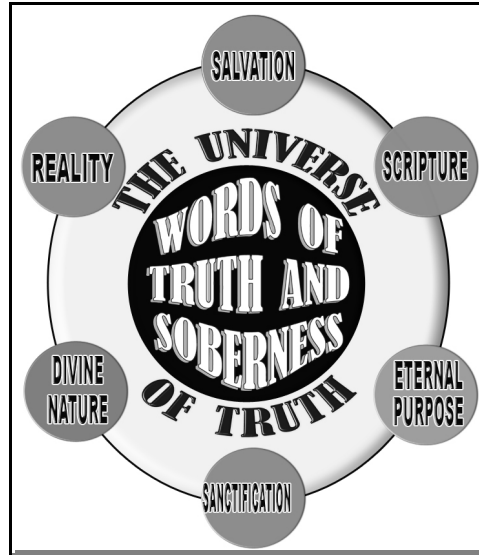
**Therefore, Paul affirms that in speaking he has not departed from reason.** He has not spoken to give himself the advantage, or present himself as other than he really is. He has been in full possession of all of his mental faculties as he spoke. He was not overcharged with emotion. He was not hastily reacting to the circumstances.

#### WORDS OF TRUTH AND SOBERNESS

*" . . . but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."* Other versions read, *"but speak the words of truth and reason,"*<sup>NKJV</sup> *"but I utter sober truth,"*<sup>NASB</sup> *"my words are true and wise,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"I am speaking words of truth and honesty,"*<sup>CSB</sup> *"I am speaking true and rational words,"*<sup>ESV</sup> *"and speak words of truth and rectitude,"*<sup>MRD</sup> and *"I am uttering the straight, sound truth."*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

**"Words of truth" are expressions that perfectly match reality. They are words that depict a very real situation.** As used here, they are utterances that are in perfect harmony with the nature of God, the reality of salvation, and the word of the Gospel. They contradict neither the text of Scripture, nor the purpose of God. They do not contravene what Paul had actually experienced, or what Jesus had

really said to him. They reflected the mind of Christ, and were in strict accord with the eternal purpose of God. Paul had spoken as the "oracles of God" (1 Pet 4:11). Because of this circumstance, the Lord will work through what Paul has said – a privilege that is withheld from all who use improper and self-conceived words.



*"Words of . . . soberness"* are words that have result in men being sober-minded. They are not words that are characterized by levity, or tend to make men scatterbrained. *"Soberness," "sobriety,"* or being *"sober"* refers to, *"soundness of mind, self-control,"*<sup>THAYER</sup> *"sensibleness, intellectual soundness, rationality, reasonableness, good sense,"*<sup>FRIBERG</sup> and *"to have understanding about practical matters and thus be able to act sensibly - to have sound judgment, to be sensible, to use good sense, sound judgment."*<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

**As used in this text, "words of truth and soberness" are words that are perfectly aligned with God and what He has purposed.** These are not to be construed as words that are politically correct, or are designed to placate men, or makes friends with them. They are in harmony with both the nature of God and the purpose of God. They blend with the salvation of God and the true sanctification of men. They are in no way at a variance with the Scriptures, and reflect the reality of the situation or subject of which they speak.

Words such as this do not blend with the flesh, the ways of the world, or the exaltation of self. They do not commingle with the wisdom of this world. They sharply contradict the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. It is for this reason that those who are of the world consider *"words of truth and soberness"* to be the

expression of madness. When a person speaks such words to them, they at once think that he is beside himself, and is not speaking in accord with the way things really are. However, these are wholly foolish assessments, and the people making them do not know what they are talking about.

In the end, when the world to which their minds are nailed, has passed away, the risen and exalted Christ is confronted, and the people they maligned are seen as they really are, **then they will know how wrong they were – but it will be too late.** Even though they are to be expelled from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power, they will make certain confessions before they are banished. Before an assembled universe, they will bow the knee to Jesus, and confess that He is, in fact, Lord of all. They will acknowledge they have been wrong, and that God was right. They will also bow before those who brought the truth of God to them, and will acknowledge before every created personality that the ones they hated were the very ones God loved. They will also give an account of all of their idle words, all their sayings, and for all their deeds. None will be overlooked.

This sort of thing was told to Felix by Paul, when he reasoned with Him about righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come (Acts 24:25). Jesus spoke of similar things when He announced to the generation among whom he walked, that in the day of judgment the men of Nineveh who repented at the preaching of Jonah would rise up and condemn them, because they did not hear the One who is *"greater than Jonah"* (Matt 12:41). He also said the Queen of Sheba would rise up and condemn their generation, because she came from afar to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but they refused to hear the One who is *"greater than Solomon"* (Matt 12:42). He said that it would more *"more tolerable"* for the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment, than for a city who did not receive the messengers He sent to them (Matt 10:15). He told the citizens of Capernaum that they would be *"brought down to hell"* because they had ignored the mighty works that had been done among them (Matt 11:23).

Words *"of truth and soberness"* do not seem to me to allow much room for levity – the presence of which is quite prominent in our time. **The people of God should take care not to give their attention to sayings or matters that find their terminus in laughter alone.** A manner of

speaking is legitimate only to the degree that it makes for a sober mind.

What will be the outcome of those

who hear “*words of truth and soberness,*” and view them as the words of a person who is not in their right mind? That is certainly something worth thinking about! I cannot

imagine a person in heaven is lacking in seriousness, one that was lighthearted, or one that took God’s word lightly. The environment will not be conducive to that.

**NOT DONE IN A CORNER**

“<sup>26</sup> *For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.*”

Now Paul turns his attention once again to Agrippa. He does not speak long with Festus because of the manifested hardness of his heart. **The governor has heard the testimony of a man who has**

**The governor has heard the testimony of a man who has been commissioned by the Savior of the world, and has written it off as madness, insanity, and the display of a deranged mind. No further words will be said to him!**

**been commissioned by the Savior of the world, and has written it off as madness, insanity, and the display of a deranged mind.** No further words will be said to him! Throughout all of Scripture, the only other words addressed to Festus came from Agrippa, which report is the last mentioning of his name (Acts 26:32). So far as the record is concerned, not one more word was uttered to him by Paul.

**While this is a sensitive subject, there does come a time when the witness is withdraw from those with hardened hearts.** There are examples in Scripture of such a time, both with the world, cities, large bodies of people, and individuals. When this occurs, there is no further opportunity granted. It fulfills words stated by Solomon: “*He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy*” (Prov 29:1). Again, he stated in Proverbs 6:14-15, where it says of a “*wicked man,*” “*Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.*”

Scriptural examples of those whose time ran out include the following.

⇨ **CAIN.** “*And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth*” (Gen 4:11-12).

⇨ **THE WORLD.** “*And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years*” (Gen 6:3).

⇨ **SODOM AND THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN.** “*And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know . . . For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it*” (Gen 18:20-21; 19:13).

⇨ **GENERATIONS OF THE GENTILE WORLD.** “*Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves . . . For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature . . . And even as they did not like to retain God in their*

*knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient*” (Rom 1:24,26,28)

⇨ **THE TEN UNFAITHFUL SPIES AND ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVED THEM.** “*I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die*” (Num 14:35).

⇨ **ELI’S HOUSE.** “*And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever*” (1 Sam 3:14).

⇨ **WHOLE GENERATIONS OF THE JEWS.** “*Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee*” (Jer 7:16). “*For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here*” (Luke 11:30-32).

⇨ **CERTAIN INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM.** “*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*” (Mat 23:38-39).

⇨ **UNBELIEVING JEWS IN ANTIOCH OF PISIDIA.** “*Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves*

unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles . . . But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium” (Acts 13:46,51).

⇒ **HYMENAEOUS AND ALEXANDER.** “Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim 1:20).

⇒ **GOD HAS BEEN KNOWN TO WITHDRAW HIMSELF FROM PEOPLE.** “They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them” (Hosea 5:6).

