

Paul is now testifying before king Agrippa, Bernice and the Roman governor Festus; he has reached the point in his testimony of his miraculous conversion: We remember this from Acts chapter 9...

**Acts 26:13:** *'At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.'*

**Verse 15:** *'And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.'*

Paul knew full well Who Jesus 'was' and he hated Him; he hated Him so passionately that he was willing to track down all Christians, men and women, and to take them bound back to Jerusalem to be punished and likely killed for 'heresy.' He knew all the Hebrew Scriptures which pointed to the coming Messiah but he was spiritually blinded to the Truth, and now physically blinded, until the Lord Jesus Christ revealed Himself unto Paul who immediately understood the Truth of Who Jesus Christ is and who he, Paul, was; just as to every other believer coming to True Faith, God gave Paul His precious gifts of Repentance and Faith to believe; this was simply a more dramatic episode than most.

Paul's hatred of Christians is eerily similar to the hatred of other false religions toward the Lord Jesus Christ and His followers. In Islam, we see a maniacal zeal to 'protect' Allah; he must be defended; the smallest 'slight' against the 'honor' of Allah or Mohammed or Islam must be eradicated by the death of the offender. When the Truth of the Gospel spread into a geographical area, those held in the grip of Satanic false religions were moved to stamp it out but it would not be stamped out: *'I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!'* Mt 16:18 Even now, throughout the 'Muslim world,' Christianity continues to grow and expand in spite of tremendous persecution; the same is true in the 'Hindu world,' the Buddhist world, the Communist world, the Catholic world and into every other corner of the World. All of these false religions have historically been bent on destroying the True Light of the Gospel.

The spread of Christianity is largely because of the ministry of Paul; he was poured out in receiving and spreading the Gospel, in planting and nurturing churches and especially in writing out the Word of God as it was given to him by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

**Verse 16:** *'But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;'*

Get up! Stand up! I am about to ordain and commission you to the most important and powerful ministry you could imagine; you are a child of God, a servant of God and a minister of My Gospel! What you are now 'seeing,' although physically blinded, is nothing compared to all that I will show you!

**Verse 17:** *'Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, <sup>18</sup> To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.'*

*'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God:'*

*'... that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; <sup>15</sup> And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.'* Heb 2:14

*'He (John) was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. <sup>9</sup> That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'* John 1:8

Jesus said: *'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'* John 8:12

But then He said: *'Ye are the light of the world.'* Matt 5:14

*'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.'*

*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. <sup>21</sup> But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.'* John 3:17

The Lord Jesus Christ commissioned Paul to be light in the darkness and to take light out into the darkness but many of those to whom he took the light hated the light because their hearts and deeds were evil and it was the light which illuminated their sin and, so, they set about to destroy the light.

You see... in every false religion, they are worshipping darkness; their acts of worship, their 'gods' and rituals are all satanically inspired, born out of darkness and because of their fear of death, they hold tenaciously to the only hope they've ever known; i.e. Catholicism/Islam/Hinduism/Buddhism/Mormonism/J.W.s/ etc, etc, etc... from birth until death, throughout the entire family lines... the lies believed are the lies which are impressed upon children, even before they can understand and, so, the entire society lies mired in darkness. That is the world into which Paul was thrust, as light into darkness, and it is the world into which we are commanded to carry ourselves as light into the darkness.

The Lord Jesus Christ came into the darkness as the only true light; Satan believed that if he could kill Him, the light would be snuffed out but what he did not understand is that God's Plan, all along, was that His Son would, in fact, be crucified and raised back to Life in order to create the way that others could be born again who were, in fact, also now God's true light. As a grain of wheat is sown in death to then produce a huge and multiplying harvest, the same is true for the Light of the World. He is the Light of the World; He went back to Heaven and sent His Holy Spirit to birth anew and fill every one of the millions upon millions who would come to put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ; now the light shines throughout the World awaiting the moment when He will call us up to Himself in the Rapture as the entire World is, once again, plunged into gross darkness to begin the 7-year Tribulation but thankfully, perhaps even immediately, God will call and commission another 144,000 Jewish evangelists, like Paul, to take the Gospel throughout the World resulting in the greatest harvest of souls the World has ever known; He will be calling and saving multiplied millions even during that time of the greatest darkness the World will have ever known... Satan just can't win; he just can't catch a break as if the entire cosmos has conspired against him which is exactly the Truth: *'For by him (Jesus) were **all things created**, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.'* Col 1:16

**Verse 19:** *'Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: <sup>20</sup> But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. <sup>21</sup> For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.'*

Again, there it is: *'... and then to the Gentiles...'* this is why the Jews diligently seek to kill me (Paul).

**Verse 22:** *'Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say **should come**: <sup>23</sup> That Christ **should suffer**, and that he should be the **first that should rise from the dead**, and should shew **light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.**'*

Paul has always maintained that everything he preaches and teaches is exactly what the Old Testament Prophets said would come to be while all these Jews claim to know and believe their own Scriptures...

