Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Paul Before Agrippa, Part 1
Scripture: Acts 25:13-26:3
Code: 1796

Now, coming to chapter 25, we find ourselves faced with a difficulty in terms of preaching. When I was speaking recently, to a faculty, at a seminary, one of them was asking me about the approach that I took toward preaching, and I said it was expository, we just give of it, as the Old Testament says that they did. They read the word and gave the sense of it that our objective, in teaching the word of God, is to just tell you what it means, by what it says. And this faculty member said, "That's exactly what you're supposed to do." And I said, "Well, that's what I thought, and I'm glad to hear that confirmed."

He said, "But do you just ramble on and on, and on and on, or do you do you try to tie into a unit?" And I said, "Well, I really try to tie into a unit, but I often have trouble getting one unit done, in one time; and so, sometimes it stretches out, but I definitely try to tie things together in one unit. Not just ramble through verses, sort of giving you a verse at a time." But when you come to a passage like this, you really have a difficult time doing it, because the unit of this passage - the story here - goes from chapter 25, verse 13, to chapter 26, verse 32. And that's a lot of verses. That's nearly 50 verses. That has to be taken as a unit because that is the unit of thought. That is the story that is being told. And so, we will not be able to do it all at one time - we'll have to stretch it out a little bit.

But what we'll do is, is endeavor to give you the sense of it. This again, is historical narrative, and I only just forewarn you, so you'll set your mind to respond to that. What we're looking at in this is, is not so much the proclamation of dogma, the proclamation of doctrine, as we're looking again, at the example of a man - the man named, Paul, and the pattern of his life. The Holy Spirit has, for a very explicit reason, given us repeatedly, this historical narrative, this historical approach that we might emulate the man, as the man was, not just what he said. So again, in this study, which will extend beyond just this Lord's, day. We're gonna be looking at a man. We're gonna be seeing much about history, and maybe you're gonna have to allow the Holy Spirit, and I trust He will do, to make the personal applications.

I do feel that what you ought to look for in this passage is really two things; the pattern that Paul used in evangelizing - the pattern that Paul used in evangelizing, and the boldness of his person. Those seem to be the dominant features, here. You see, the example of a man who knew no fear. And you see the example of a man who knew what we wanted to do in accomplishing the presentation of the gospel.

Now, it is true that Christians, that I said earlier, have been accused of trying to convert people. And if you've come, wondering whether or not we are trying to convert you, you are right, we are definitely trying to convert you. We're in that kind of business. We're all about trying to convert people. This is the goal for which we go into the world, and that is to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ, that they might be redeemed. Now, I know that some people have said, well, you know Christians are always trying to convert Jews. That's exactly right.

And some Rabbis have argued that the Jews don't try to convert the Christians; why do the Christians convert the Jews, or try to convert the Jews? It's because we have this injunction from our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, making disciples." This is our objective. I've titled this passage that we're gonna look at, regarding Paul and Agrippa, Are You Trying to Convert Me, because that's exactly what Paul does. You remember, in chapter 26, a very famous statement, verse 28, that you've heard preached on multiple of times, and perhaps misinterpreted, as many times - maybe not.

Agrippa said unto Paul, "Almost thou persuadeth me to be a Christian." Now I've heard a lot of sermons about that text that are so many people who are almost ready to be saved. Almost coming to Christ. On the verge of coming to Christ - that is not what that is saying. The actual Greek statement is are you, with so few words, trying to convert me? It's mockery. Hey, I know what's going on, you're trying to make a Christian out of me. You know what Paul says, right. You better believe it; and not only you, but everybody else, in this building. Are you trying to convert me? Yes, it's absolutely what we're trying to do.

Now, the Apostle Paul approaches this text in an effort to gain the heart and soul of Agrippa. Let me give you a little bit of a background. Paul was a man of objectives. He always had some kinda goal burning in his brain. The goal, in this passage, is to get Agrippa clearly into a position where he understands the gospel and can make an intelligent decision for Christ. Now, just to give you an idea of what's going on, the Apostle Paul has already been proven innocent, in four different trial situations, or hearing situations - before the mob, before the San Hedron, before Felix and before Festus.

And all of those occasions, the only thing that stands out in the text is, that the man hasn't done anything. He has not blasphemed God by dessecrating the Temple, as he was accused. He has not defied Israel by disobeying the Mosaic Law. He has not defied Rome, by being an insurrectionist and creating riots against the government. He has not done any of those things, and all of those courts, both Jewish and Roman, have attested to the fact that he has not, done those things.

