

Journey Through Acts
“The Heavenly Vision”
Acts 26:1-32

Introduction:

1. As We Continue Our ***Journey Through Acts*** Tonight:
 - Please Turn Back In Your Bibles With Me:
 - To Acts 26 - Where Paul Remains:
 - In The City Of Caesarea:
 - In Chains, As A Prisoner Of The Roman Empire!
 - Of Course - As We’ve Seen:
 - In Previous Chapters:
 - The Apostle Paul Had Committed:
 - No Crimes!
 - As He Stated Back:
 - In 25:8 - “Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all!”
 - And - Neither The Jews Nor The Romans:
 - Were Able To Produce Any Witnesses:
 - To Prove Otherwise!
 - Again - In 25:7 - “The Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove!”
2. But - Since Paul Sensed:
 - That He Would Not Find Justice:
 - In The Courts Of Festus:
 - Whether He Was In Caesarea Or Back In Jerusalem:
 - He Claimed His Right As A Roman Citizen:
 - And - 25:11 - “Appealed Unto Caesar!”
 - ***Now*** - Paul Was ***Assured***:
 - Of A Trip To Rome!
 - Just As The Lord Had Promised Him:
 - On That Long & Lonely Night Back In Jerusalem - Over Two Years Before!
3. But Since The Roman Governor Festus:
 - Didn’t Know What To Tell Caesar:
 - About The Prisoner He Was About To:
 - Place On His Door-Step:
 - He Took Advantage Of A Visit By A Neighboring Jewish Ruler & His Sister:
 - King Herod Agrippa II & Bernice!
4. And This Is The Setting:
 - For Acts 26! Paul Is Not On Trial:
 - But - He Is Given Yet Another Opportunity:
 - To Witness! And This Time - It Is To:
 - The Very Last King Of The Jews!
 - And So - I Would Like For Us:
 - To Read This Chapter:
 - Without Interruption:
 - As We Hear Paul’s Testimony & Defense For The Second Time:
 - From His Own Mouth!

**** Acts 26:1-32 ****

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

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

3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech

thee to hear me patiently.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

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

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

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

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

29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

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

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

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

5. You Can Just Sense The Passion Of Paul:

- In His Words!

- A Passion:

- For The Truth!

- A Passion:

- For The Lord!

- And - A Passion:

- For The Man Sitting Before Him:

- His Own Country-Man & King:

- Agrippa!

6. But - The Cause Of Paul's Passion:

- Is What He Calls - Back In 26:19:

- "The Heavenly Vision!"

- A Vision Of The Lord Jesus Christ:

- Alive & Well - And Full Of Glory:

- On The Road To Damascus!

- And In This Address:

- Before Festus & Agrippa & Bernice & Other Important Dignitaries:

- Paul Gives Even More Detail:

- Of His "Heavenly Vision" - And What Jesus Said Personally To Him!

7. And So - For The Rest Of Our Time Tonight:

- I Want To Look A Bit More Closely:

- At Paul's "Heavenly Vision" - To See:

- That His Vision Remains:

- As Our Vision!

- And That We Too:

- Must Not - As Paul Also Said In 26:19:

- Be "Disobedient Unto The Heavenly Vision!"

- Because:

* The Heavenly Mission Of Paul Is:

1. ***Our Heavenly Mission:***

- As Well! It Is The Mission Described By Jesus Himself:

- When He Said - In 26:16-18 - "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; / Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, / 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!"

- Paul's Mission Is Our Mission!

- And - What Does This Mission Entail?

- It Is:

- A Mission To Heal!

- To Offer Healing:

