

“GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS”

Acts 26:2-8

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INTRODUCTION

It is truly amazing to see how the Lord works in answer to prayer and sometimes uses the people that we would least expect. In the passage before us today, we see the apostle Paul with his life in the hands of a motley crew of political leaders – Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice. We’ve already seen that they were morally perverse and typically selfish and self-centered administrators.

However, God uses these persons for his own purpose, and Paul treats them with respect as he addresses them. Let us learn something from observing Paul’s behavior in this situation!

Paul’s testimony to a large degree involves review of previous testimonies given in chapters 9 and 22. As we saw last week, this testimonial of Paul is the most complete defense that he gives in the book of Acts, and is the climax of the entire book. In this opening section of his defense, Paul presents three points:

- 1) Paul is _____ to present his case before King Agrippa (2-3).
- 2) Paul has nothing to _____ about his past (4-5).
- 3) Paul’s _____ of the resurrection is also the hope of Israel (6-8).

I. HAPPINESS IN PRESENTING HIS CASE (2-3)

A. The Blessedness of His Position

1. Paul was happy to make his defense.
 - He is being wrongfully accused by inveterate enemies – Jews.
 - He presents his defense against such accusations – his *apologia*.
 - King Agrippa was living with his sister in an incestuous relationship; he was one of the notorious Herods, and was just like his ancestors – more loyal to Rome than to his people.
 - How many of us would consider ourselves blessed to have to do something like this?
2. Agrippa, being mostly Jewish, was an expert—“a knower, connoisseur.”
 - He knew Jewish “customs”.
 - He knew Jewish theological points.

B. The Urgency of His Position

- Paul intends to be thorough, not brief in his presentation.
- He asks Agrippa to listen to his case with a “long and patient spirit.”

II. Hiding His past Is Not An Option (4-5).

A. All Jews know about his manner of life (4-5)

- As a young man his father sent him for training to Jerusalem.
- From that beginning, Paul lived in and among the Jews of Jerusalem, as part of the nation of Judea.

- By the time he became an adult leader, it was “a long time previously”.
- B. Jews should be willing to testify to this truth.
- They knew him well for many years.
 - They knew that Paul belonged to the party of the Pharisees.
 - The Pharisees were the strictest Jewish sect, in both interpretation of Scripture and detailed requirements.
 - Would such a man is this so show sacrilege to his own faith and temple?

There had to be another explanation for Paul’s dramatic change to become a Christian and to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Messiah. What is that explanation?

III. THE HOPE OF PAUL AND OF THE JEWS IS FOUND IN JESUS CHRIST AND HIS RESURRECTION (6-8).

A. Paul Stands Trial for The Hope of His People.

- The promises made to the patriarchs could only find their fulfillment in the coming Messiah. Abraham “saw His day” and believed in him.
- The promise to make them a great nation, to make them a blessing to all the nations of the earth, and to extend the Davidic line of kings perpetually could only be fulfilled in the God man – the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

B. Israel’s Efforts Can Only Attain Their Fulfillment in the Person of the Messiah (7).

- Note that Paul still considers Israel to consist of 12 tribes – so much for “the lost 10 tribes”!
- Israel’s “religious service” is with **earnestness**-- “in a stretched out manner”, with great intensity.
- Their service was continual – “night and Day.” No one could accuse them of not caring and of having a lack of interest.
- But their hope was waning and becoming continually dimmer because they had rejected their true Messiah; as Robertson states, their hope “is a sadly worn thread for Jews who refused to see the Messiah in Jesus” (p. 445).

C. Paul’s belief in the very Messiah the Jews hope for was the basis for his accusation by the Jews.

- Paul knows that Jesus Christ, who died, now lives!
- If He were dead, how could He help and save His people?
- **Why should it be considered incredible that Jesus Christ could rise from the dead?**
- IF HE DOES NOT LIVE THERE IS NO HOPE.
- But he does live and Paul is about to proclaim that.

CONCLUSION

“I serve a risen Savior, He’s in the world today. I know that He is living whatever men may say. I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer. And just the time I need Him, He’s always near.”

**Don’t despair—no matter how your circumstances may look, and whomever you may have to deal with!
GOD IS IN CONTROL, YOU MUST TRUST HIM.**