

Acts Chapter 26

Verses 26:1-29

Paul's fifth of 6 defenses (22:1-21; 22:30 to 23:10; 24:10-21; 25:1-12; 28:17-19).

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

“Permitted to speak”:

Since no one was there to accuse Paul, Agrippa permitted him to speak in his defense.

“Stretched forth the hand”:

A common gesture at the beginning of a speech (12:17; 13:16; 19:33).

Festus was really the head of this court, but he had undoubtedly stepped down so that his superior might deal with this seemingly impossible situation.

He (Agrippa), at once turned the floor over to Paul.

It appears Agrippa is eager to hear from Paul.

Paul is eager to speak on his own behalf.

Acts 26:2 "I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:"

Paul is a wonderful orator and he knows that he is not really trying to convince the others, but king Agrippa, so he addresses him.

We see Paul eager to address him and clear his name.

Paul immediately gets Agrippa on his side, when he tells him he is an expert in Jewish law.

Acts 26:3 "Especially [because I know] thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently."

“Expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews”:

See note on 25:26.

Paul's main purpose here was not to defend himself but to convert Agrippa and the others (see verses 28-29).

In the last sentence above Paul says, if you will hear me out, I will prove my innocence to you.

Acts 26:4 "My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;"

We see here, that Paul tells Agrippa that the very Jews that are trying to kill him, knew him really well when he grew up in Jerusalem.

Paul had gone to school under Gamaliel in Jerusalem we learned in another lesson, and he was probably class-mates with many of his accusers.

He says I am no stranger to them.

Acts 26:5 "Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."

"I lived a Pharisee":

See note on Matt. 3:7; Phil. 3:5.

He tells Agrippa that these same men knew that he was a Pharisee and a very strict keeper of Moses' law.

None of them would testify in Paul's behalf, but if they did and told the truth, they would have to admit that he was a very strict Pharisee.

Acts 26:6 "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:"

"For the hope of the promise":

The coming of the Messiah and His kingdom (1:6; 3:22-24; 13:23-33; Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Dan. 7:14; Mica 5:2; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:11-12).

The hope of the promise that God had made was that Messiah would come.

All Jews knew of the promise of Messiah.

He says it is because I believe in the promise God said that he would send Messiah.

This promise had been made to Abraham.

Acts 26:7 "Unto which [promise] our twelve tribes, instantly serving [God] day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews."

"Twelve tribes":

A common New Testament designation for Israel (Matt. 19:28; James 1:1; Rev. 21:12).

The 10 northern tribes were not lost.

Representatives for each intermingled with the two southern tribes before and after the Exile, a process that had begun during the reigns of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:1-11) and Josiah (see 2 Chronicles 34:1-9).

The promise of Messiah and the promise of the resurrection, and eternal life for the Christian is all the same.

Paul says here, because I believe that Jesus Christ was Messiah and believe in the resurrection, I am accused of the Jews.

Acts 26:8 "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"

Paul found it inconceivable that he should be condemned for believing in the resurrection, the great hope of the Jewish people (see note on 24:15).

Remember, Agrippa is a Jew.

He believes that God was Creator of the world, why would it be hard for him to believe that God could raise the dead?

Acts 26:9 "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

Paul draws back now a little and says I once did not believe myself.

I could not believe that someone from Nazareth could be the Messiah, and I too was opposed to Jesus of Nazareth.

Acts 26:10 "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against [them]."

"Saints":

Christian believers (1 Cor. 1:2).

"I gave my voice against them":

Literally "I threw my pebble", a reference to the ancient custom of recording votes by means of colored pebbles.

This verse may also indicate that Paul had once been a member of the Sanhedrin.

The word translated “voice” (Greek psephon), is the word for the pebble used by ancient juries in voting: a black one for conviction, a white one for acquittal.

Paul cast his vote against the Christians.

This lends some support to the opinion that Paul had been a member of the Sanhedrin or some lesser council.

Paul freely admits his fault in not only consenting to the death of the Christians, but actually as a member of the Sanhedrin, had given his consent to have them killed.

Much of Luke's writings use words that doctors used, and this just verifies that Luke himself was the author.

I believe Luke listened in on this trial.

He knows too many details.

Acts 26:11 "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled [them] to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted [them] even unto strange cities."

“Compelled them to blaspheme”:

To renounce their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul did not just jail them, but stoned them, and persecuted them as well, trying to make them renounce their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul really worked out of the temple in Jerusalem.

Verses 12-14

The third account of Paul’s conversion (see notes on 9:1-17; 22:6-23).

For the interpretation of the events at Paul’s conversion (see the note on 9:7).

Acts 26:12 "Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,"

Paul was on his way to capture Christian men and women and bring them back to be imprisoned in Jerusalem.

You see, at that time Paul was working hand in hand with the high priests.

They all thought they were in the will of God stopping these Christians.

Acts 26:13 "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me."

All of a sudden, Paul encountered the Light of the world.

This Light (Jesus Christ), is the source of all light.

Even the sun is just a container that we see a portion of the Light in.

The Light that Paul encountered is not to be even compared to the sun.

The sun is not the Light.

It is a light.

We see here that Paul didn't immediately understand what this Light was; he just knew it was much greater than the light of the sun.

He tells Agrippa that the men with him saw this Light, as well.

Acts 26:14 "And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

This Light was so bright that Paul fell blinded to the earth.

The other men did not hear the voice, only Paul heard the voice.

This kicking against the pricks is just saying to Paul, why fight, just submit to God.

The Light was telling Paul that it was useless to fight against God.

Of course, Paul did not realize he was fighting God.

Paul must submit to God's will now.

This voice must have been in Paul's ear.

God can speak to an individual in a large group, so that no one else knows, just as he had done here for Paul.

Paul mentioned that this voice was speaking in Hebrew, so they would know this was the Hebrew's God.

Acts 26:15 "And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Paul's question was a legitimate question.

He had never come in direct contact with Jesus before.

Can you imagine how he felt when the voice said, Jesus whom thou persecutest?

Of course Paul had not persecutest Jesus personally, but had persecuted Jesus' followers.

Acts Chapter 26 Questions

1. What did Agrippa say to Paul in verse 1?
2. Who did Paul address in his speech?
3. What did Paul say Agrippa was expert in?
4. How did Paul ask Agrippa to hear him?
5. In verse 4, what did Paul say all the Jews knew?
6. In verse 5, how had Paul lived?
7. In verse 6, Paul says he stood judged for what?
8. Who had this promise been made to?
9. Paul asked Agrippa, why should you think it incredible that God could do what?
10. Paul thought it right to do things contrary to whom?
11. Who had Paul put in prison?
12. Who had given Paul this authority?
13. What city did this happen in?
14. What had Paul given his voice against the Christians to do?
15. Verse 11, tells us that Paul tried to force the Christians to do what?

16. Where was Paul headed, when he saw the Light?
17. What time of day did he see the Light brighter than the sun?
18. Who else saw the Light?
19. What happened to Paul, when he saw the Light?
20. What language did God speak to Paul in?
21. What question did He ask Paul?
22. What question did Paul ask Him?
23. What name did He give?
24. Who had Paul persecuted, really?