

Acts 26:1-32

Paul's address to King Agrippa is the grand finale of his defense speeches. Although Paul calls his address here a defense, the venue is not a legal trial but a hearing to advise the governor, Festus, as to the contents of his report to Caesar.

Summary

In Acts 26:1-32, Paul preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's promises, declared through Moses and the prophets, to satisfy Israel's hope and bring light to the Gentiles, seeking to persuade the King Agrippa and all those present to turn from sin and put their faith in Jesus the Messiah.

1. Well Informed Audience vv. 1-3

Paul's specific audience was King Agrippa II. He began his defense by rehearsing his impeccable credentials as a Jew, his previous persecution of the church, and his encounter with the risen Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus. Then Paul developed his case by affirming that in Jesus, the suffering and risen Messiah, God had kept his prophetic promises and had fulfilled the resurrection hope that sustains Israel.

2. Zealous Persecutor vv. 9-18

Paul's summary of his pre-Christian life emphasized both its continuity and its discontinuity with the new man he had become since his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. On the one hand, the message that Paul now embraced was the full flowering of the hope that he had always shared with his fellow Jews. The discontinuity between Paul's 'then' and his 'now' consisted in his previous persecution of those who confessed faith in Jesus of Nazareth.

3. Sovereign Commission vv. 19-23

The explanation for the dramatic change in Paul is found in his confrontation with the risen Jesus as he travelled to Damascus in pursuit of Christ's people. The light that surrounded Paul and his traveling companions symbolized Paul's new calling, to fulfill the promise of the servant of the Lord who would open blind eyes and turn people from darkness toward God's light (**Isa. 42:6-7, 16; 49:6**).

Paul immediately began to preach the message of repentance and faith, first in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and all Judea, and finally among the Gentiles.

As an heir of the prophets, he proclaimed nothing but what Moses and the prophets had promised: that the Christ would suffer and then shatter death's gates, blazing the trail to eternal life for those who follow him

4. Comprehensive Gospel vv. 21-23

Paul then shifted the focus from his personal experience to the message that he was called to proclaim, indicating that behind the accusations of the Jewish leaders lay their hostility to his gospel (**Acts 26:21**).

Paul's gospel is comprehensive it benefits.

First, it sets people free from spiritual confusion and ignorance of the true God, turning them from darkness to light (**2 Cor. 4:4, 6**). **Secondly**, it sets believers free from the oppressive tyranny of the great enemy of our souls, turning us from the power of Satan to God. **Thirdly**, it sets believers free from guilt, condemnation, and eternal punishment. **Fourthly**, through the gospel, God gives to disinherited drifters, who deserve their exile, a place among those who are sanctified.

The gospel is also comprehensive in its beneficiaries.

As our human need for redemption and reconciliation with God is universal, so God's provision in Christ knows no bounds of nationality or social class.

Finally, Paul focused on the Source from whom these comprehensive benefits flow to these comprehensive beneficiaries. That Source is the Christ who suffered, was the first to rise from the dead, and now proclaims light to Israel and the nations.

5. Two Verdicts vv. 24-32

In the remaining verses, we see a verdict about Jesus and a verdict about Paul.

As Paul appealed to ancient writings to support his claim that the Christ would rise from the dead, Governor Festus, a practical politician, impatient with theoretical discussion, became frustrated.

Paul ignored his outburst and continued to address Agrippa. Confident that nothing had escaped the king's attention, Paul had spoken openly and boldly.

He then asked the king directly, 'King Agrippa do you believe the prophets?' and immediately answering his own question, 'I know that you believe!'

Agrippa sidestepped Paul's question with a courteous, but non committal response (**Acts 26:28**). Paul's response (**Acts 26:29**), which apparently brought the hearing to a close, exuded confidence in God's power, joy in Christ's grace, and compassion for the king and all those present. Whether sooner or later, Paul prayed that God would bring his hearers to faith.

As the King and the Governor exited the auditorium, they discussed what they had heard, agreeing that Paul had not violated any Roman law that would justify his execution or exile in chains.

Despite the verdict of Festus and Agrippa, Paul would travel in chains to Rome. Yet his joy overflowed, for his travels and his trials contributed to his defense of the gospel (**Phil 1:16**).

Is it so with us in the midst of our trials and tribulations?