But, you see, he has been retained as a prisoner, because the Roman Governors don't have the courage to release him because they know the Jews want him dead, and they're afraid of the Jews, if

they let him go. They're afraid that they will pressured, that there will be riots by the Jews, and they will have a hard time coping with them, so acquiesced to the Jews' wishes, by keeping Paul and prisoner, and they play footsie with the desire of the Jews to execute him. They know he's innocent, but they don't let him go because they're afraid of the Jews - it's, blackmail is what it is. That's an old story, with Roman Governors. The Jews did it, to all of them.

And so, we see in the situation here, that Paul should have been should have released; he's proven innocent on four occasions, but they still have him there, in prison, in Caesarea, because they know the Jews want him dead, and they think they might be pacified if the just keep him incarcerated. But Paul, you know, realize this just can't go on like this, and here realizes his life is in danger, so he knows he's not gonna get any justice Caesarea. And he's never gonna get off the hook, in Caesarea, so he has the only the recourse possible left to him, and that is that, which any Roman citizen had, who was brought before a Court, anywhere in the world, he appealed to Caesar.

And when you come to chapter 25, verses 10-12, Paul makes his appeal to Caesar. He says, in effect, I can't get any justice here. The Jews are still really trying to kill him. They wanted him to come to Jerusalem so they could ambush him on the way. Festus won't do anything to get rid of him, because he's afraid of the Jews. So, Paul says, "I appeal to Caesar," verse 11, at the end. Verse 12, Festus says, all right, "Under Caesar shall you go." The only hope that Paul had of getting out of this mess was to make his appeal to the Roman Court, at Rome. Now, that was a bold move because, as I told you before, Nero was nuts, and submitting himself to the judgment of Nero wasn't necessarily a good way out. But Paul did it, because it's the only hope he had, plus he knew the Lord, in chapter 23, verse 11, had promised that we would make it to Rome.

The Lord appeared to him that night, in the cell, in Jerusalem and told him he would be able to make it to Rome and preach the gospel, there. And so, he anticipated going to Rome anyway, so by appealing to Caesar, he fulfilled two things; he thought he could put himself in a place to get justice. Secondly, he would be in obedience to God's will, going to the place God had designed for him to go, and he really wanted to go to Rome. Deep down in his heart, he had a desperate desire to go there. When he wrote the letter to the Roman's earlier, at Corinth, he said to them, "That I desire to come to you. I long to see you, to impart some spiritual gift." I wanna come to you, chapter 15, verse 24 of Roman says, "On my way to Spain."

In chapter 19, he said, "I'm going to Jerusalem and then to Rome." So, he really wanted to go there. He really felt that if he could make an impact on that city, he could really have an impact in the Roman world. So, he has no other choice, and he appeals the case to Roman, endeavoring, not only get justice, but to be in the place where God has intended him to be. Now, there's a very interesting problem here, however, that is, this problem. In the appeal that Paul makes to Rome, Festus must acquiesce and send him there. But, Festus has a tremendous problem. Along with the prisoner, there had to be a report, and the report had to contain the accusations against the prisoner on which the

trial and the case were based.

But in the case of the Apostle Paul, there wasn'tany accusations, that stuck, and so, there wasn't anything to write down. So, Festus' problem is, he's got this prisoner who is innocent of anything, who isnow, needs to be sent to Rome to be put on trail, but he hasn't got one thing to write down, to explain what the trial is supposed to be about, because there is no accusation, that stuck - there is no thing of which he is either guilty or accused, that is even worthy of bringing. There aren't any even witnesses; there weren't any eyewitnesses to attest to anything. All it is, is a desire, on the part of those Jewish leaders, is to have that man, dead. They knew he was innocent. His innocence was repeatedly proven, but that didn't matter, they wanted him dead, anyway. It was the same as Jesus, it didn't matter that it was matter that He was innocent. They hated what Jesus stood for. They hated the fact that He rebuked their sin. They hated the fact that He unmasked their hypocrisy, and they hated the same thing, about Paul, and they wanted him, dead.

But there wasn't really any accusation, and so Festus was stuck, he was thing to function on a legal basis, as a faithful Roman procurator should but he couldn't send a prisoner along, with no information. But, fortunately for him, a man named Agrippa happened to arrive on the scene, making a courtesy call on this new procurator. Festus had just been inducted into the procuratorshipor the governorship of Judea, and his neighboring vassalKing was a man named Herod. And Herod just happened to arrive with his whole entourage and all their paraphernalia, to make a sort of a courtesy call on this new procurator, to sort of cement relationships. And it just was a marvelous thing the way it happened, because Agrippa was a perfect guy, to help Festus out of this problem of trying to figure out an accusation against Paul.

You see, Festus felt that the reason he couldn't really figure this thing out, was because it was a Jewish thing. And when Agrippa, the Jewish King, arrived, he figured I've got a guy who is gonna be able to untangle this mess. Agrippa arrives then, in verse 13, and that's where we begin our study. And we're gonna look at a whole bunch of points here, for a while to come. Let's begin with the consultation of Paul's testimony. The consultation regarding Paul's testimony - Agrippa and Festus have this little brainstorming session and determined what they're gonna do with this, Paul.