This is not an area in which men can speculate, to be sure. The best thing to do is take these warnings seriously, and endeavor with all of your might not to tempt the Lord with unseemly conduct, words, or thoughts. Holy men have spoken solemnly about this Divine trait. Joshua warned the people, “**If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good**” (Josh 24:20). Azariah told Asa the king, “**Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you**” (2 Chron 15:2). Ezra declared, “**The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him**” (Ezra 8:22). Isaiah affirmed, “**And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed**” (Isa 1:28).

To this day, there are multitudes that do not believe God will fulfill those words. They imagine that they can reject the Lord, deny His Word, and do the things He has forbidden – all with impunity. But they are deceived. They have reacted to the truth of God in precisely the same manner as Festus, viewing His Word and work as unreasonable. **What a tragic error in judgment!** Men cannot trifle with God without paying a most grievous penalty. They cannot view the words of His servants as insane and unmeaningful without the God of heaven noting it, and eventually responding to it in judgment.

#### THE KING KNOWETH

“For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely . . .” Other versions read, “is familiar with these

**At this point it is necessary to say that those who are lacking in a acquaintance with Scripture are at a decided disadvantage. It is not insurmountable, but such ignorance must be dissipated before any fruit can be expected.**

things,”<sup>NIV</sup> “has knowledge of these things,”<sup>BBE</sup> “understands these matters,”<sup>CJB</sup> “is informed about these things,”<sup>DARBY</sup> “well acquainted with these things,”<sup>MRD</sup> “knows what I am talking about,”<sup>CEV</sup> and “understands about these things well enough.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

What “things” did Herod know? They probably included some knowledge of the life and ministry of Jesus, the change of Saul of Tarsus, the persecution of believers, as well as some knowledge of the writings of the Moses and the Prophets. Agrippa did not know the truth in the sense affirmed by Jesus: “**And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**” (John 8:32). At this point he had not acknowledged the truth, as stated in Second Timothy 2:25. His knowledge appears to have been an academic one. That was not enough to save the man, although a person must begin with that kind of knowledge in order to acknowledge truth and be made free by it.

Paul knew that you can reason with a person who has been exposed to the truth of God, and is at least familiar with what God has said. However, you cannot reason concerning the salvation of God with someone who has no knowledge of what God has said about salvation. That is precisely why Paul spoke as he did to the Athenian philosophers (Acts 17:22-31). For example, they were hearing for the first time about the resurrection of the dead (Acts 17:18,32). However, this was not the case with Agrippa. He was acquainted with what the Jews taught, as well as with their manners.

I have observed over the years that a lot of the purported witnessing that is done in the name of Jesus assumes that the people know more than they actually do. Under such conditions, at the very best, any commitment that is made is shallow – too shallow to sustain the professed believer. For example, knowing what the Scriptures say is imperative, but not enough. Satan knows what they say, but the Word of God has no sanctifying power upon him. **The word of God must do its work within for it to be profitable.** Therefore, it is said of the Word,

“as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thess 2:13). It is good to bear witness to someone who is aware of what the Word says, yet that is not sufficient of itself. It appears from the text that the knowledge of these things distinguished Agrippa from Festus. Paul speaks to him with these things in mind.

**At this point it is necessary to say that those who are lacking in a acquaintance with Scripture are at a decided disadvantage.** It is not insurmountable, but such ignorance must be dissipated before any fruit can be expected. Judging from the content of much of the preaching and teaching in our time, this is not generally known – at least not with discernment.

#### I SPEAK FREELY

“ . . . before whom also I speak freely . . .” Other versions read, “I speak to him also with confidence,”<sup>NASB</sup> “I can speak freely with him,”<sup>NIV</sup> “It is to him I am actually speaking boldly,”<sup>CSB</sup> “I therefore speak confidently before him,”<sup>MRD</sup> “to him I now speak fearlessly,”<sup>NJB</sup> “I speak frankly,”<sup>LIVING</sup> and “[therefore] to him I speak with bold frankness and confidence.”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Lexically, the word “freely” is translated (παρρησιαζόμενος) from a word meaning, “to bear oneself boldly or confidently . . . to use freedom in speaking . . . to grow confident, have boldness, show assurance, assume a bold bearing,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “as acting with an attitude of openness that comes from freedom and lack of fear,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> and “as acting with an attitude of openness that comes from freedom and lack of fear.”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

In the English language, and as it is used here, “freely” means, “in a free manner: a. as of one’s own accord; b. with freedom from external control c. without restraint or reservation.”<sup>MERIAM-WEBSTER</sup>

It was the knowledge that Agrippa possessed that permitted Paul to speak with such liberty – without having to guard every word he said, carefully weighing whether or not he was casting pearls before a swine (Matt 7:6). For one thing, when he appealed to Moses and the Prophets, Agrippa would be

able to pick up on the general sense of what Paul was saying. This was to his advantage if he would but give heed to it. We might liken it to someone having a wholesome respect for the Bible, so that he would not speak against it.

When a person speaks the truth of God to an uninformed audience – like the group at Athens (Acts 17:22-32), or the idolaters in Lystra (Acts 14:14-17) – the speaker is actually limited in what he can say. For example, it is pointless to speak about Jesus or Christ if there is no cursory knowledge of who He is. If, on the other hand, one is acquainted with Moses and the Prophets, and what they foretold about the coming Messiah, the speaker has something to work with – and so does the Holy Spirit.

**The Danger of a Private Interpretation of Jesus Christ**

Right here, a word must be said about the danger of preaching a human interpretation of Jesus Christ, what He did, and why He did it. There is a lot of this

- ⇨ The factual Jesus is the One who magnified the Law and made it honorable (Isa 42:21).
- ⇨ It is One that loves righteousness and hates iniquity (Heb 1:9).
- ⇨ It is the One who will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the Gospel (2 Thess 1:8).
- ⇨ It is one who reconciles men to God, so that they are in harmony with Him (Col 1:20-21).
- ⇨ This is the Jesus who made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24; Heb 9:26; 1 Cor 1:30).
- ⇨ It is one in whom we die to sin and are made alive unto God (Rom 6:11).
- ⇨ This is the Jesus who comes to give us

quench a smoking flax (Isa 42:3; Matt 12:20).

Because Agrippa had some knowledge of Jewish manners and of Moses and the Prophets, Paul was able to speak more freely than he apparently could to Festus.

**I AM PERSUADED**

“... for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him . . .” Other versions read, “for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention,” <sup>NKJV</sup> “I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice,” <sup>NASB</sup> “being certain that all this is common knowledge to him,” <sup>BBE</sup> “because I am sure that none of these things have been hidden from him.” <sup>CJB</sup> “I am sure these events are all familiar to him,” <sup>NLT</sup> and “I am convinced that not one of these things has escaped his notice.” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Once again, the things that were rehearsed to Agrippa include the following. Paul infers they were all of a public nature, and that word of them had been heard by the king. This was no doubt owing to the fact that Judea was the domain over which he presided, and he kept abreast of any events that could potentially cause disruption of the peace. Although these happenings included the manner in which Paul was raised, and his zeal for the Lord, it seems to me that his focus was on the Lord Jesus Christ and the particular prophecies that related to Him.

- ⇨ The promise made to the fathers (26:6-7).
- ⇨ That God should raise the dead (26:8).
- ⇨ The name of Jesus of Nazareth (26:9).
- ⇨ The appearance of Jesus to Paul on the road to Damascus (26:12-18).
- ⇨ The preaching of Christ throughout the coasts of Judea (26:20).
- ⇨ That Christ should suffer (26:23a).
- ⇨ That Christ should be the first to rise from the dead (26:23b).
- ⇨ That Christ should show light to the Jewish people (26:23c).
- ⇨ That Christ should show light to the Gentiles (26:23d).

