

Zealous Towards God Part 1 of 3

Acts 26

25 ends with Paul being brought before Agrippa and Bernice by Festus. Agrippa desires to hear Paul tell his story.

2nd time in Acts Paul tells it. Happened in 9, told in his defense in 22, retold to prick Agrippa's heart here in 26.

26-28 are grouped together in our study of the "ABCs of Acts" – Zealous Towards God

1. Paul's Opening Remarks – 26:1-8

- 1: most magnificent audience P had stood before
- 2,3: personal plea to Agrippa. Fortunate he understood situation & P [desired to convert]
- 4: Nation: Tarsus but also Jewish comm. 9:1
- 5: if all Jews [4] told truth instead of condemning P, they would let him go
- 6,7: doesn't address charges but insists he wouldn't mistreat Jews, disparage the Law, or defile the temple. *Accused by Jews of all people!*
- 8: you – plural – you people, y'all – addressing whole crowd momentarily

2. Saul's Persecution & Conversion – 26:9-18

- 9: P admits he had once been where they are
- 10: Saints – now realized they were innocent
- 11: lit: "I tried to force" – admitting he was sometimes unsuccessful. *Emotional past*
- 12-14: everything in P's upbringing was the Lord's prodding him to accept Jesus, Gal. 1:15
- Goads/pricks: pointed sticks 6-8ft farmers would use to prod ox pulling the plow
- 15: divine goad pierced his heart, scalpel that reshaped his life
- 16: minister – different than normal GK word – one who serves a higher will; witness allowed P to be an apostle [1:22-23]
- 17: P frequently rescued
- 18: P's mission was to open the eyes of the Jews & Gentiles alike

3. Preaching the Resurrection – 26:19-23

- 19: "How could I do otherwise?"
- 20: obedient to commands [baptized at once, 8:18, 22:16] and commission [preached]
- 21: A needed to know changing to Christianity wouldn't make an easy life

- 22: also needed to know the Lord's hand with him
- 23: next logical step: invitation/challenge

4. Paul Challenges Agrippa – 26:24-27

- 24: Festus [out of view] becomes agitated. Actions catch us off guard; statement doesn't
- 25: P answers calmly with respect. Insane before he obeyed, now in 'right mind' Mk. 5:15
- 26: Christianity no secret order. A's birth coincided with beginning of Jesus' ministry
- 27: if he said he didn't believe, lose credibility of Jews; if he did, next step was to obey

5. Almost Persuaded – 26:28-29

- 28: everyone waiting for his response!
- 2nd use of Christian in Acts [11:26; cf. 1 Pet. 4:16]. Wish we had the tone of his voice.
- "If you kept going, I would become a Christian."
- 29: all: incl. distinguished guests
- Paul's life defines what a Christian should be

6. Next Stop: Rome – 26:30-32

- 30: Agrippa thought he had said too much – abruptly stood up; interview over
- 31: unanimous verdict – a victory for Paul, but not the victory he desired.
- Festus still has no charge to put in his official letter
- 32: almost unbelievable: a Herod commending a follower of Jesus. What might've been?

Lessons:

1. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and **be ready always to give an answer** to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" 1 Peter 3:15 [emp. JR]
2. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31
3. "Almost Persuaded" is to be completely lost!

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