Now, Festus has to come up with some accusation, supposedly, and he needs Agrippa to help him, verse 13, "After certain days, King Agrippa, and Bernice, came unto Caesarea, to greet Festus." Now, this was purely a courtesy call. Festus was, if anything the superior to Herod. Even though Herod was the King, he was only a vassal King. He was to the land, what Queen Elizabeth is to England; it's sort of Pomp and Circumstances, and not a whole lot else. The Roman Government had subjugated all of Israel's own authority, and this man was just a puppet thing. In fact, he was reared, for most of his life, in Rome. It wasn't till the time that his father died and after, that he was given some territory to rule in Israel, that he left Rome. He spent the last days of life in Rome, and died there. So, he was really Roman oriented and Roman, in allegiance, though he was Jewish. And, of course, as a King, was in

charge of the appointment of Priests and the operation of the ceremonies of Jewish worship. So, he was very, very familiar with this.

Now, this particular Agrippa - just to give you a little idea about who he is; was one the Herod's. The Herodian family was a whole family of Kings; they were a lot of them, and they sort of dominate the rulership, of the New Testament Era. You can go all the way to Herod the Great, and extend all the way to Agrippa II - this is Herod Agrippa II, he was the last of the Herods. When died, that was the end of it. Now, Herod Agrippa II was the brother of Bernice. You see Bernice, there? That was his sister. And Herod Agrippa II and Bernice, is one of the most infamous relationships of all history because they lived incest. Interestingly enough, Bernice was also the sister of Drusilla, who was the wife of Felix, the Governor, before Festus.

So, the whole thing was kind of a family package, thing. Herod Agrippa II was the son Herod Agrippa I. Clever of me to think of that. And Herod Agrippa I was a terrible character; he had beheaded James. He had imprisoned Peter. He is the guy, in chapter 12 of Acts - this is his father, Agrippa II, father - who decided that it would be Agrippa Day, in Caesarea, and invited everybody to come, and he got up and made a proclamation. And all the people said, oh what a man. It is the voice of a God, and not a man. Isn't he something? And he loved it. And an Angel of God smote him and he was eaten worms and died.

That's how Herod Agrippa II, father's, passed on. Herod Agrippa's uncle had beheaded John the Baptist, and his great father, killed all the babies at Bethlehem. So, it was really a disastrous family. It was proper for a Jewish King to pay a courtesy call on a new procurator, and so he showed up. He was really accommodating to Rome. He was reared in Rome, he lived in Rome, until his father died in 44 A.D. Claudius, the Emperor of Rome wanted to appoint him to the Kingdom that his father had, but everybody told him, he was too young - he was only 17. So, they waited another six years, till he was 23, and then they gave him only a part of the territory.

A little later, when he matured, and when was 27, they gave him a little more of the territory, and he really ruled a very small - relatively smaller. You have Northern Palestine and Galilee, just a little section, up there. And he strictly a vassal King - he was Jewish in nationality, he Roman in perspective. I think it very interesting that he established his Capital at Caesarea Philippi, which is a different Caesarea, than the one that is - this location, at this text. Caesarea Philippi was north, and he changed the name of it, to Neroniusin order to fascinate Nero; and incidentally, it was on the side Mount Hermon, which is very famous today because that's where all the battling is going on.

Now, in the Jewish War, which really brought about the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. He tried to prevent the Jews from revolting. He tried to keep the peace. And in fact, when Vespasian moved his troops against Jerusalem, he joined the Roman Army and fought against Jerusalem. So, he really was a traitor to Judaism. He died in Rome, the last of Herodian Dynasty.

Now, I want you to meet Bernice. Now, Bernice was his sister. Historian Josephus, tells - and he is the major Historian of that era, and reliable - that they lived in incest. And it became very common knowledge, this debauched situation. Bernice got around, and every once in awhile she'd had an interlude with a lover, but would always comeback, because the lover would always dump her, sooner or later because of this terrible incest that kept perpetuating. In fact, the son Vespasian, Titus - the one who really was so instrumental in part of the destruction of Jerusalem, took Bernice as his lover. But when he got her back to Rome, the talk around Rome was so bad, he dumped her, and she went right back into the incest with Agrippa. And they lived in it, until they died, and they lived to a very old, and lived in Rome.