These were all matters with which anyone attending the synagogues, or subjected to the Scriptures would have some familiarity. That was enough to have

**Right here, a word must be said about the danger of preaching a human interpretation of Jesus Christ, what He did, and why He did it. There is a lot of this happening in our time, so that the understanding of people is being shaped by an erroneous view of Jesus, His love, His work, and what He is doing at this time.**

happening in our time, so that the understanding of people is being shaped by an erroneous view of Jesus, His love, His work, and what He is doing at this time. All of this is done in order to supposedly make Jesus relevant to the hearers. However, what is actually being done is that the real Jesus is being further obscured, with men being led to think of Him as a kind of hero that is waging a war against poverty, disease, and marital and social disorder. Scripture refers these kind of presentations as “another Jesus” (2 Cor 11:4), or “false Christs” (Matt 24:24).

**It is important to again mention that the true Jesus is the One who fulfilled the prophecies of Moses and the Prophets.** Any Jesus who does not precisely fulfill those prophecies cannot possibly be the real Jesus, and to lead men to believe that it is, is to lead them astray.

- an understanding, that we might know Him that is true (1 John 5:20).
- ⇨ It is the One who says “sin no more!” (John 5:13; 8:11).
- ⇨ He speaks of abiding in His love (John 15:10), bearing fruit (John 15:2-8), and taking up your cross and following Him (Lk 9:23).
- ⇨ He tells men that of they do not forsake all that they have, they cannot be His disciples (Lk 14:33).

This is all in keeping with Moses’ prophecy of Jesus: that He would be a Prophet to whom the people would hearken. Those who refused to hearken to Him would be destroyed from among the people (Deut 18:15, 18-19; Acts 2:22-23). For those of tender heart, and according to Isaiah, He is the One who will not break a bruised reed or

provoked earnest inquiry as it did in Cornelius and other proselytes from that region.

**THESE THINGS WERE NOT DONE IN A CORNER**

“... for this thing was not done in a corner.” Other versions read, “since this thing was not done in a corner.”<sup>NKJV</sup> “for this has not been done in a corner.”<sup>NASB</sup> “for it has not been done in secret.”<sup>BBE</sup> “they didn’t happen in some back alley.”<sup>CJB</sup> “for all this did not take place in a corner [in secret].”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

This had particular regard to what the Living God had done among the people – things pertaining to Jesus Christ. They included at least the following public matters.

- ⇒ The news of the birth of Jesus, which the angels affirmed was intended for “all people” (Lk 2:10).
- ⇒ At the time of Jesus’ dedication as the firstfruit of the womb, Anna the prophetess also proclaimed Christ also declared Him to those who “looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Lk 38).
- ⇒ The ministry of Jesus, who “went about doing good, and healing all who were that were oppressed of the devil” (Acts 10:38).
- ⇒ During Christ’s prodigious ministry “His fame” even went “throughout all

Syria” (Matt 4:24). It was also spread through all the “land” of the Jews (Matt 9:26), and throughout “all that country” (Matt 9:31).

- ⇒ Even Herod the Tetrarch, a relative of Agrippa, “heard of the fame of Jesus” (Matt 14:1).
- ⇒ The fame of Jesus spread through all of Galilee (Mk 1:28), spreading “out into every place of the country round about” (Lk 4:37).
- ⇒ The fame of Jesus also went “abroad” (Lk 5:15).
- ⇒ The events of the day of Pentecost, and

⇒ Add to that the fact that in every synagogue, on every Sabbath, throughout the land, the Scriptures of both Moses and the Prophets were read publicly (Acts 15:21,27).

Indeed, the things that were wrought for the salvation of men were “not done in a corner.”

And what may be said now that over two millennia have past? **If the knowledge of those happenings was more than enough to provoke earnest inquiry, what can be said of our time, when the fulness of Scripture is available to men, and enough is said about Jesus every day to move men to**

**And what may be said now that over two millennia have past? If the knowledge of those happenings was more than enough to provoke earnest inquiry, what can be said of our time, when the fulness of Scripture is available to men, and enough is said about Jesus every day to move men to seek Him?**

the proclamation of Jesus was a public matter (Acts 2:2:6).

- ⇒ In all of this, especially in the preaching of the Gospel, God Himself “set forth,” or “declared publicly,”<sup>NASB</sup> Jesus as “a propitiation through faith in His blood” (Rom 3:25).

**seek Him?** Even though there is corruptness throughout the Christian world, yet, even under those less-than-ideal circumstances, enough of the truth has been made known to leave men without excuse. There simply is no satisfactory reason for not seeking the Lord, and striving to obtain an understanding of Him.

**BELIEVEST THOU THE PROPHETS?**

“<sup>27</sup> **King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.**”

Behold how Paul presses the matter upon Agrippa. He does not draw back from one who is paying attention to him. He knows nothing of toning down the message to awaken interest, but beholds in Agrippa a man who is wrestling with the truth. He does not shout out in derision like Festus, but displays some interest, even though it will prove to not be enough.

**BELIEVEST THOU THE PROPHETS?**

“King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?” Other versions read, “Do you believe the Prophets?”<sup>NASB</sup> “have you faith in

the prophets?”<sup>BBE</sup> and “do you believe the prophets? [Do you give credence to God’s messengers and their words?]”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

In asking this question, Paul is not inquiring about the whole of the Prophets, but particularly of what they declared about the coming Christ. That is what Paul affirmed he consistently preached: “saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts 26:22).

**Some of the Prophets Prophecies**

- ⇒ A “Righteous Branch” who would reign and prosper (Jer 23:5; Zech 3:8).
- ⇒ A “Child” upon whose shoulder the

government would be placed (Isa 9:6).

- ⇒ One whose name would appropriately be called “Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6).
- ⇒ A “Witness,” “a Leader,” and “a Commander” (Isa 55:4).
- ⇒ A “covenant of the people and a light to the Gentiles” (Isa 42:5).
- ⇒ “David their king,” raised up for Israel (Jer 30:9).
- ⇒ He would be called “Messiah the Prince” (Dan 9:25).

- ⇒ He would be the “*Plant of Renown*” who would satisfy man’s deepest hunger (Ezek 34:29).
- ⇒ For those who believe on Him, He would be “*a Sanctuary*.” For those who do not, He would be “*Stumblingstone*” (Isa 8:14).
- ⇒ He was the “*Shiloh*” unto whom the people would gather (Gen 49:10).
- ⇒ He would be “*the Son of righteousness*,” who would arise “*with healing in His wings*” (Mal 4:2).
- ⇒ He would be “*despised and rejected of men*” (Isa 53:3).

- ⇒ He would be God’s own “*fellow*,” who would be smitten by the Lord’s own sword (Zech 13:7).
- ⇒ He would be called, “*the Lord our Righteousness*” (Jer 23:6).
- ⇒ He would be noted as “*a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*” (Isa 53:3).
- ⇒ He would be “*the Messenger of the Covenant*” (Mal 3:1).

Now, in the light of that sampling of the Prophets, how does this question sound? “*Do you believe the prophets?*”<sup>NIV</sup>

supper became “*angry*.” He said of those who declined his invitation, “*For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper*” (Luke 14:24).

Two invitations were sent out to those servants. The first informed them that a great supper was being prepared, and they were invited to it (Lk 14:16). The second came when the supper was prepared, and the table set – “*for all things are now ready*” (Lk 14:17). **Their excuses confirmed they had not taken the first invitation seriously. It was not, so to speak, marked on their calendars.**

The messages of the Prophets concerning the coming Christ were like the first invitation. They were designed to whet the appetite of the people, and awaken them to the necessity of preparation. Then, when Jesus actually arrived on the scene, the people were expected to come to Him.

But what of those who, with Bibles in their homes, are still unaware of the first invitation? What can really be said about those who have taken no time to probe into what the prophets said about a coming Savior, and to culture an appetite for Him? And what of preachers, teachers, and elders who have long been so known, yet have not apprised “*the flock of God*” of the revelations God gave of Christ through the prophets? Are these conditions something that can be excused? Are they not matters concerning which God has spoken with remarkable clarity?