- To Those Who Are In Spiritual Blindness!
 - 26:18 - "To Open Their Eyes, And To Turn Them From Darkness To Light!"
- Now - This Is An Interesting Verse:
 - Because - Jesus Is Not Saying That:
 - **He** Will Open Their Eyes - But That:
 - He Will Use **Paul** To Open Their Eyes!
- Paul Was The Divine Tool & Instrument:
 - That Jesus Was Going To Use:
 - To Bring Light Into The Darkness Of Men's Souls!
- And You Must Not Forget:
 - That You Too Are God's Chosen Instrument:
 - And Tool - To "Open" The Eyes Of Lost Sinners To The Light Of The Glory Of Jesus Christ!
 - He Has Also Given You:
- A Mission To Help!
 - To Offer Help:
 - To Those Who Are In Spiritual Bondage!
 - 26:18b - "And From The Power Of Satan Unto God!"
 - I Think That Too Many Times:
 - We Forget That The Reason People Sin:
 - Even In Unspeakable Ways:
 - Is Because They Are Sinners, And Are Under The "Power Of Satan" Himself!
 - And They Need Help!
 - They Need God's Help!
 - And They Need Your Help!
 - We Need To Pray For Each Other:
 - That The Lord Will Give Us:
 - A Greater Heart Of Compassion:
 - For Those Who Are In Bondage To Sin & To Satan!
 - And Seek To Help Them & Turn Them Around To God!
 - Because This Is Your Mission As Well!
 - He Has Also Given Us:
- A Mission Of Hope!
 - To Offer Hope:
 - To Those Who Are Spiritually Broken!
 - It Is A Hope That Can Only Come From:
 - The Forgiveness Of Sin!
 - As Jesus Himself Said:
 - In 26:18c - "That They May Receive Forgiveness Of Sins!"
 - Forgiveness Reveals The Tenderness & The Thoughtfulness:
 - Of God Toward Sinners!
 - Do You Know Someone:
 - Who Needs The Hope Of Forgiveness Tonight?
 - **They** May Not Know They Need It Yet:
 - But **You** Do!
 - Won't You Go To Them:
 - And Show Them That:
 - "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him!" (Daniel 9:9)
 - God Wants Your Heart & Your Arms:
 - To Be As Open To Sinners:
 - Needing Forgiveness:
 - As His Own!
 - Because - He Has Also Given You:
- A Mission Of Heritage!
 - To Offer A Heritage For Spiritual Castaways!
 - Through You & Your Witness:
 - God Can Bring "Many Sons [And Daughters] Unto Glory!" (Hebrews 2:10)

- So That - 26:18d - Sinners Might Receive:
 - An “Inheritance Among Them Which Are Sanctified By Faith That Is In Me!”
- And This Is The Mission:
 - That Jesus Has Given - Not Just Paul:
 - But You & Me!
 - His “Heavenly Vision” Ought To Be Our “Heavenly Vision!”
 - After All - Isn’t This What Jesus Himself:
 - Came To Accomplish?
 - In Luke 4:18-19 - Jesus Quotes From Isaiah 61 - And Describes His Mission:
 - “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, / To preach the acceptable year of the Lord!”
 - And Jesus Can Use You:
 - Do Accomplish His Work!
 - “All the work hinges, therefore, upon the opening of the blind eyes, a work of sovereign power and grace. But any blind Bartimeus can cry, Have mercy on me, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And all God's plans in the Gospel, the church, and the ministry, are to this end, to grant all these saving blessings freely!” (Melanthon W. Jacobus)
- Do Not Forget Your Heavenly Mission!
 - Also - Do Not Forget:

2. ***Our Heavenly Message!***

- That All The:
 - Healing & Help & Hope & Heritage:
 - A Sinner Needs - Can Be Received:
 - 26:18e - “By Faith That Is In Me!”
 - Jesus Said!
 - Because - He Is The One:
 - That Paved The Way:
 - And Paid The Price:
 - Necessary For All Those Spiritual Benefits!
 - And So - Our Message:
 - As Christians & As A Church:
 - Is To Be Paul’s Message:
 - In 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!”
- So: The Love Of Christ:
 - Is Still Our Message!
 - As Paul Said - “That Christ Should Suffer!” (26:23)
 - The Suffering Of Christ Shows & Proves His Love!
 - And - In John 15:13 - Jesus Said:
 - “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends!”
 - And Yet - Jesus Displayed The Greatest Love:
 - When - “While We Were Yet ***Sinners***, Christ Died For Us!” (Romans 5:8)
 - The Love Of Christ:
 - Must Still Be Our Message!
- The Life Of Christ:
 - Is Still Our Message!
 - As Paul Said To Agrippa - “And That He Should Be The First That Should Rise From The Dead!” (26:23)
 - Now - This Does Not Mean That:
 - Others Had Not Been Brought Back To Life!
 - But That - Jesus Christ Was The First To Rise:
 - To Immortality - And:
 - Never To Die Again!
 - Because - As Peter Preached In Acts 2:24:
 - “It was not possible that he should be holden of it!”