Now, I'll show you an interesting thing about it. All gossip all around them, all their lives. But notice what it says, "Certain days, King Agrippa, and Bernice." Okay? Now, look at verse 23. "And on the next day, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice." Now, look at chapter 26, verse 30. "When he had thus spoken, the King rose up, and the Governor, and Bernice." Listen, Bernice wasn't left out of anything. You say, why does Bernice standup every time he stands up? Why does the Holy Spirit keep saying, "and Bernice?" Did she amount to anything? Not really; certainly nothing that you...you certainly wouldn't name your daughter Bernice. If you already did, that's too bad.

Sorry about that. Well, you can change it. But anyway, Bernice is always there; see? You know, and you try to look at the significance of that; why is it that every time this guy stands up or sits down, or does something, the Holy Spirit has to say, "and Bernice?" I think the Holy Spirit is pinpointing something for us. She is attached to Agrippa like an ugly disease. She is the symbol of his vice. She is the classification of the man. All you have to know, to characterize Agrippa, are these two words, and Bernice. Right? She is the Holy Spirit's characterization of the man. And every time the man appears - and Bernice - she is like a disease around his neck - the repetition of incest.

Doctor Ironside said, "If Agrippa dies unsaved, we may be that God links Bernice with him, still. And when Agrippa stands, eventually, at the Great White Throne, Bernice will be there, too." In other words, Bernice represents sin, that sin, that evil thing in his life from which he never could be separated, in time or eternity, unless he would judge the sin and get right with God. Surely, there is something intensely solemn here. Oh, the awfulness of sin, how it clings. It's a vivid illustration, isn't it? - And, Bernice.

So, Agrippa: Decadent, immoral, descendant, of an infamous family - a father who beheaded James, an uncle who beheaded John; a great grandfather who slaughtered babies - so it goes. And he appears, and he does know some things about Judaism. And Festus needs to know some things about Judaism. So, he's a welcome guest. He apparently - that is Agrippa - had a very good reputation in Jewish matters. The Apostle Paul acknowledges him as "an expert" in verse 3, of chapter 26.

Now, notice verse 14, and we will go a little faster, from here on. Verse 14, "And when they had been there many days, they" - of course they had a whole big thing there, you know, welcoming the King. "Festus declared Paul's cause unto the King, saying, 'There is a certain man, left in bonds, by Felix.'" Now, they've been having their little tete-te-tete, for a few days, and finally the right time comes, and Festus says, you know, there's this man here, that Felix left, when he was defrocked and sent out of the Governorship, by Rome - when he was recalled. And I've this man on my hands. And Festus reviews, for Herod, the situation regarding this man, that Felix left, there.

And you remember, back in chapter 24-27, it says that, Felix left him to do a favor to the Jews. That's the only reason he was even in prison. He was innocent. They just - weretrying to pacify the Jews. So, he said, now, let me tell you about guy, verse 14, "When they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the King, saying, 'There's a certain man left in bonds by Felix, about whom, when was at Jerusalem, the Chief Priest and the Elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.'" Now he says, "There's this man, and as soon as I got here" - you remember the first thing he did, was he spent a few days at Caesarea, when he was inducted, and then immediately to Jerusalem to try to make some kind of relationship with the leaders there.

"As soon as I got to Jerusalem," he says, "the Chief Priest and Elders informed me about this man, and they wanted him to be condemned." They did not want a trial - the implication is, they did want any kind of a sentencing, they just wanted an execution; this man is left here by Felix; I don't what's going on, here; all I know is these Jews want this man, dead. "To whom I answered," verse 16, "It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before he, who is accused, have the accusers face to face, and have opportunity to answer for himself, concerning the accusation, laid against him." He says, now, we can't do this. He said to Agrippa, "I told them that Roman law prohibits executing a man without a trial.

And we have inherited that today, haven't we? We have a legal system, in which the accused must stand face to face, with the accusers, and it must be brought all into the open. All the evidence concerned must be detailed and a verdict determined. And that's exactly what Roman justice demanded. There must be a confrontation of the accused and the accusers, and there must be a resolution of the case before any sentencing can take place.

And so he says, "I had to bow out of that request on the basis of Roman justice." And of course you know what the Jews' idea was - we'll just get this guy in a corner. We'll say, if you wanna have a happy rulership here, if you wanna get along as a Governor, you'd better do this, for us; and they started at the very beginning, they tried to blackmail him. But he didn't let 'em do it, at the first. At least he moderately did not compromise. He said, "No, I'm not gonna do that. Roman law demands a trial." And so, he called the trial, down to Caesarea, and said, "You come down and we'll have an official trial." - verse 17 - "Therefore, when they were come here, without any delay on the next day, I

sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought forth."