Add to that the Gospel of Christ, and the exposition of that Gospel in the Epistles. **What of those who have neglected all of that revelation, both by hearing and the personal ingestion of the Word of God?** Do you suppose leaving such noble pursuits to culture earthly relationships, occupations, and pleasures will be met with a heavenly smile and toleration?

It must be acknowledged that if the question Paul asked Agrippa was asked of the average American church member, it would be met with a questionable and befuddled stare. “*Do you believe the prophets?*”<sup>NKJV</sup> Some would blurt out, “Of course!” – even though they would have no idea what the interrogator was talking about. It would be an affirmation similar to the way they would answer, “Do you believe every word of the Bible?” – even though had read very little of it.

**And what may be said now that over two millennia have past? If the knowledge of those happenings was more than enough to provoke earnest inquiry, what can be said of our time, when the fulness of Scripture is available to men, and enough is said about Jesus every day to move men to seek Him?**

- ⇒ He would bear “*our griefs*,” and carry our “*sorrows*” (Isa 53:4).
- ⇒ He was “*wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed*” (Isa 53:5).
- ⇒ The “*Desire of all nations*” (Hag 2:7).
- ⇒ God’s “*Servant*,” His “*Elect*” (Isa 42:1).
- ⇒ His name would be “*Immanuel*,” God with us (Isa 7:14).
- ⇒ As a root, He will spring from Jesse, shall stand for “*an ensign of the people*,” the Gentiles will “*seek*” Him, and His rest will be glorious (Isa 11:10).
- ⇒ He will be a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, and a sure foundation. Because of this, “*He that believeth shall not make haste*,” or be disturbed<sup>NASB</sup> (Isa 28:16).
- ⇒ In Him a fountain will be opened “*for sin and uncleanness*” (Zech 13:1).

#### A Point of Profound Concern

I am stricken with a sense of shame for the church of our generation because it is largely behind Agrippa in its knowledge of the prophets – particularly what they said about the coming Christ. I do not doubt that Agrippa will stand up with this generation like the Queen of the south will stand up with the generation that was exposed to the bodily presence of the Son of God. Regardless of the opinions of men, God will hold men responsible for being knowledgeable of what has been revealed to their generation. While there are men who chide religious sloths for leaving the Bibles on the shelf, so to speak, they ought to be reminding them of their answerability for that circumstance. This also applies to the exposure of people to faithful preachers and teachers of the Word of God. **Sound preaching and teaching is like a Divine invitation to come to the feast of salvation that God has prepared.** Those who imagine they have their own personal business to which they must attend have, by that posture, been excluded from participation in the salvation of God. That is the particular point of the parable of a man making a great supper, and inviting many. When those who were invited “*began to make excuse*,” the master of the

I KNOW THAT THOU BELIEVEST

“ . . . I know that thou believest. ”

Paul is not speaking of believing like Abraham, who acted upon the Word of the Lord. This is rather an acknowledgment of the truth of Scripture – not formally questioning what it says. **In the last 50-55 years, with an amazing plethora of translations designed to make it easier for simpletons to understand, there has actually been a rise in Scriptural illiteracy.** As if that were not enough, there has been an explosion of doubt unleashed in the Christian community that has questioned the reliability of the Scriptures themselves. Add to that the environment of a significant percentage of higher and specialized Christian education to read and study more non-Biblical writings than the Scriptures themselves. As a result, a torrent of religious sewage is being dumped on congregations both directly, and through electronic media.

**What I am saying in all of this is that what Paul said to Agrippa could not now be said to a staggering number of professing Christians.** Add to that the political officials who say they are Christians who have far from a working knowledge of

**In other words, even though they did not live up to what they knew of the Scriptures, at least they kept the knowledge of the them alive both among themselves, and the social environment in which they existed.**

the Scriptures. What man of God could stand before the highest political officials in the land and say, “I know that you do believe”?

Although the Jewish leaders had developed a lot of hoary tradition, and had nullified the commands of God with their tradition, the Scriptures were still read in their gatherings, and a general acquaintance with Scripture was maintained. That is why most of Paul’s preaching and teaching was in the synagogues, not in amphitheatres, coliseums, and other social gathering places.

The same was seen in the ministry of Jesus, who regularly went to the synagogues, and often spent every day in the Temple. **In other words, even though they did not live up to what they knew of the Scriptures, at least they kept the knowledge of the them alive both among**

**themselves, and the social environment in which they existed.** King Agrippa is a testimony to that fact, as well as every proselyte who embraced the Scriptures placed in the hands of the Jews (Rom 9:4).

In this day of greater light, the availability of greater understanding, and the development of Moses and the Prophets by the apostles, there should be a better and more productive understanding of the Prophets. **Further, this level of ignorance has taken place in the midst of religious professionals, specialized ministers, extensive Christian education, and an explosion of supposed Christian writing.** And what has all of this wave of new knowledge produced? What fruit has it borne? How has God been glorified by it all? A proper answer to such questions will reveal the nature of the times in which we live.

**ALMOST THOU PERSUADEST ME**

“ <sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. ”

**ALMOST**

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost . . .” Other versions read, “In a short time you will,” <sup>NASB</sup> “Do you think that in a short time you can,” <sup>NIV</sup> “Are you so quickly,” <sup>NRSV</sup> “in a short time you think,” <sup>RSV</sup> “with but a little,” <sup>ASV</sup> “a little more,” <sup>BBE</sup> “Somewhat thou,” <sup>PNT</sup> “with trivial proofs like these,” <sup>LIVING</sup> “in brief, you are doing your best,” <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> “You think it a small task to make a Christian of me [just offhand to induce me with little ado,” <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and “keep this up much longer.” <sup>MESSAGE</sup>

Once again, the differing versions throw dust on the passage, obscuring its meaning. It is like the men providing such miserable translations forgot to read the next verse. Ponder the diversity displayed in the English versions of this text.

- ⇨ Agrippa is depicted as asking a question, not making a statement.
- ⇨ Agrippa suggests what Paul said was trivial, and thus incapable of inducing him to be a Christian.
- ⇨ Agrippa charged Paul with doing his best in a short period of time that could not possibly move Agrippa to change his mind about Christ.
- ⇨ If Paul kept on, Agrippa might be convinced.
- ⇨ Agrippa asks Paul if he actually thinks he can convince Agrippa with such a brief presentation.

The Greek word translated “almost” is ὀλίγω. In his Word Pictures, Robertson points out that the meaning of the word, as used in this text, is not easy for the linguist to comprehend. He points out the manner in which Tyndale translates the

word: “somewhat.” The Bishop’s Bible translates it the same way. The word itself means “of degree or intensity, slight . . . profitable for little,” <sup>THAYER</sup> “of degree little, mild, slight . . . to a small extent,” <sup>FRIEBERG</sup> and “for a little while, in only a small way.” <sup>UBS</sup>

In order to arrive at the meaning, it must be determined if Agrippa was referring to the amount of time Paul used in his defense, or if he was speaking of the impact of Paul’s words upon himself. The versions that I have questioned defer to the first meaning. In this, however, I think they are incorrect. I adduce the following reasons for this conclusion.

- ⇨ First, it was the weight of Paul’s words that made them so effective, not the amount of time he spent giving them.
- ⇨ Second, it is the Word of God that works effectively, disclosing the thoughts and intents of the heart, not the words of men.

- ⇒ Third, Paul was not trying to persuade Agrippa to become a Christian, but was giving an account of his own life.
- ⇒ Fourth, if Agrippa was chiding Paul for thinking such a brief presentation would convince him, he would have fallen into the same category as Festus.
- ⇒ Fifth, the answer of Paul suggests that Paul took the words of Agrippa precisely as the Authorized Version presents them – a statement of Agrippa being “almost,” or nearly, persuaded.

