

ACTS

Chapter 26

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: ²“King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, ³ and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently. ⁴“The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. ⁵ They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. ⁶ And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. ⁷ This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. ⁸ Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? ⁹ “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. ¹² “On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³ About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. ¹⁴ We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ^a ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ¹⁵ “Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ ” ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ¹⁶ ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. ¹⁷ I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’ ¹⁹ “So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. ²⁰ First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. ²¹ That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. ²² But I have had God’s help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— ²³ that the Christ ^b would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles.” ²⁴ At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.” ²⁵ “I am not

insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. ²⁶ The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.” ²⁸ Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” ²⁹ Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.” ³⁰ The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. ³¹ They left the room, and while talking with one another, they said, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.” ³² Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

26:1 *permission to speak.* Agrippa gave the permission because Festus allowed him to have charge of the hearing.

BEGAN HIS DEFENSE – He did not really have to make a defense, but he would do so for the gospel’s sake. (PBC)

26:3 *well acquainted with all the Jewish customs.* Agrippa as king controlled the temple treasury and the investments of the high priest, and could appoint the high priest. He was consulted by the Romans on religious matters. This is one of the reasons Festus wanted him to assess Paul.

26:5 *I lived as a Pharisee.* Cf. Gal 1:14.

26:6 *my hope in what God has promised.* Including God’s kingdom, the Messiah and the resurrection (see v. 8).

26:8 Paul had been speaking to Agrippa but at this point must have addressed others as well, such as Festus and the commanders (see note on 21:31), who did not believe in the resurrection. Agrippa was also allied with the Sadducees, whom he appointed high priests, and was likely to reject both the resurrection of Christ and resurrection in general.

26:10 *I cast my vote against them.* Does not necessarily mean that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin (see note on 22:20). He may have been appointed to a commission to carry out the prosecution (see v. 12), where his vote was given.

26:11 *force them to blaspheme.* He tried to force them either to curse Jesus or to confess publicly that Jesus is the Son of God, in which case they could be condemned for blasphemy, a sufficient cause for death (see Mt 26:63–66).

26:12 *I was going to Damascus.* Again Paul gives an account of his conversion (see 9:1–19; 22:4–21 and notes).

26:14 *I heard a voice.* See notes on 9:7; 22:9.

to kick against the goads. A Greek proverb for useless resistance—the ox succeeds only in hurting itself.

26:17 *to them.* Not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles (see 22:21; Gal 1:15–16). His mission was from God (Gal 1:1).

26:18 *from darkness to light.* A figure especially characteristic of Paul (see Ro 13:12; 2Co 4:6; Eph 5:8–14; Col 1:13; 1Th 5:5).

are sanctified. † Justified through faith (see notes on 20:32; 22:16; 1Co 1:2).

26:22 *the prophets and Moses.* The OT Scriptures (Lk 24:27, 44).

26:23 *the first to rise from the dead.* The firstfruits of the dead—to die no more (see 1Co 15:20; Col 1:18).

to the Gentiles. Cf. Isa 49:6.

26:24 *You are out of your mind.* See Jn 10:20; 1Co 14:23. The governor felt that Paul’s education and reading of the sacred Scriptures had led him to a mania about prophecy and resurrection.

26:26 *not done in a corner.* This gospel is based on actual events, lived out in historical times and places. The king must himself attest to the truth of what Paul has affirmed.

26:27 *do you believe the prophets?* King Agrippa was faced with a dilemma. If he said “Yes,” Paul would press him to recognize their fulfillment in Jesus; if he said “No,” he would be in trouble with the devout Jews, who accepted the message of the prophets as the very word of God.

26:28 *in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?* His question is an evasion of Paul’s question and an answer to what he anticipates Paul’s next question to be. His point is that he will not be persuaded by such a brief statement.

26:29 *these chains.* Paul was still bound as a prisoner.

26:32 NOT APPEALED TO CAESAR – Once Paul had appealed to the emperor, he became inextricably enmeshed in the Roman legal system and had to see his case through at Rome. But the apostle was not in error at having made the original appeal: at the time, it most likely saved his life. (LL)