- Jesus Is “The Resurrection, And The Life! [And] He That Believeth In [Him], Though He Were Dead, Yet Shall He Live!” (John 11:25)
- The Life Of Christ:
 - Must Still Be Our Message! And:
- The Light Of Christ:
 - Is Still Our Message!
 - As Paul Again Said In 26:23:
 - “And Should Shew Light Unto The People, And To The Gentiles!”
 - The Light Of Christ Shines Forth:
 - Like The Sun - Into All The World:
 - Calling All People:
 - To Trust In Him!
 - It Doesn’t Matter:
 - What Their Pedigree Is!
 - The Light Of Christ Is For “All Nations & Kindreds & People & Tongues!” (Revelation 7:9)
 - It Doesn’t Matter:
 - What Their Position Is!
 - In 26:22 - Paul Told Agrippa That His Message Was For Everyone - “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!” - And:
 - It Doesn’t Even Matter:
 - What Their Past Is!
 - Because In Heaven, There Will Be All Kinds Of Sanctified Sinners There!
 - Paul Said So Much In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 - “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, / Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. / And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God!”
- So - We Must Ever Point Others To:
 - And Never Get Over:
 - The “Old, Old Story Of Jesus And His Love!”
 - And His Life & His Light!
 - Do Not Forget Your Heavenly Message!
 - But Also - Do Not Forget:

3. ***Our Heavenly Madness!***

- As Paul Was Making His Case To Agrippa:
 - Festus Thought He Was Crazy!
 - 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!”
 - Of Course - Paul Was **Not** Mad!
 - But He **Was** Motivated:
 - To Witness The Truth & Even To Win His Austere Audience To Christ!
 - And So - With Great Zeal & Passion:
 - Paul Makes A:
- Strong Appeal!
 - A Strong & Final Appeal:
 - To Agrippa!
 - 26:27 - “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest!”
 - Here - The Questioned:
 - Becomes The Questioner:
 - And A King Is Now On Trial:
 - Before A Prisoner!
 - Surely Paul Had To Be Mad:
 - To Think That He Could Speak To:

- And Win Such A Man As Agrippa!
- And Agrippa Knew What Paul Was Up To!
- And So - We See A:
- Strong Answer!
 - From King Agrippa Himself!
 - In 26:28 - He Says - "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!"
 - Now - This Has Been A Challenging Statement:
 - For Bible Translators - Ever Since There Have Been:
 - Bible Translations!
 - What Did Agrippa Mean?
 - The Word "Almost" Is One Way To Translate A Phrase That Literally Means: "In A Few / Little!"
 - Does He Refer To:
 - Paul's Words?
 - The Time?
 - Or - His Own Response?
 - Some Translations Put Agrippa's Words:
 - In The Form Of A Question!
 - But - It Seems Best To See It More As A Statement!
 - He Was Trying To Get Out Of An Uncomfortable Situation!
 - But - Still - We Are Not Really All That Certain!
 - But - What *Is* Clear:
 - Is That Agrippa Was *Not* Ready:
 - To Be A Christian!
 - He Resisted:
 - The Clear Message:
 - Of The Gospel From Paul's Lips!
 - As John Calvin Once Described It:
 - "Agrippa's meaning is, that he will *not* willingly become a Christian; yea, that he will not be one *at all!*"
- But That Did Not Dissuade Paul:
 - To Make One Final, Passionate Plea!
 - 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!"

Conclusion:

1. And With That:
 - The Moment Given To Agrippa:
 - To Receive & Respond To:
 - The Gospel - Vanished!
 - "Almost Persuaded"
 - Means He Was *Not* Persuaded!
 - And That Broke Paul's Heart!
2. Oh - That The Lord Would Give Us:
 - The Same Kind Of:
 - "Heavenly Madness" For The Souls Of Others!
 - And - As Paul Wrote In 2 Corinthians 5:11:
 - "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men!"
3. So - Tonight:
 - Take Away From This Chapter:
 - This Truth - That:
 - The Mission Of Paul:
 - Is Your Mission!
 - The Message Of Paul:
 - Is Your Message!
 - And - The Madness Of Paul:
 - Ought To Be Your Madness!
 - Because:

- The “Heavenly Vision” Of Paul:
- Belongs To You As Well!

4. Do Not Be:
- “Disobedient Unto – **Your:**
 - Heavenly Vision!”

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