**PERSUADEST ME TO BE A CHRISTIAN**

“... Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Other versions read, “to become a Christian,” <sup>NKJV</sup> “make me a Christian,” <sup>RSV</sup> “become Messianic,” <sup>CJB</sup> “to play the Christian,” <sup>NAB</sup> and “make a Christian of me.” <sup>NJB</sup>

to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called **Christians** first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). This is how believers came to be known by the Gentiles, who were not themselves joined to the Lord. Some allege that this verse is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, “and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name” (Isa 62:2). However, the fact that no inspired man ever addressed believers as “Christians,” or admonished unbelievers to become “Christians,” dispels this myth. That God would call His people by a name He never uses is an absurdity unworthy of any further consideration.

- ⇒ “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). Again, this term was used

there are Divinely prepared options available to them, and sense that they ought to avail themselves of them. Yet, they are too firmly fixed to this present evil world to break loose from it. They are willing to be a church member, as ordinarily perceived, and even to frequent the gatherings of believers when they have nothing else they prefer to do. However, a “follower of Jesus?” – Well, they are not prepared to make a commitment of that magnitude. That would mean they would have to remain with Jesus – all of the time – and they simply are not prepared to go that far!

- ⇒ Sometimes following Jesus requires the abandonment of cherished human responsibilities. Jesus indicated this when He told a would-be disciple who asked to remain at home until he could bury his father, “Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead” (Matt 8:22).
- ⇒ In order to follow Him, Jesus said one must “deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23).
- ⇒ Jesus told a covetous rich man who had inquired about obtaining eternal life, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me” (Matt 19:21-24).
- ⇒ Jesus also said that serving Him required following Him, and that where He was, His servant would also be: “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor” (John 12:26).

**Paul is an example of someone who followed Christ.** Jesus, “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor” (John 12:26). **See if you can find anything in the Scriptures that Paul did after He was apprehended by Jesus, that was not directly related to Jesus.**

**There are still many people who are in this “almost” category. They know there are Divinely prepared options available to them, and sense that they ought to avail themselves of them. Yet, they are too firmly fixed to this present evil world to break loose from it.**

Again, the various versions tend to muddle the text. As you can see, some paint the text as Paul doing something – making Agrippa a Christian. Others represent Agrippa as being moved by what Paul said to almost become a Christian. In my judgment, the latter is the true sense of the text.

This text is one of three verses in the entire Bible in which the word “Christian” appears. The word means, “follower of Christ,” <sup>STRONG’S/THAYER</sup> and “one who is identified as a believer in and follower of Christ.” <sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

- ⇒ “And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came

by someone who was not himself a follower of Jesus.

- ⇒ “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet 4:16). Once again, this is the persecutors’ view the believers. It is not an inside view.

Thus, Agrippa interrupts Paul’s defense, indicating that he felt the nudging of his conscience, yet did not yield to it.

There are still many people who are in this “almost” category. They know

**I WOULD TO GOD**

“<sup>29</sup> And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am,

except these bonds.”

The answer of Paul confirms that Agrippa had indicated a very real attraction

to what Paul had said. He was not, as some versions suggest, merely mocking Paul by suggesting he could not convince him to be a Christian with such a brief presentation. In

the first place, so far as the record is concerned, I am not sure it would be proper to view Paul's defense before Agrippa as something that was brief, or in any manner inadequate. I have already shown the remarkable concentration of truth that was made known in what Paul said. Now, let us make a cursory comparison of the number of words contained in his speech.

⇒ Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:2-53) . . . . .	1,268 words
⇒ Paul's words at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:16-)	
⇒ . . . . .	611 words
⇒ Paul's words to Agrippa, before the interruption of Festus (Acts 26:2-23) . . . . .	564 words
⇒ Paul's defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 22:1-21) . . . . .	526 words
⇒ Peter on Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36)	531 words
⇒ Peter in Solomon's porch after healing the lame man: (Acts 3:12-26) . . . . .	390 words
⇒ Paul at Athens (Acts 17:22-31): .	266 words.
⇒ Paul and Barnabas to the idolaters in Lystra (Acts 14:15-17) . . . . .	85 words
⇒ Paul's words to Festus after his allegation that Paul was "mad (Acts 26:25-26) . . . .	51 words

So far as recorded content is concerned, Paul's defense before Agrippa ranks third in volume of the speeches recorded in the book of Acts. I do not know what form of reasoning would justify Agrippa thinking it was "a short time," <sup>NASB/NIV</sup> "quickly," <sup>NRSV</sup> "a little," <sup>ASV</sup> "brief," <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> or "trivial." <sup>LIVING</sup>

**What Exactly Did Paul Proclaim**

What did Paul declare that had an impact upon Agrippa? Excluding his own background and experience, here are some of the things Paul confidently affirmed.

- ⇒ That hope in the promise of God had been the driving factor in himself, and among all serious Jews (26:6-7).
- ⇒ That God raises the dead (26:8).
- ⇒ That Jesus was the one Paul was persecuting in his opposition to the saints (26:14-15).
- ⇒ That Jesus had commissioned him to "open men's eyes." (26:18a).
- ⇒ That Jesus had commissioned him to turn men "from darkness to light."
- ⇒ That Jesus had commissioned him to turn men "from the power of Satan unto God" (26:18b).

- ⇒ That Jesus had commissioned him to so speak as to bring men to "receive forgiveness of sins" (26:18c).
- ⇒ That Jesus had commissioned him to so speak as to qualify men to obtain an "inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith" (26:18d).
- ⇒ That, in keeping with Jesus commission, he had declared to men that they ought to "repent and turn to God" (26:20a).
- ⇒ That he had declared to men that they ought to "do works meet for repentance" (26:20b).
- ⇒ That, according to the Prophets, Jesus "should suffer" (26:23a).
- ⇒ That, according to the Prophets, Jesus should "be the first that should rise from the dead" (26:23b).
- ⇒ That, according to the Prophets, Jesus should "show light" to the Jewish people (26:23c).
- ⇒ That, according to the Prophets, Jesus should show light "to the Gentiles" (26:23d).

Whatever you may think about those words, heaven was well pleased with them, and used them to discern the thoughts and intent of Agrippa's heart. **Like all valid witnessing, words must be employed that can be used by the Holy Spirit to reach into the hearts and consciences of men. This cannot be accomplished by subjects and words that are not fully supported by the Word of God.**

**I WOULD TO GOD**

"And Paul said, I would to God . . ." Other versions read, "I pray God," <sup>NIV</sup> "I pray to God," <sup>NRSV</sup> "It is my prayer to God," <sup>BBE</sup> "I wish to God," <sup>CJB</sup> "I wish before God," <sup>CSB</sup> "I would pray to God," <sup>NAB</sup> "I wish before God," <sup>NJB</sup> "I would have wished to God," <sup>YLT</sup> "I wish," <sup>CEV</sup> and "That's what I'm praying for." <sup>MESSAGE</sup>

The phrase "would to God" is translated from the Greek expression *Εὐχαίμην ἂν τῷ θεῷ*. Lexically, and as used in this text, this phrase is defined as, "to pray to God . . . to pray, to pray for," <sup>THAYER</sup> "of petitionary prayer or appeal to God pray, offer prayer, ask; (2) of a strong desire for something; want, wish for," <sup>FRIBERG</sup> "pray; wish, long," <sup>UBS</sup> "to speak to or to make requests of God - 'to pray, to speak to God, to ask God for, prayer," <sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> "to pray for a thing, long or wish for," <sup>LIDDELL-SCOTT</sup> and

- "wish (for)." <sup>GINGRICH</sup>  
This Greek word appears seven times in Acts through First John – and nowhere else. In the texts below, I have put the words translated from this Greek word in bold type.
- ⇒ "And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds" (Acts 26:29). Other versions read, "pray God," <sup>NIV</sup> and "pray to God," <sup>NRSV</sup> The Greek word for "God" is used in this text – "to GOD."
- ⇒ "Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day" (Acts 27:29). Other versions read, "prayed for," <sup>NKJV/NIV/RSV/NRSV</sup>
- ⇒ "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom 9:3). Other versions read, "have a desire." <sup>BBE</sup> The word for God is not used in this text.
- ⇒ "Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates" (2 Cor 13:7). Most versions read "pray to God." This is because the Greek word for God (θεῷ) is used in the text: "pray to GOD."
- ⇒ "For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection" (2 Cor 13:9). Other versions read, "pray," <sup>NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV/RSV/ASV</sup> "God" is not specified in the text.
- ⇒ "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Most version s read "pray." The word "God" is not in this text.
- ⇒ "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 1:2). Other versions read, "pray," <sup>NKJV/NASB/NIV/NRSV/RSV</sup> "desire," <sup>DARBY</sup> "hope," <sup>NAB/NJB</sup>