Messiah would **come**: *'I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel...Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion.'* Num 24:17

He would **suffer**: *'He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid*

as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.' Isa 53:3

He would **rise from the dead**: 'For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' Psalm 16:10

He would show **light to Israel and to the Gentiles**: 'And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth' Isa 49:6

'I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for **a light of the Gentiles**; <sup>7</sup> To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.' Isa 42:6

These are just a few verses but the Prophets overflow with Messianic prophecies...

**Verse 24**: 'And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.'

All that Paul is saying seems as foolishness to Festus; he is a Pagan Roman who worships a pantheon of false gods; how could any sane person believe that there is but One True God over all! And, remember: the Roman, Greek, Norse and every other false religious system was originally inspired through ancient memories of the time before the Flood: 'There were giants in the earth in those days; **and also after that**, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.' Gen 6:4 These were the template upon which man's demonically inspired imaginations created his own gods to worship: anything but the Truth! These then became, as it were, the original 'gods' ruling over the darkened World before the Flood but ancient man looked back upon that time as a kind of golden age, and it is the same golden age for which modern man now longs and works.

**Verse 25**: 'But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.'

Festus calls Paul 'mad' while Paul responds with respect and dignity but then, with laser like focus, he zeros in on Agrippa, the Jewish king who clearly knows and understands the Prophets:

**Verse 27**: 'King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? **I know that thou believest.**'

The Holy Spirit has given Paul the understanding that Agrippa really does understand and believe but he just won't come to the place of humble repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation.

**Verse 28**: 'Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.'

My guess is that Agrippa is not saying this in all honesty but, rather, mockingly... 'even me! the king!' But, Paul continues in direct sincerity: who knows... perhaps Paul did lead him to Salvation...

**Verse 29**: 'And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.'

Jesus told Paul he would take the light of the Gospel into the world of darkness and that he would be preserved and protected; Paul believed Him and consequently barreled ahead full speed, nonstop, always looking for the largest return possible; not only you, Agrippa, but everyone here, I would have to come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for Salvation... everyone!!! and as he says this, he holds up his hands to show his chains, that he has been bound for more than 2 years by men who saw no law broken whatsoever. Imagine the patience, faith and perseverance of Paul!

**Verse 30**: 'And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:'

All the dignitaries, all those of 'importance' rise up together to huddle in a corner to decide Paul's fate, never realizing that it is God, Himself, Who is directing them to do exactly what He has determined beforehand.

**Verse 31:** *'And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.'*

And there it is: what they've all known, all along but never having the courage to take the stand for truth and justice. The chief priests have always known it, Felix knew it, Festus has known it and Agrippa and Bernice know it but they are all still cowards, unwilling to risk upsetting the Jews; they must keep the peace at all times, their very survival depends on it. Thankfully, they have a way out, it can all be laid at Paul's feet; it is his fault that he remains in chains... or so they try to convince themselves.

**Verse 32:** *'Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.'*

And Festus says: 'Whew! Agrippa said it! The Jews can't blame me for keeping Paul from them; it is their very own king who has said this... don't blame me! This is Paul's doing! Blame him! Keep me out of it!'

Now we are reaching toward the end of this most important historical treatise on the works of Paul in receiving and propagating the Word of God, the Light of the Gospel and the spread of Eternal Salvation.

**Acts 27:1** *'And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.'*

Remember, this is Luke who is recording the Acts of the Apostles; it is he who says, *'that we should sail...'*

As quickly as possible, Festus wants this whole matter gone. This centurion, Julius, is assigned to Caesar Augustus' band. To be a centurion of Caesar's band, Julius would have been the best of the best; God has assigned the most capable soldiers to insure Paul's safe passage to his next major ministerial assignment: evangelizing Caesar's household and writing out the Word of God to be preserved for our benefit.

**Verse 2:** *'And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.'*

They boarded a ship at Caesarea with the intent of sailing along the eastern and northern coasts of the Mediterranean to finally reach Italy and Rome. Aristarchus is a Christian from Macedonia who has always been in the thick of things with Paul; we see him 3 times in Acts and then Paul mentions him in his letters to the Colossians and to Philemon.

*'And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and **Aristarchus**, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.'* Acts 19:29

*'**Aristarchus** my fellowprisoner (in Rome) saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him)'* Col 4:10 ... written from Rome.

Aristarchus has been with Paul and Luke for some time now, even going with them to Rome.

**Verse 3:** *'And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.'*

The first leg of this longest of Paul's journeys begins from Caesarea by ship to Sidon in Lebanon: about 67 miles, one day sailing. This centurion, Julius seems to be a good fellow in allowing Paul to leave the ship unattended to visit other Christian friends in the area; the word would have spread quickly: **'Paul is here! Come!'** Paul would not have spent the time resting and eating bonbons; he would have taken this small but precious time to preach, to teach and to encourage the believers, knowing this would likely be the very last time he would ever see any of them again, this side of Heaven. It had to weigh heavy on Paul, the worry about the care of all these new Christians scattered throughout the Empire; who would feed them, who would care for their spiritual needs, who would protect them; certainly, Paul knew he could entrust them to the Holy Spirit but humanly speaking... it had to drain him...

Perhaps Paul even led Julius to faith as well...