So, he said, "I sat up the legitimate trial and tried to determine the case." Which is good. Verse 18, "Against whom, when the accuser stood up, they had brought" what? - "no accusation on such things as I had" - in perfect tense - "been continually supposing." He had probably manufactured, in his mind, some idea of what the man had done. Claudius Lysias did; remember he thought he was that strange rebel, the Egyptian. And I'm sure that Felix had his ideas about who he was, too. Well, I'm sure, Festus figured this has done something, something, such and such. When he got in there he says, "I found out that there was no accusation of anything that I had imagined." Fetus said, "I've got a problem. You see I had this guy, here. I was innocent of the whole matter. I inherited him from Felix. I know the Jews want him dead, but I can't figure out what he did."

"Now, to make matters worse, the guy's appealing to Caesar, and I've got to send him to Rome, but I don't have one thing to write down, on the report. Will you please help me out of this mess?" Well, that's a real mess, I agree. It's tough to come to a decision. He finally concludes, in verse 19, by saying this, "The only thing I know is, they had certain questions against him, of their own religion." He didn't understand Judaism. He said, "This is this is a theological thing, and I am lost." "And," - now watch this, this is beautiful - "of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul keeps on affirming, to be alive."

Let's get the picture, here. He says, "Agrippa, I inherited this guy. They want him dead. They wanted to kill him without a trial. I said you can't do that, Roman law demands a trial. We put on a trial; there wasn't any accusation that stood; the only thing that the guy has done is he's in an argument about religion. And there's a dead man by the name of Jesus, that he keeps saying, is alive. Could you believe that? They guy is out of his mind. Why do they bother with him? I don't understand this thing. Any intelligent Roman knows you don't rise from the dead. But he goes around affirming, 'Jesus is alive.'" "Big deal. If that's his particular strange thing, let him alone. What does it hurt?"

See, he didn't understand anything. He didn't understand the implications of the resurrection because he did not understand the implications of the execution of the Messiah. He didn't understand the life and work of Jesus Christ. He didn't even know this Jesus, the one Jesus. He doesn't even know who He is. You can't expect Festus to understand anything, and of course, he's trapped in his ignorance. He doesn't even understand why they're having a big debate. All he knows is the thing is about the resurrection. Boy, isn't that good to know? No matter whatever happened, Paul always got down to the core issue, the core issue was, Jesus is not dead, he's alive. That's what we believe, amen. He's alive.

And the issue is always the resurrection. So, he says, "Agrippa, I need help. I don't know what's going on here, and it doesn't seem to me to be anything worthy of a trial, and yet he's appealed to Rome and the people want him dead. Help me." Verse 20, he admits his perplexity. "And because I was

perplexed, concerning such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters." He said, "I was confused some about some of these things, so I said, let's to go Jerusalem and we'll do it there." Well, the truth of the matter was, the Jews pressured him into trying to get him to Jerusalem, didn't they? 'Cause they wanted to kill him and ambush him on the way, but here, he just - he doesn't say the Jews pressured him to do it, he wants to look good in Agrippa eyes, so he says, "I determined to take him to take him to Jerusalem, and there, I figured, in that context, with the Jewish people there, they could come up with some kind of solution, to this mess."

But you know what happened, when Paul got the word that he was gonna go to Jerusalem, what did he do? He said, "No way, am I going to Jerusalem, I can't get justice in Caesarea, let along Jerusalem. I appeal to Caesar." And he took the route that every Roman citizen had - if he couldn't get justice at one place, he could appeal to Rome. So he said, "I was gonna bring him to Jerusalem and settle it, but when Paul had appealed to be reserved under the Hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar." He said, "Then he appealed to Augustus." Now, let me say a word about Augustus. Augustus is not a proper name. Augustus really is an adjective. You think of Augustus Caesar, that is not really the proper name for a Caesar, that's the adjective for all of the Caesars.

You know what we mean we say there was an august body meeting? It means an honorable or a gloried one, or a dignified one. Well, the word in the Greek is the same thing, it's sabastas, and sabastas literally comes from a root, to worship - the Worshiped One, the Revered One. And who was the Revered One? The Augustus Caesar of this day was Nero. Properly termed, Nero could be called the Augustus Caesar Nero. The term Augustus was first applied to Octavian, who was the first Roman Emperor, and then it was applied to the rest, in succession.

So, he wanted to see the August one, he wanted to see the Revered One, the Worshiped, Honorable Caesar. "And when he made that appeal, I have no choice. I commanded him to be retained here until time would when I could send him but I can't send him," he's saying, "because I don't know what to tell that he did. I certainly can't say, here's some nut running around saying somebody's alive who's dead. They're gonna say, ho, ho, ho, we should worry about that, guy." So you see, he's got a problem. Well, Agrippa thought, this will be interesting. He liked jugglers and comedians and strange people, and he thought I'd like to hear this guy. Verse 22, "Agrippa said unto Festus, 'I would also hear the man myself. He sounds like an interesting fellow.' 'Tomorrow,' said he, 'thou shalt hear him." So, ends the consultation regarding the testimony of Paul.