Based on the use of the word, I conclude that "wish" speaks of an especially

strong and compelling desire. There is nothing casual or uncertain about the word. As used here, the desire is toward the Lord, seeking His will and power in the matter. In some of the other texts, prayer to God may be assumed, but it is not integral to the text. When the men aboard the vessel in a fierce storm are said to have “wished for the day,” the emphasis was that they were fervently looking for the passing of the storm, when the light would no longer be hidden by the dark clouds. For Paul and Luke, prayer to God was no doubt made. For the others, they may very well have prayed to their gods. **The point of the text, however, was the strength of their desire.**

In the text before us, Paul is expressing his heart’s desire – something for which he fervently longed. This was a desire that shaped his speech, moving him to speak with words the Lord could use to turn the heart of the king toward the Lord Jesus.

**One of the Jeopardies of Our Time**

One of the jeopardies of our time is the dulling effect that entertainment and pleasure have upon the hearts of men. With such a variety of things being served up to the masses, a fervent desire for one thing, particularly the right thing, is exceedingly rare.

**Strong spiritual desires are not at all common in the professed Christian community.** This is involved in being “*fervent in spirit*” (Acts 18:25; Rom 12:11). Is an aspect of “*laboring fervently in prayers*” (Col 4:12). We do well to remember that it is an “*effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man*” that “*availeth much*” (James 5:16). We are to “*love one another with a pure heart fervently*” (1 Pet 1:22), having “*fervent charity among*” ourselves (1 Pet 4:8).

Such holy traits are neutralized by religious entertainment, distractions, and childish simplicity. People who cave in to such pressures will not have compelling desires such as those Paul expresses in this text. They will be locked into mediocrity.

**ALSO ALL THAT HEAR ME THIS DAY**

“... that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day . . .” Other versions read, “*not only you but all who are listening to me today,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*not only thou, but all who have heard me this day,*”<sup>DARBY</sup> and “*both you and everyone here in this audience,*”<sup>NLT</sup>

With one sweeping word, Paul addresses an entire assembly of political and military dignitaries, stating his fervent desire that they would be fully persuaded of the

things he had spoken.

**Salvation Is Universal in Its Provision**

Paul’s words underscore the universality of salvation’s provision. No member of Adam’s race has been excluded, for “*the iniquity of us all*” were laid upon Christ (Isa 53:6). Jesus did, in fact, take away “*the sin of the world*” (John 1:29), and “*put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*” (Heb 9:26). Jesus partook of flesh and blood in order “*that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,*” thus providing for the thorough deliverance of all who believe (Heb

*salvation*” (2 Thess 2:13).

**However, the knowledge of these facts is not to impact on the manner in which the Gospel is preached.** This is because the details of such things have not yet been revealed. By its very nature, the Gospel is designed for all men – “*every creature*” (Mk 16:15). It is in the preaching of this Gospel that the election of God is made known. Those who have the Spirit of God will have His attitude as well: “*Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim 2:4). How men handle this truth may very well vary,

**Men are very prone to sift truth through their own conclusions, rather than sifting their conclusions through the truth of God. If a person is going to have peace within, and do the work of the Lord with a good conscience, he must do the latter.**

2:14). With remarkable precision it is written that Christ “*died for all*” (2 Cor 5:14-15).

The remedy for sin reaches as far as the transgression, which defiled all men, and even all creation (Rom 5:12-19).

When Jesus entered into the world, an angel announced this was an era of “*good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people*” (Lk 2:10). Jesus is said to have given Himself “*a ransom for all*” (1 Tim 2:4). There is a sense in which God is “*the Savior of all men*” (1 Tim 4:10). The grace of God that brings salvation “*hath appeared to all men*” (Tit 2:11). **So far as potentiality is concerned, no offspring of Adam has been excluded from the provision of salvation.** Whoever believes will receive it – “*everyone that believeth*” (Rom 1:16; 10:4).

It is the knowledge of this glorious circumstance that enabled Paul to express his desire for everyone within the sound of his voice: “*not only you, but also all who are listening to me today.*”<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

There is such a thing as “*the election of grace*” (Rom 11:5), and those who were foreknown (Rom 8:29). Predestination is not merely a theological term, but is a revealed reality (Rom 8:29-30; Eph 1:5,11). There are those who are “*chosen . . . to*

but the truth itself remains constant. It may prove difficult for some to even think in such a manner, but they do well to learn to adjust their thinking to be in agreement with the God who made and saved them.

**Men are very prone to sift truth through their own conclusions, rather than sifting their conclusions through the truth of God.** If a person is going to have peace within, and do the work of the Lord with a good conscience, he must do the latter.

All of this is to say that Paul was not simply spouting rhetoric when he declared his desire for everyone listening to him. This is really the way he thought, and his heart was in his words.

**BOTH ALMOST AND ALTOGETHER AS I AM**

“ . . . were both almost, and altogether such as I am . . .” Other versions read, “*might become both almost and altogether,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*whether in a short or a long time . . . might become such as I am,*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*Short time or long . . . may become what I am,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*Whether it takes a short time or a long time . . . might become just like me,*”<sup>CJB</sup> “*either easily or with difficulty . . . might become as I am,*”<sup>CSB</sup> “*whether with little or with much, not thou only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am,*”<sup>ASV</sup> “*were both almost, and*

*altogether such as I am,*"<sup>GENEVA</sup> "sooner or later not only you but all who listen to me today might become as I am,"<sup>NAB</sup> "Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am,"<sup>NLT</sup> "both somewhat, and also in a great deal, such as I am,"<sup>PNT</sup> "were not somewhat only but altogether such as I am."<sup>TNT</sup>

The point of being like Paul refers to the advantages realized in Christ Jesus: being justified from all things, forgiven, sanctified, and having access to God. Being made free, being made an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, and having his name written in heaven. **He is not talking about social status, but of heavenly Divine acceptance.**

Furthermore, the point is not the length of time it would take to bring the people to such a state. In my judgment, the many translations that leave this impression are 100% wrong. **Paul is speaking about the level of their persuasion, not of the length of time or number of words required to obtain that persuasion.**

Once again, the alarming absence of persuasion among professed believers is of great concern. Too many questions are being asked, which betrays the absence of, or at least a deficiency in, persuasion. This is not good. The Scriptures confirm that those who were accepted by God were a persuaded people.

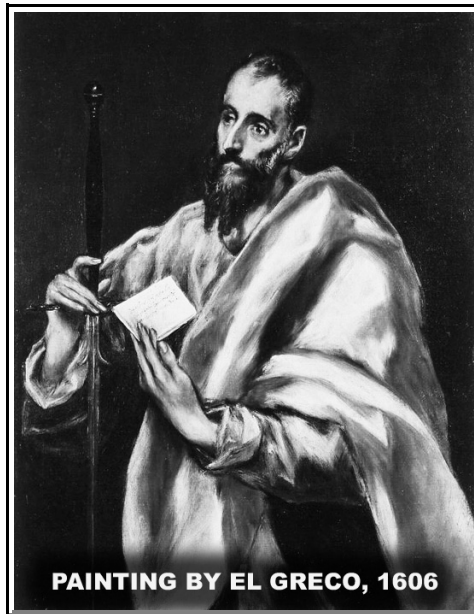
- ⇒ It is said of Paul and Barnabas that they "**persuaded**" many Jews and proselytes to "*continue in the grace of God*" (Acts 13:43).
- ⇒ While in Corinth, Paul went into the synagogue "**and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks**" (Acts 18:4).
- ⇒ In Ephesus Paul "**persuaded** . . . much people" (Acts 19:26).
- ⇒ It is said of Abraham that he was "**fully persuaded that**" what God had "*promised, He was able also to perform*" (Rom 4:21).
- ⇒ Paul was "**persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord**" (Rom 8:38-39).

