

Acts 25:13-26:32: Paul's Testimony before King Agrippa

Acts 25:13-27: What's the Charge?

Thank God for Roman law. 25:16: *"I answered them that it's not the Romans' custom to give any man up before the accused confronts the accusers face to face and has an opportunity to give a defense concerning the charges."*

Roman law was a blessing because you had the right as a Roman citizen to face your accusers and make a defense.

This is not a courtroom trial. The purpose for Paul to give his testimony before King Agrippa is so Gov. Festus could send Paul to Caesar with a letter stating the charges against him; otherwise, why waste Caesar's time.

King Agrippa was Jewish and the great-grandson of the notorious Herod the Great (who tried to kill baby Jesus). Since Agrippa was Jewish, he would have understood the controversy between the Jewish leaders and Paul. Agrippa was curious and wanted to hear Paul's story.

What are the charges/accusations/crimes (GR *aitia*) against Paul? Paul cannot be sent to the Emperor without any charges.

John 19:4-6: Pilate found no basis for an accusation (*aitia*) but gave Jesus to the mob who were shouting "Crucify him!"

Matthew 27:37: And above his head they put the accusation (*aitian*) against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews." This was the accusation for the Roman reason. The Jewish accusation was blaspheme because Jesus claimed to be God.

Acts 26:1-32: Paul's 3-Part Testimony

Paul's testimony has three parts.

Before: 2-11

How his conversion happened: 12-18

After: 19-23

Luke has recorded Paul's conversion testimony 3 times, but this is the most detailed and compelling.

Paul described his anger, hostility, brutality, and "raging fury" against those who believed in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Paul tried to make them blaspheme. Paul tried to make them confess Jesus of Nazareth was

the Son of God as Jesus claimed he was. (Read Matthew 26:63-66.)
Blaspheme was a capital offense - death by stoning.

Paul was appointed to bear witness to the things he has seen and “to those in which I will appear to you.”

26:14-18: “I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you **to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.**”

What is the meaning of “It is hard for you to kick against the goads”?

"To kick against the goads" was a common expression at that time. It comes from the practice of farmers goading their oxen in the fields. Goads were typically made from slender pieces of timber, blunt on one end and pointed on the other. Farmers used the pointed end to urge a stubborn ox to move. Occasionally, the beast would kick at the goad. The more the ox kicked, the more likely the goad would stab into the flesh of its leg, causing greater pain. So, "To kick against the goads" was a common expression for stubborn behavior that only hurts the person doing it.

Jesus was saying to Saul that in the process of persecuting Christians, Saul was hurting himself. Since he was not hurting himself physically, the Lord was likely referring to the impact on Saul's conscience. Instead of behaving like criminals, the Christians Saul arrested, imprisoned, and killed most likely showed grace and forgiveness. Stephen's words and demeanor as he was martyred also may have continued to “goad” Saul’s conscience. Saul may have even tried to overcome the effect on his conscience by persecuting more vehemently - kicking against the goads - which aggravated the self-inflicted pain and convicted his conscience more deeply. He probably did not

sleep peacefully. It is like Jesus was saying, "Saul, when you resist Me and persecute Me, you are hardening your heart and hurting yourself."

What does it mean "to open their eyes"? This refers to spiritual not physical blindness. Paul was physically blinded and when his eyes were opened, he knew the truth about Jesus. Paul finally realized he was persecuting the followers of Jesus of Nazareth for a hope God promised through the Prophets and Moses - God raises the dead (26:6-8, 22-23).

Paul had no power to open their eyes. The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of spiritually blind people when the Word of God is preached or personally shared. Every true Christian had his/her eyes opened and believed in Christ for salvation.

More Christians need to have their eyes opened to the spiritual warfare happening around them and the spiritual warfare over America right now! (Refer to the Jericho March 12/12/20 in Washington DC.)

Purpose 1: So that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power/authority of Satan to God. Spiritual blindness means a person is in darkness and under the authority and power of Satan. It takes a spiritual awakening, a new birth, the work of the Holy Spirit, for a person to realize he/she is in darkness under the power of Satan.

Salvation is a transfer from one authority to another.

There are a lot of authority transfers in life. There is a transfer of authority between political parties and presidents. Companies will transfer employees from one position or location to another. There is a transfer of authority in an adoption. The biological parents of a child surrender their rights to a legal guardian. The ownership of a used car can be transferred with a payment. You pay the money, and the owner transfers the title over to you. Jesus paid the price with his blood and those who are under the authority of Satan can be transferred to Jesus by faith.