And Agrippa, interesting - just a little footnote, "Agrippa, I would also hear the man myself," is an imperfect, and it gives the idea of a continuous action. It may be, that he had continuously wished to hear this man, having heard about him. There's no doubt in my mind, that he had heard about it, and that had been a constant wish to hear him. It was a curiosity with Agrippa. So, the consultation

regarding Paul's testimony leads us to the next day, and hearing begins in verse 23, and we'll call it the circumstances of Paul's testimony. Now, what's interesting about this is it was probably one of the most dramatic scenes in all of the New Testament. And I wished we could do it in 35 millimeter, full color, or __ rather, so you could really see what this thing was like, and get the picture. I don't have the words to describe it, but you use your imagination.

I'll do it from the Greek. 23, "The next day when Agrippa when was come, and Bernice, with great pomp" - now you know the word, pomp; some of you, in the past, and maybe even recently, because I think there was a revival of this thing - remember a Walt Disney film, called, *Fantasia*, do you remember that? Well, it was a spectacular thing for cartooning and all the colors and all ___. Well, you know, fantasia is the Greek word fantasia that is translated here, pomp. So, in came Agrippa with his whole great fantasia. He came in with a super colossal, phantasmagoria, the whole entourage; this is a big show. You know what I mean it was all there. You can imagine the King coming in and he's got his purple robes on, and Bernice, with her purple robes on. And they've got their golden mogasson, they've got their rings, they've got whatever it takes to show that you're really where it's at, in terms of Rulers.

And certainly there were all those other soldiers; a phalanx of them would come in and act as a ceremonial guard. The place of Hearing, the Auditorium literally would be surrounded by the best dressed nattily attired, of the soldiers, standing at attention. And there would be those people, you know, with the big things that go like, this, you know? That'd have on the back of them, the name of the local funeral parlor, you know, those things? And all of that, whole big circus of Pomp and Circumstance going on; and a big huge display; and of course, all of the dignitaries were there, verse 23, "They entered into the place of Hearing"

That's literally auditorium - "with the Chief Captains," and of course - "the principal men of the city" - I mean anybody who was anybody in Caesarea, was there. Boy, this was really a big deal - "and they all were there. At Festus' commandment, Paul was brought forth." Now, if we can believe tradition, Paul was not very imposing, physically. You see all of this glitter and glamour and fantasia going on, and all this stuff, and in walks a little bandy-legged, baldheaded Jewish guy, who maybe couldn't see too well, and had a two year Tunic on, that had been a cell with him, or wherever he was kept; and he's shackled by a chain, and he stands in the middle.

And you can imagine people saying, did we come to hear this guy? Hey, it's a little overdone, isn't it, for him? But you know what's amazing about Paul, it didn't matter what was going on around him, he always dominated the scene, didn't he? He always dominated the scene. He was not, apparently, an imposing figure. But they may have said, this guy is a problem? You know, Luke has a great sense of values and he must have a great sense humor because the contrast here is just really interesting. And I imagine that all those people, with all their paraphernalia on, especially Agrippa, and Bernice - and probably Festus, too - would really have been super scandalized if they'd known that history

recorded that they looked like a bunch of jerks, and Paul's the one that stuck and looked liked somebody.

They never would've dreamed that. They never would dream that history would record that Paul was the dramatic hero, and they were stupid, foolish. Putting on a big show, like a bunch of kids playing house, in the backyard. All the VIPs and in walks Paul. Maybe the greatest of the VIPs, apart from Jesus Christ, that ever lived. A beautiful thing; look at verse 24. Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all men who are here present, with us, you see this man. Take a look at this guy. About whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me. This," - he's saying, look at him; this is the guy that all the Jews keep dealing with me, about. Can you believe that? Look at him, at Jerusalem and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. They want this guy dead. Look at him.

"When I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he, himself, had appealed to Augustus, I am determined to send him to Augustus. He's done nothing for which to die, and he appealed to Caesar and I'm gonna send him." But he admits to the whole crowd. Listen to this. This is an honest man; he really was, he says, "Of whom I have no certain thing to write under my Lord." I don't have anything to put on, to report, though. "Wherefore, I have brought him forth, before you, and especially before you, O' King Agrippa, that after examination, I might have something to write. For it seemed to me, unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not signify the accusations laid against him."

Now, you see his problem? Now, he's a very open man. With them, he's very honest. He says, "I can't send this guy to Rome without an accusation. I've got a problem." And he turns the thing over to Agrippa. And he's saying, in effect, this isn't official, this is not a trial; this is just a Hearing, it's just a time for Agrippa to get some curiosity satisfied, and to show off. And it's a time for Festus to get something to write on his little note, to Rome. And you know something? Legally speaking Paul didn't even have to show up. Now, he would have had a hard time trying not to show up, because they would've dragged him in. But he maybe could have argued wisely, from the law standpoint, and said, you better not take me in there, I've had my trial. I've been judged innocent; I pleaded my case to Rome, I have no need to go to that thing. And he may have been able to get out of it, but not Paul. Why wouldn't he wanna get out of it? Because it was another platform, to do what? Preach Christ. Everything that ever happened in the man's life, he turned around to that.