- ⇒ Believers who hold to conflicting views are admonished to be "**fully persuaded**" in their own mind (Rom 14:5).
- ⇒ Paul was "**persuaded**" that God was "*able to keep*" what he had "*committed to Him against that day*" (2 Tim 1:12).
- ⇒ Those who lived prior to Christ, and even prior to the Law, saw the promises "*afar off, and were persuaded of them*" (Heb 11:13).

**Make no mistake about it, a lack of persuasion is a fundamental lack.** Such a condition must not be allowed to continue, for it puts the individual lacking such persuasion in a vulnerable situation.

**EXCEPT THESE BONDS**

" . . . *except these bonds.*" Other versions read, "*except for these chains,*"<sup>NKJV</sup> and "*except for being a prisoner.*"<sup>GWN</sup>



Paul knew well what it meant to suffer "*for righteousness' sake*" (Matt 5:10). He did not mitigate his testimony to avoid incarceration, nor was he ashamed of his chain. He wrote to Timothy, saying that Onesiphorus was not ashamed of his chain: "*The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain*" (2 Tim 1:16). He also admonished Timothy not to be ashamed of the fact that he (Paul) was a prisoner: "*Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the*

*power of God*" (2 Tim 1:8). Like the apostles, he no doubt was rejoicing that he was "*counted worthy to suffer shame for His name*" (Acts 5:41).

Notwithstanding this man of God did not desire for any one else to be in chains because of their persuasion. He knew there was no glory in suffering itself, for a person can suffer because he is an "*evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters*" (1 Pet 4:15). That is the kind of suffering that must be avoided, for it reproaches Christ and demeans the Gospel. **A Gospel that has no power, and does not change those who embrace it, ought not to be preached to anyone, much less everyone.**

Paul knows that those who "*live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Tim 3:12), yet he does not desire the saints to be persecuted or placed in chains.

For those unacquainted with the ways of the Lord, this is a difficult thing to harmonize. This is particularly true of those who have a bent toward Law, which views everything from a strictly legal point of view. Such people are unable to distinguish between results and responsibilities – and they are not always synonymous.

There appears to be another lesser reason for Paul referring to his chains – holding them up before the audience, so to speak. **He was in chains unjustly, and he would not let te officials forget it.** Throughout this episode, he has made frequent reference to his innocence.

- ⇒ To Felix he said, "*And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me*" Acts 24:12-13),.
- ⇒ Again he said to Felix, "*Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council*" (Acts 24:18-20).
- ⇒ Paul told Festus, "*Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I*

**offended any thing at all**" (Acts 25:8).

⇒ To Festus he said, **"to the Jews I have done no wrong"** (25:10).

⇒ **"For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar"** (Acts 25:11).

against Him.

⇒ **"Which of you convinceth Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?"** (John 8:46).

⇒ **"Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of those works do ye stone Me?"** (John 10:32).

**The point is that the people of God are to live above reproach, so that no charges against them can be**

**The point is that the people of God are to live above reproach, so that no charges against them can be confirmed. The admonitions to see to it that we live in such a manner are numerous. These expose those who excuse sin and tell us that believers all sin all of the time, and constantly need to have their hearts broken and to repent.**

In addition to his own testimony,

⇒ Lysias the captain had reported, **"Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds"** (Acts 23:29).

⇒ When charges were brought against Paul before Festus, it was observed, **"And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove"** (Acts 25:7).

⇒ Festus told Agrippa, **"Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed"** (Acts 25:18).

⇒ He also said to Agrippa, **"But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters"** (Acts 25:20).

#### The Example of Jesus

The Lord Jesus Himself challenged His opponents to raise a legitimate charge

**confirmed.** The admonitions to see to it that we live in such a manner are numerous. These expose those who excuse sin and tell us that believers all sin all of the time, and constantly need to have their hearts broken and to repent. That such action should take place when sin is committed is certainly true. However, it is wise not to neglect the admonitions directed to the saints.

⇒ **"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake"** (Matt 5:11).

⇒ **"Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame"** (1 Cor 15:34)

⇒ **"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"** (2 Cor 7:1).

⇒ **"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"** (Eph 5:3-4).

⇒ **"That ye may approve things that are**

**excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ"** (Phil 1:10).

⇒ **"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world"** (Phil 2:14-15).

⇒ **"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (1 Thess 5:23).

⇒ **"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a 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"** (1 Pet 3:15-16).

⇒ **"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless"** (2 Pet 3:14).

⇒ **"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"** (1 John 2:1).

**There is more to a holy life than simply doing what we have been commanded to do.** Such a life is a visible witness to the effectiveness of grace. Those who are honest will be forced to acknowledge the effectiveness of the grace of God – even though that is not precisely how they view it. In this extended episode the innocence of Paul has been both witnessed and confessed by Lysias the captain, Felix, Festus, and now Agrippa.

Scripture also attests that false accusers will be brought to shame for leveling false accusations at the righteous (1 Pet 3:16). False accusers will also **"glorify God in the day of visitation"** (1 Pet 2:12). Ultimately, this will take place when Jesus confesses the saints to God and before the holy angels (Rev 3:5). It can also occur if Jesus visits the accusers as He did Saul of Tarsus. During that visitation, Saul instantly ceased his opposition to the saints, and

heartily embraced their Savior and cause. Jesus also reminded the persecuted church in Philadelphia, “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are

*Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee”* (Rev 3:9). None of these promises

apply to those who fail to mortify their members, subduing fleshly inclinations. An unholy life actually disqualifies one from obtaining the promises of reference.

**THIS MAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN SET AT LIBERTY**

“<sup>30</sup> *And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:*<sup>31</sup> *And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.*<sup>32</sup> *Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.”*

Having heard the witness of Paul, this meeting was dismissed. No further questions were asked of Paul. He had given a reason for the hope that was within him, and had done so in an effective manner, thereby bringing honor to both God and Christ.

**THEY TALKED AMONG THEMSELVES**

*“And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them.”*

Agrippa, Festus, and Bernice got up, and *“those who were sitting with them.”*<sup>NASB</sup> Thus, we are apprised that the whole group had been sitting, with their attention fastened upon Paul. Technically, it was an evaluation session, but this group of people, probably, significant in number, had heard more than they thought they would. Earlier this group of people were defined as , *“Agrippa . . . and Bernice . . . with the chief captains, and principal men of the city”* (Acts 25:23). Festus was there as well. In our day, this would be like speaking to the president, the whitehouse staff, and the senators and representatives. Jesus had told Ananias that Paul would bear His name *“before kings”* (Acts 9:15). But who could have imagined something of this magnitude?

The last words Paul said to them all were, *“And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds”* (Acts 26:29).

**Keep in mind that at this gathering no accusing Jews were**

**present.** They had already heard Paul’s witness and rejected it. Now he had been able to bear witness to Agrippa without the encumbering presence of the unbelieving Jews. This too was ordered by the Lord, fulfilling the word of Solomon: *“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD”* (Prov 16:33).

**NOTHING WORTHY OF DEATH OR OF BONDS**

*“And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.”* Other versions read, *“when they had drawn aside, they began talking with one another, saying, This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment,”*

in disagreement with the king, and that would not have been wise. Thus his mouth was stopped, so that he raised no contention about the matter.

This group of heathens, uncultured for truth, were more sensitive to it than the accusing Jews were, who had been cultured to receive the truth.

