

**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:**  
**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:**  
**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.***

Luke's narrative continues of the flow of events that began in chapter 21.

King Agrippa turned his attention to Paul and granted him permission to speak in his own defense. Paul declared it would be his pleasure to answer the accusations made against him by the Jewish religious leaders before the king because he knew that the king was quite knowledgeable of the customs and teachings of the Jews. He then begged the king's indulgence as he began his defense.

David Guzik made an interesting observation about Agrippa: "Paul stood before the man whose great-grandfather had tried to kill Jesus as a baby; his grandfather had John the Baptist beheaded; his father had martyred the first apostle, James."

**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;**  
**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.**  
**Acts 26:6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:**  
**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.**  
**Acts 26:8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?**

Paul noted that it was well known that he had grown up among his own people, the Jewish people, both in Tarsus (where he was born) and later in Jerusalem (where he came to study with Gamaliel). Those who had known him the longest could testify that he had lived in strict obedience to the law as a Pharisee, the most exacting sect of Jewish religion.

I like the CJB translation of verse 8: "How ironic it is that I stand on trial here because of my hope in the promise made to our fathers!"

Paul explained that it was in expectation of the fulfillment of this very promise that was the primary motivation for the Jews continued commitment to serving God. Paul declared that it was because of his belief in this same hope—the hope of resurrection from the dead to enjoy life in God's kingdom—that the Jews were pressing charges against him. Why? Because he based his hope in the

resurrected Lord Jesus.

Considering that the Jews believed in the God of their fathers as described in the Torah, Paul wondered why they would question his testimony concerning the resurrection of Jesus.

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

**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.**

Continuing his testimony, Paul goes on to tell that he had also once thought the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth to be false teaching and had persecuted those that followed Jesus. Paul revealed that with the authority of the chief priests he had put many of those that followed Jesus in prison and agreed with the decision to execute them. Paul told how he searched out these people in the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme God and deny their faith. He was so passionate in his efforts to eradicate this sect that he even sought permission to seek them out in other countries.

Sad to say, this brings to mind the tactics of Islamic radicals today.

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

**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.**

**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.***

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

One day Paul had been authorized and commissioned by the chief priests to seek out the followers of Jesus in Damascus. Paul described how at noon, a great light from heaven, a light that was brighter than the sun, surrounded him and his companions. It caused them all to fall to their knees. He then heard a voice speaking to him in the Hebrew tongue saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Why are you fighting me?" (my paraphrase) He then told Agrippa that the voice identified Himself as "Jesus whom thou persecutest." In other words, by persecuting those that were His followers, Paul was actually persecuting the Lord.

I am reminded that we are "in Christ" and that He indwells us in the person of the Holy Spirit. Everything that we who place our faith in Him experience, He

experiences.

*Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."*

*2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

*John 14:16–17 "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."*

*Romans 8:9 "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

"it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" - The NIV Commentary describes this phrase as an expression for opposition to deity. It states, "Lest he be misunderstood as proclaiming only a Galilean prophet he had formerly opposed, he was pointing out what was obvious to any Jew: correction by a voice from heaven meant opposition to God himself."

**Acts 26:16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;**

**Acts 26:17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,**

**Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.**

The Lord commanded Paul to get up and get ready to serve Him. The Lord told him that he had been chosen to serve God by giving testimony to the Lord's revelation of Himself to Paul both then and in the future. Jesus told him that he would rescue him from the attacks of both the Jews and Gentiles to whom he would be sent to declare the gospel. His mission would be to encourage them to open their eyes and turn from darkness to light, from following Satan to following God. He was to share with them how they could get forgiveness for their sins and receive the inheritance that was promised to those who were saved by faith in Jesus.

As I read this section, I thought of the following verses.

*John 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*

*1 Peter 1:3–4 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that*

*fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you...."*

*Ephesians 2:8–9 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*

**Acts 26:19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:**

**Acts 26:20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.**

**Acts 26:21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*.**

Paul told king Agrippa that he could not disobey his vision from heaven. He began giving his testimony first in Damascus, then Jerusalem, and throughout Israel, and finally to the Gentiles. He was faithful to declare the gospel message—that men should repent of their sins and turn to faith in God, proving their faith by their works.

Paul concludes that it was for obeying the Lord God that the Jewish leaders took hold of him with intent to kill him.

**Acts 26:22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:**

**Acts 26:23 That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.**

Paul testified that with God's help (in spite of great persecution) he had continued in the work God had called him to until this very day. He witnessed to everyone without regard to his/her position in society. He had been faithful to testify to those things that had been fulfilled by the prophecies of Moses and the prophets. They had prophesied that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead to an eternal existence. This Messiah, Jesus, would be a light to both the Jewish people and the Gentiles.

I cannot read this section without thinking of the words of Isaiah.

*Isaiah 53:5 & 10-11 "But 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.... Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."*

And of Zechariah.

*Zechariah 12:10, 13:6 & 14:9 "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the*

*inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn....And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends....And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one."*

The prophecies of Moses are apparent through the types that are apparent in retrospect as we consider the Lord's death and resurrection, e.g.:

- By the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac and God providing the sacrifice.
- By the Passover – the sacrifice of an innocent lamb without blemish to provide for the deliverance of those who placed their faith in God.

Regarding a servant to provide light to the Gentiles, I again go back to Isaiah.

*Isaiah 42:1–7 "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles....He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law....I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."*

**Acts 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.**

**Acts 26:25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.**

**Acts 26:26 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.**

It seems that Festus could take no more, so he interrupts and accuses Paul of being a mad man. Paul assured the governor that he was quite sane and speaking the truth. Paul appealed to Agrippa to affirm him. He declared that he was sure that Agrippa was keenly aware of the truth of his words.

**Acts 26:27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.**

**Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.**

**Acts 26:29 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.**

Paul turned to directly address Agrippa asking him if he believed the prophets; then declaring that he knew Agrippa believed them before he could even answer. Agrippa basically affirmed Paul's conclusion by declaring that he was almost

persuaded to become a Christian himself.

Paul mirrored the heart of God when he declared that he wished that not only Agrippa, but also everyone that heard his testimony that day were “such as I am”—inferring, a Christian—but not a prisoner.

**Acts 26:30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:**

**Acts 26:31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.**

**Acts 26:32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.**

Finally, the king, the governor, Bernice and the governor’s counselors separated themselves to confer. They agreed that Paul had done nothing worthy of death or imprisonment. Agrippa noted that they could have set Paul free if he had not appealed to Caesar. (Evidently, once he made an appeal to Caesar, the course of events could not be changed.)