So, we first of all see the consultation regarding his testimony, then the circumstances around his testimony. What a beautiful stage - all set, for him to preach. And whole place is jammed with pagans from wall to wall. People who didn't know the Lord, and he just had of 'em as an audience. I mean he was in paradise. You know this is exciting because this is the objective of the church, to go into the world and preach the gospel. You know, you read the New Testament and you read about the church meeting, the church meets and prays and breaks bread, fellowships, studies of the word of God - the church never meets to evangelize, it always go out into the world to do that. And here he is. He's out there confronting the world, nose to nose.

I mean he's surrounded by the whole Roman entourage and all of the Jewish people, and all the dignitaries, in that part of the world, and he is as bold, and as fearless as any man who ever lived. He just blurts it out. And his testimony is fantastic. We'll get into this thing, and you'll see how dramatic and dynamic is his presentation, and penetrating. And he just - he unmasks the sin of those people and he just tears Agrippa. So, here he comes. Well, Agrippa's got the controls now. In chapter 26, verse 1; we see a third point, the commencement of Paul's testimony. We've seen the consultation and circumstances; here's the commencement.

"Then Agrippa said," to Paul - 'Thou art pert to speak for thyself.' And Paul stretched forth the hand and answered for himself.'" Boy, that's a terrific statement, and answered for himself - I like that. Boy, I know Peter meant when he said, "Every man ought to have an answer to give for the reason, that the hope that is in him." Right? "With meekness and fear." You know if we really get into those times, and into those situations where we're confronting people with the claims of Christ, and trying to convert them to Christ, we need to have the information there. Paul put it this way, "The instance." 2 Timothy 4, "In season, out of season. Do you know what instant means? You've got the information. Don't be a concordance cripple. I'm speaking. Just a moment, I must go get my concordance and find out where the verses are, and then I'll be right with you. See?

We ought to have the reservoir or the knowledge of the word of God to be instance. To be ready to give an answer to the man who asks us for the reason of the hope that's within us. You know the Lord Jesus Christ, and of course, as deity, he had this in a sense, that none of us, do. And Paul even had it in a sense of revelation that we don't. But the Lord Jesus was the Master of taking every opportunity and turning it, to himself, wasn't he? A woman at a well needs water and she finds out that He is the water of life. She can have a well of water springing up into eternal life. A lot of people need some food, and He feeds them bread and then turns around and says, "I am the bread of life."

A great candelabra, sits in the middle of Temple; Jesus walks in and says, "I am the light of the world." The High Priest takes the pitcher of water and pours out the water and they're all thanking God for the water and Jesus says, "I am the water of life. If any man thirsts, let him come unto to me and drink." Jesus was the Master of taking ever occasion and turning it, to himself, and Paul drank deeply of that very same Spirit, he could do it, as well. We've seen him in case, after case, after case, where the circumstances became the platform for his proclamation.

People, you need to think like that. This is one of the first patterns of evangelism, we see in the passage, the ability to take the moment, and turn it to the gospel. The ability to take the circumstance, you're in, and magnify the Lord Jesus Christ, in it; the ability to take whatever's going on, translate that into opportunity. You say how do you do it? Just be ready to do it. The first thing you need to do is be ready and anxious to do it, and the door will open. It really is a question of boldness, not

method, wouldn't you say? And we could have all the methods in the world on how to win people to the Lord, but what it boils down to is walking in the Spirit, let the Spirit move your heart and be bold enough to speak.

And so, the Apostle Paul speaks. Listen, he's been waiting for two years to say something, and now he's gonna say it. Martin Niemoller; you may have read of Martin Niemoller. He was a Christian, a German Christian who was captured by the Nazis and spent nine years in prison, and endured horrors, just horrible things. At end of World War II, when he was released, he came to America, and of course, there was very much interest in his coming. And he traveled around America and spoke. And he spoke out of the context of nine years, of the horrors of a Nazi prison.

Two Reporters commented on Niemoller and his speech, in one city, and this was their comment. "Imagine," said one Reporter, disgustedly, "nine years in a Nazi prison and all he can talk is Jesus Christ." end quote. Isn't that a great testimony? Well, here's Paul, two years, in Caesarean prison, and all he can talk about is all he could ever talk about, Jesus Christ. You wanna know what his testimony is about? It's about what he's always about, it's about Jesus Christ. What else? The man took every opportunity and turned it around.