**MIGHT HAVE BEEN SET AT LIBERTY**

*“Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.”* Other versions read, *“might have been set free,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“might have been made free,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“could have been released,”*<sup>CJB</sup> *“might have been let go,”*<sup>DARBY</sup> and *“might have been loosed.”*<sup>GENEVA</sup>

**But there was more to this matter than Paul’s personal experience. Neither, indeed, was this strictly a matter of justice and social correctness. Jesus had personally revealed to Paul, “Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome”**

<sup>NASB</sup> *“while talking with one another they said,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“as they were leaving,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“As they talked it over afterwards they agreed,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“as they continued to talk the matter over together,”* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> *“They quickly agreed on Paul’s innocence saying, “There’s nothing in this man deserving prison, let alone death,”* <sup>MESSAGE</sup> *“This man practices nothing worthy of death or chains,”* <sup>EMTV</sup> and *“after they had gone out, they said to one another, This man is doing nothing deserving of death or [even] of imprisonment.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The hearers were all in perfect accord: Paul had not done, nor was he practicing, anything deserving of either death or imprisonment. Festus did not speak up again, saying Paul was *“mad,”* as he had earlier. Had he done so, he would have been

So far as legality was concerned, king Agrippa saw that the death or incarceration of Paul could in no way be justified. Had Paul not appealed to Caesar, which right would not be withdrawn from him, he might have been fully exonerated from all charges, and consequently freed.

But there was more to this matter than Paul’s personal experience. Neither, indeed, was this strictly a matter of justice and social correctness. Jesus had personally revealed to Paul, *“Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome”* (Acts 23:11). **While under house arrest, he would preach there “for two whole years,” with Rome paying the bills** (Acts 28:30-31). It is the promise of this

**Thus, in the midst of a distracting, and even painful experience, Divine direction was realized. Among other things, this confirms the need for spiritual alertness during difficult times. Care must be taken not to become absorbed with our trials, lest we miss something from heaven that may be intended by them. This is the sort of thing that cannot be outlined or legislated.**

Thus, in the midst of a distracting, and even painful experience, Divine direction was realized. Among other things, this confirms the need for spiritual alertness during difficult times. Care must be taken not to become absorbed with our trials, lest we miss something from heaven that may be intended by them. This is the sort of thing that cannot be outlined or legislated. Nevertheless, it is involved in being “sober” (1 Thess 5:6,8), “awake” (Rom 13:11; 1 Cor 15:34; Eph 5:14), and properly focused (2 Cor 4:18; Heb 12:1-2). **The Kingdom of God does not center around us; we are not the main persons.** We are participants, but the focus is not upon us. However, if, in our trials, we become absorbed with what is happening to us, we have, in fact, shifted the focus to ourselves. That will yield no good thing.

opportunity that was driving Paul.

The revelation was not given to Paul until this entire episode was well under way. He had been dragged from the Temple, beaten, rescued by captain Lysias, and made a defense before the Jews. During that time, he had set his accusers against themselves by pointing out that he was a Pharisee, and

affirmed that he had been called into question because of “the hope and resurrection of the dead” (Acts 23:8). The tumult grew so intense that Paul was sequestered away from the crowd. It was the following night that Jesus told him he would testify about Him in Rome.

## CONCLUSION

**This entire account, commencing in Acts 21:27, is a macro view of Jesus governing His Kingdom.** The government has been placed upon His shoulder (Isa 9:6-7), and this is an example of His administration. Notice the people that have been involved thus far.

- ⇒ Jews from Asia (21:27).
- ⇒ “All the people” who were in the Temple complex at that time (21:27b-28).
- ⇒ Trophimus, who was traveling with Paul, and was a Greek (21:29).
- ⇒ All the city of Jerusalem (21:30).
- ⇒ A chief captain of the Roman army (21:31).
- ⇒ The soldiers and centurions that came with the captain (21:32).
- ⇒ The soldiers who carried Paul to safety (21:35).
- ⇒ A centurion to whom Paul spoke concerning Roman law (21:25-26).
- ⇒ The chief priests (21:30).
- ⇒ The Jewish council (21:30).

- ⇒ The high priest Ananias (23:2).
- ⇒ The servant who struck Paul on the mouth (23:2-3).
- ⇒ Those who were standing by when Paul responded to the action, challenging what he said (23:4).
- ⇒ Sadducees (23:6).
- ⇒ Pharisees (23:6).
- ⇒ Forty Jews who banded together and plotted to kill Paul (23:12-13).
- ⇒ The elders (23:14).
- ⇒ Paul’s sister (23:16).
- ⇒ Paul’s sister’s son (23:16).
- ⇒ One of the centurions whom Paul instructed to take his nephew to the captain, informing him of the plot against him (23:17).
- ⇒ Two centurions that Lysias called to arrange for Paul being conducted to Caesarea (23:23).
- ⇒ Two hundred soldiers (23:23).
- ⇒ Seventy horsemen (23:23).

- ⇒ Two hundred spearmen (23:23).
- ⇒ Felix the governor (23:26).
- ⇒ Tertullus, an orator (24:1-2),
- ⇒ The Jews that brought Tertullus (24:9).
- ⇒ Drusilla, Felix’s wife (24:24).
- ⇒ Festus, who replaced Felix (25:27).
- ⇒ Caesar (25:11-12).
- ⇒ Agrippa (25:13).
- ⇒ Bernice (25:13).
- ⇒ The chief captains of Caesarea (25:23).
- ⇒ The chief men of the city of Caesarea (25:23).

There is a brief listing of hundreds, and even thousands of people, that became involved in this affair. They included foreign Jews, the entire city of Jerusalem, Jewish authorities, an army, military leaders, governors, a governor’s wife, a king, and a king’s sister.

There are also places involved: the Temple, the city of Jerusalem, the city of Antipatris, the city of Caesarea, and the governor’s mansion.

Which of these individuals, groups, or places was not under the government of Jesus? Could any of them successfully void the will of the Lord? Indeed not! There was a sense in which they were all

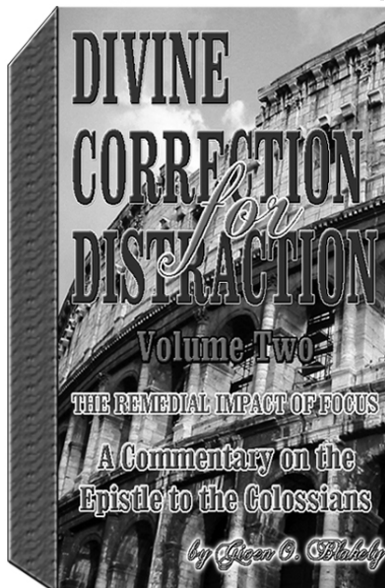
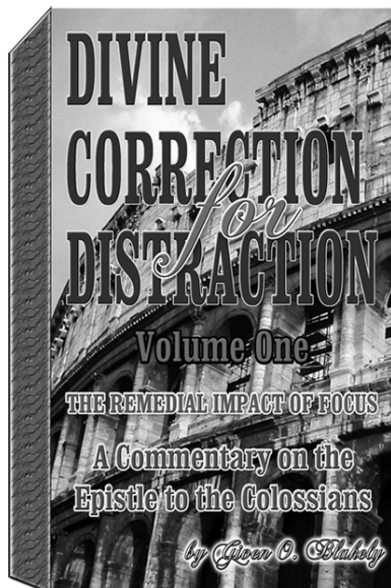
pawns in the hands of the Lord – vessels to be used as He saw fit. In it all, the Lord was working all things together for the good of Paul. Over and above that, He was so working as to cause praise in heaven and

among the discerning on earth. He was also revealing His control of the wicked one and all of his seen and unseen forces. Indeed, *“If &#201c;be for us, who can be against us?”*

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 8/27/10. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The one hundredth and second lesson will cover verses 1 through 11 of the twenty-seventh chapter: **“PAUL WARNS OF IMPENDING DANGER.”** Paul begins his voyage to Rome in order to realization the promise of Jesus, that he would bear witness to Him in Rome. Paul is given some liberty on the voyage, the Lord helping him. During the trip Paul warns the men that the voyage would be with hurt and much damage. However, the contradicting word of the master and owner of the ship was believed, and Paul’s warning rejected. 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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