

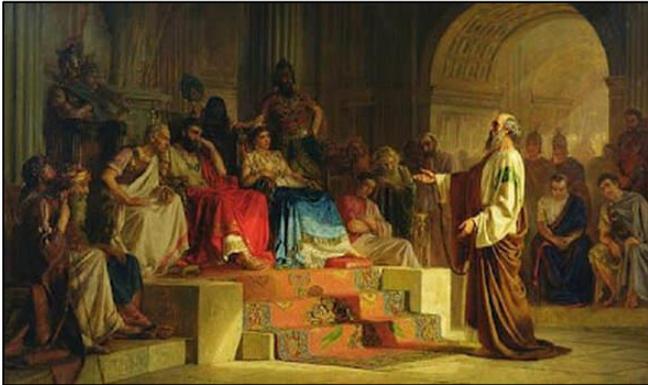
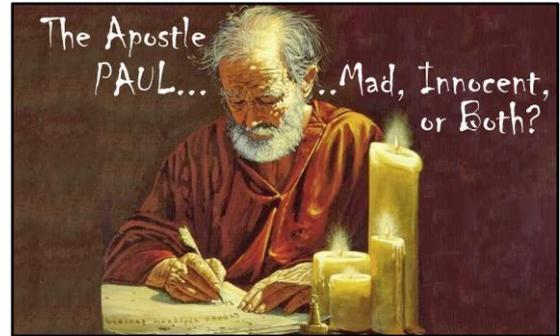
ACTSFACTS

C@G Supplementary Study Notes for ACTS

Message #56

“PAUL: MAD, INNOCENT, OR BOTH?”

(Acts 26:1-32)



BACKGROUND:

We pick up the unfolding story at the gala event that Governor Festus has created for King Herod Agrippa II so that he (Agrippa) could hear from the prisoner, Paul, for himself.

Festus hands chairmanship of the occasion over to Agrippa who invites Paul to speak.

Acts 26 contains the entirety of Paul's defence before Agrippa, not just a summary by Luke.

Paul seizes the opportunity of another chance to witness to his experience of God. In typical testimony fashion he begins with his orthodox Jewish past, then he describes his encounter with the risen Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road and, finally, how he has put into practice what he was told to do.

Paul's speech is a good example of what a Christian testimony is all about: BEFORE and AFTER.

What would your testimony be like if you focused on what life was like BEFORE you met Jesus and, then, what it was like AFTER you met Him? If you had two minutes to explain to someone how your life has been transformed by grace, what would you say?

Why does Paul say that he is on trial (26:6-8)?

Why do you think the issue of the resurrection is so central to Paul, to you, and to everyone?

How does Paul show the transformative power of the gospel in his own life?

GETTING PERSONAL:

How have you seen Christ work to transform you? How could you use your story as a tool for sharing the gospel with others?

Agrippa understood Judaism (verse 3). How well do we understand the “Jewish” background to the Christian faith?

Do you think it is necessary, or important, that we do?

How do you think we can get to understand it better?

It is interesting that throughout this chapter Paul, the prisoner in chains, comes across as the one who is free, whilst the king, governor and prominent citizens (who all have their liberty) are the ones who are in bondage!

The hearing began with Paul on trial. Now, however, his audience is under interrogation, as Paul confronts them with a summons to repent and believe in the gospel. He uses his innocence, not to gain release, but to gain new opportunities to proclaim the resurrection of Christ!

This turn of events becomes too much to bear for some, including Governor Festus.....who interrupts and accuses Paul of being mad (26:24).

Have you ever been accused of being mad/crazy because of what you believe?

Have you ever found that, when people do not understand, or accept, your testimony, they tend to accuse you of madness or of being irrational? Why do you think that is?

Paul refuted the accusation of madness made by Festus and, interestingly, sought to enlist King Agrippa as a witness. Citing Agrippa's knowledge of the Jewish religion, Paul put the king on the spot by asking whether he believed the prophets. The implication for Agrippa here was immense. If he accepted the prophets, then he would have to concede that Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah. That would mean that he would have to make a ruling about Christianity which would have put him in a very awkward position before the governor and the other prominent guests, to say nothing of the Jewish leaders.

So, instead of answering Paul's questions directly, he fobbed it off with a question of his own...

"What are you trying to do, Paul, make me a Christian in such a short space of time?" (26:28)

Paul doesn't let any opportunity slip by...he answers that he would love everyone there to come to know Jesus, whether it took a short, or long, time (though he does not wish the chains on anyone).

This raises an important point for us, today. Even though we may not agree with, or even like, our political leaders....do we pray for them? Are we keen to see them come under the amazing grace of Christ?

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Paul had a passion to see everyone come to know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

But Agrippa and his whole entourage stood up and walked out. So close, yet so far away.

The tragedy of the "almost".

How does Paul's heart for King Agrippa compare or contrast with your heart for those around you who do not know Christ?

Why does Paul think he is in a better situation than his audience (v 29)?

Do you know people who, like Agrippa, have suffered (are suffering) from the "tragedy of the almost"? What can you do in situations like that?

How can a person be "almost, but not saved"?

The final verses of this chapter show that Festus and Agrippa agree that Paul has not done anything that deserves imprisonment or death. In fact, Agrippa acknowledges that Paul could have been set free. However, as he had used his Roman citizenship to appeal to have his case heard before Caesar in Rome, they could do nothing now except to send him on to Rome and Caesar.

It could be said that Paul's message is all about FORGIVENESS.

Do we always feel forgiven? Why is it important to know we are forgiven?

Why is it important to forgive others?

PRAY:

Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to place in you a burning desire that your friends (and even enemies) come to know the risen Christ.