I remember doing a course, one time, when I taught a course in college, and working on the gospels. And there was a great of God, who was a great Soul winner. And somebody asked him one time, what turned his life around, and what made him so fruitful, in winning people to Christ, and he said this: "One day I prayed a prayer that changed my life, and this is it; God giving me the opportunity. Every time I am able to introduce the topic of conversation, it will always be of Jesus Christ." That was his prayer. God giving me the opportunity - every time I am able to introduce the topic of conversation, it will always be of Jesus Christ. That's what changed his life. God only knows how many people he won to Jesus Christ because that's all he ever talked about.

You say, maybe that's extreme. Yeah well, maybe that's the rationalization. Paul talked about Jesus Christ. And two years in a cell hadn't paled his desire to speak. And I know that he looked at that man, Agrippa, and his heart grieved for Agrippa. And he had the love of God toward man and wanted him to hear the gospel. And so, he is about to speak concerning Jesus Christ. He is gonna testify that Jesus is alive from the dead. He's gonna say the same thing he's been saying again, and again, and again. Wouldn't it be nice if the world said of us, you know, that guy, he's the guy who keeps going around saying Jesus is alive?

I mean wouldn't it nice if that was our reputation? The world should so know us. Well, let's just - to begin with, I'm not gonna take much time. But let me introduce to the first part of his speech, in chapter 26. It's the courtesy. I mean he wants to be courteous to Agrippa and gain his ear. He's honest. He says, "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself, this day, before you, concerning all the things of which I am accused of by Jews." - not the Jews, it wasn't all of

them; and certainly didn't wanna incorporate Agrippa, in that - "Especially am I glad, Agrippa, because I know you to be" - what? - "expert, in all the customs and questions, which are among the Jews. Wherefore, I beseech, hear me out, patiently." Now listen, he addresses the key figure in the room, Agrippa, which was courteous. But he knows everybody else is gonna listen.

And they're especially gonna listen if they know he's talking to the King because they don't wanna interrupt that. Two men stand in confrontation. One stands a prisoner, the other sits, a King. But one is an enslaved King, and one is an enthroned prisoner. It's a fantastic scene. And you know what's in Paul's heart? In Paul's heart is the conversion of Agrippa. And when Paul gets into his testimony and gets to the end of the testimony that he gave, Agrippa says, "Hey, are you trying to convert me?" Paul says, "Right, that's exactly what I was trying to do. Not only you, but everybody else here."

This is one of the supreme defenses of the Christian faith, the supreme testimonies, ever given by Paul. And it begins with this courteous beginning. And its whole intent is evangelistic. Now watch this; his testimony is not defense, it is offense. When you are drawn before tribunals of the world, your purpose is not to defend yourself; your purpose is to win them to Jesus Christ. That's always our purpose. Paul isn't saying, hey man, I don't deserve any of this stuff. Whoa, listen, I'm just a - he just attacks in offense. He must have felt that Agrippa would understand. You see, Agrippa was a Roman-an orientation in the Jewish nationality, so, he felt that Agrippa would be open. I mean he would understand his logic - Paul's logic - he would understand his reason; he would understand the Jewish situation and the Jewish customs. At the same time, he wouldn't be sympathetic with the Sanhedrim. And he wouldn't be so hateful. So, he felt, maybe I've got an objective guy here, who is as objective as a Roman, would be, but who is as oriented to Judaism as a Jew would be. This guy might be a potential convert. And boy, he really goes after him. And knows too, the influence - if Agrippa became a believer, he knows what a tremendous impact it would have.

Is he trying to convert Agrippa? Absolutely that's what he's trying to do. We make no apology as Christians. We're trying to convert everybody we can get our hands on. We're after the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Christian Science, and everybody else - and the Buddhists, and we wanna 'em all to come to Jesus Christ. If you wonder whether we're out after folks, yeah, well that's what we're doing. And Paul thought maybe he has an open heart. I'll go after it. Was he right? Will have to come back next week, to find out. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for giving us again, a glimpse of the boldness of this man. God, help us to know that we're in the business of touching people's lives, for Jesus Christ; of trying to make them Christians. Father, help us to realize that in the world, that is what we're for, to reach out and touch their lives, to tell them of the resurrected Jesus Christ. Father, help us, as well, to be bold and fearless and, no matter what scene is, and no matter august, the body's present. No matter how threatening the situation, give us that boldness that Paul knew, that fearlessness that made him a man who left a dent in the world, everywhere he stepped. Father, help us to be so. Help us to love

you so much that we're obedient to that. To make an impact on our world, as he did. We praise you for the privilege of following in His train and being called to proclaim the same message He proclaimed. May we be worthy of such a calling, of such a savior, in His name we pray. Amen.

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