

## 89. Paul Invited Agrippa to Become a Christian

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. We show them how to share that message with others as we take them with us and share that message. That is the message that is able to change and transform any life. The Lord gave Paul the opportunity to share that message with King Agrippa. In our topic today, we will see that Paul went on to give King Agrippa a personal invitation to both believe the message about the death and resurrection of Christ and to personally receive the eternal life that Christ offers to every person.

Festus had listened silently as Paul had talked to King Agrippa. However, Festus was not willing to keep quiet any longer. Acts 26:24-27 says, “Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, ‘Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!’ But he said, ‘I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.’” Festus suddenly showed that the message of the death and resurrection of Christ was bringing conviction to him in his own life.

The word translated “you are beside yourself” means *one who speaks so that it does not seem that he is in his right mind*. He said that Paul was speaking like a man who was insane. We see that Festus had some of the same thinking as the Sadducees. The Sadducees did not believe in miracles or the resurrection. Festus held these same beliefs. Festus interrupted the words of Paul to tell him that his education had so distorted his mind that it seemed like he was not in his right mind.

Paul took time from speaking to Agrippa to answer Festus. He showed great respect as he called Festus, “most noble Festus”. The word translated “most noble” was a title of respect for someone who had an important rank or office. Paul said that he spoke words that were words of truth and reason. The Word of God is truth and Paul said that he taught the things that were written by Moses and the prophets. The word translated “reason” means *soundness of mind*. Paul said he felt free to speak about these things to King Agrippa, because he said King Agrippa knew about the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul said that none of the things that had happened to Christ had been done in a corner or secret place. Instead, people throughout the entire region were familiar with that message. In Acts 5:28, the Jewish religious leaders had said, “Saying, ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!’”

After answering the statement of Festus, Paul immediately began to speak to King Agrippa again. He asked Agrippa if he believed the prophets. He said that he knew that Agrippa believed. James 2:19 says, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!” Agrippa was familiar with what the Jews taught about God, the Father. He was also familiar with what the Jews taught about Jesus. Paul knew that Agrippa believed, but had not put that belief into practice. John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” Like the demons, Agrippa believed

in God, but had not received Christ and the payment that Christ made for his sins.

Acts 26:28-29 says, “Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You almost persuade me to become a Christian.’ And Paul said, ‘I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.’” The word translated “persuade” means *to induce or convince one to believe*. The word is used in Acts 18:4, where we read, “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.” This statement of Agrippa can be interpreted two different ways: Almost you persuade me to become a Christian or do you think that you can persuade me to become a Christian in this short time? Whichever way Agrippa meant it, we see how Paul responded.

Paul said that he had a great concern both for Agrippa and for all those who were gathered there that day. It was the desire of Paul that each person there would completely place their faith in Christ and His death and resurrection. The only thing that Paul did not desire for the people there that day was the chains that he wore. Paul wrote, in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Paul knew salvation was the need of every person there that day. That was why it was more important for him to share that message rather than to defend himself regarding any accusations that the Jews had previously made.

Here, we see that Paul gives us a great example for our own lives. We also need to have this same concern that each person with whom we talk would come to an understanding of how to repent of their sin of unbelief and place their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ so that each person can have forgiveness of sins and eternal life. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.” Like Paul we need to be pleading with others that they will be reconciled and brought back together with God through Christ.

Once Agrippa said, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian,” he had made his choice. Acts 26:30-32 says, “When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, ‘This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.’ Then Agrippa said to Festus, ‘This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.’” Once Paul finished his response, Agrippa stood up to let Paul and everyone there realize that the hearing was over.

That day, Festus, Agrippa and Bernice had to make a choice. Festus showed that he had no understanding of the purpose of the death and resurrection of Christ when he cried with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” As a result, Festus made it clear that he had no interest in learning more. In contrast, Paul realized that Agrippa and Bernice had heard enough about Christ, through the years, that they had a clear understanding of why Christ died and the Father raised him from the dead. They chose to wait until some other time to believe. We never read that the time ever did come that they did believe.

After Festus, Agrippa and Bernice left the judgment hall, they talked together about Paul and what they had heard that day. Festus did not tell Agrippa that the reason for the hearing that day was the result of the fact he had tried to please the Jews. Acts 25:7-9 says, “When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, while he answered for himself, ‘Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.’ But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, ‘Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?’” Festus was trying to cover up the fact that he knew Paul had not broken any Roman laws.

As the three talked together, they said, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.” Here, we see that Festus, Agrippa and Bernice realized two things. First, they realized that Paul had not committed any crime that deserved the death penalty. Festus had actually admitted that earlier when he said, in Acts 25:26-27, “I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.” Here, we see that Agrippa were in agreement with what Festus had said earlier.

Second, they realized that Paul was not guilty of any crime and that he should not even be in prison. Acts 26:32 says, “Then Agrippa said to Festus, ‘This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.’” Here, we see that Agrippa told Festus that Paul deserved to be set free. However, because of the fact that none of the three were willing to repent of their sin of unbelief and turn to Christ, they were not willing to take action and set Paul free. Instead, Agrippa said that Paul could not be set free because he had appealed to Caesar. Paul had to appeal to Caesar because Festus wanted to please the Jews by giving them the opportunity to kill Paul on the way to Jerusalem. Here, we see that Agrippa gave his permission to send Paul to Caesar rather than set him free because of the fact that Paul had earlier appealed to Caesar. When people reject Christ, they will often help each other try to cover their sins.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to follow the example of Paul and take each opportunity to invite people to turn to Christ. We will best help our children learn to invite people to repent of their sin and turn to Christ as they hear us regularly encourage people to turn from their sin and turn to Christ. Children learn best by example as we show them by our example the importance of regularly inviting people to repent of their sin of unbelief and trust in the death and resurrection of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you give your children an example to follow.