Salvation is a transfer of authority. We are born under the authority of Satan until we put ourselves under the authority of Jesus Christ. When you receive Christ as Savior you place yourself under the authority of his Lordship. Jesus says to Satan, "You no longer have authority over this person to deceive and destroy. He/she is now under my authority." Jesus said, John 10:10: "The

thief - Satan - comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” Claim your authority under Jesus Christ and tell Satan to leave you alone.

Colossians 1:13: *For He rescued us from the tyranny/authority of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

“Transferred” GR μεθίστημι (methistēmi): to cause a change of position, to cause to change sides, to transfer.

We are transferred from Satan’s kingdom to the kingdom of God’s beloved Son by faith. Jesus referred to Satan’s kingdom: Matthew 12:26 & Luke 11:18. When Jesus cast out demons, he was accused of doing it by Satan’s power. Jesus said, “That’s stupid. It does not make sense. If I cast out demons by Satan’s authority, then Satan’s kingdom is divided and will not survive.”

Propose 2: *So that they may receive forgiveness of sins.* There is no salvation without forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins is not just a psychological benefit as guilt is removed, it is an existential reality. We need forgiveness to enter heaven. Paul needed to have his sins forgiven and the consequence removed. Paul had ordered the murder of Christians. Paul carried a heavy weight of sin on his conscience as he “kicked against the goads.” Forgiveness removed the weight, but more importantly it also removed the penalty, eternal damnation.

Jesus dined at the home of a Pharisee. When a prostitute washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and hair and used the perfume she used for her body on Jesus’ feet, Jesus said to the Pharisee, “Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Purpose 3: *so that they may receive a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.*

Sanctified (*hagiazo*) by faith in Christ. Sanctified means to make holy by separation from sin. We are saved by faith and then begin the process of sanctification by faith. Sanctification is the process of the HS changing bad

desires, habits, and behaviors with what pleases God – holy desires, habits, and behaviors. Even our sanctification is by faith not just our salvation.

Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to believe and act like a Christian?”

What Agrippa was really saying was “I have too much to lose by becoming a Christian.” If he became a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth and joined the Messianic Jews, then he would be recalled or overthrown as king. Neither could Agrippa be a secret disciple of Christ. His rivals would find out and oppose him. The rich and powerful have a lot to lose if they become real disciples of Christ.

This is counting the cost of being a disciple of Christ. Every person who considers becoming a Christian ought to count the cost; he/she should try to foresee the unintended consequences of believing and living for Christ.

It is also rare for a person to hear the Gospel for the first time, one time, and immediately respond. People need time to process the demands of the Gospel and count the cost of following Christ.

Remember this truth when counting the cost of discipleship: **the reward is greater than the risk**. The reward is forgiveness of sins, righteousness, a resurrection body, eternal life, and acknowledgement before the Father in heaven. The reward is they can kill the body but cannot touch the soul.

Matthew 10:28-33: And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

26:29: And Paul said, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

It means “Whether short or long time, or with few or many words, or whether my defense (*apologia*) is weak or strong.”

“I wish you might become as I am”; that is, a believer in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Transfer under Kingdom Authority

Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13

Colossians 1:13: *For He rescued us from the tyranny/authority of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Satan’s kingdom

Demons

Darkness (as a metaphor for evil)

Children of the devil (1 John 3:7-10)

Law of sin and death (Romans 8:2)

Theft, death, destruction (John 10:10: steal, kill, destroy)

Lies & deception (John 8:44)

Slaves to sin (opposite of redemption Romans 6:6, 17)

Accusation & condemnation (Revelation 12:10-11)

Selfishness (John 10:11-13)

FEAR (2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18; Ephesians 6:11: schemes of the devil)

Deeds of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21)

Hell & eternal torment

Jesus’ kingdom (kingdom of His beloved Son)

Holy Spirit

Light (as a metaphor for holiness)

Children of God and heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16)

Abundant life (John 10:10: The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.)

Law of the Spirit of life & freedom (Romans 8:2)

Truth & revelation (John 10:16, 14:6)

Redemption (Colossians 1:13)

Forgiveness of sins & no condemnation (Romans 8:1; Revelation 12:11)

Self-sacrifice (John 10:11-13)

FAITH (Ephesians 6:16: shield of faith)

Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24)

Heaven & eternal life