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

Paul Before Agrippa, Part 3: Are You Trying to Convert Me?
Scripture: Acts 26:19-32
Code: 1798

Let me draw your attention to Acts 25, and this is going to be our concluding look at a lengthy section of Scripture, which we've entitled Are you Trying to Convert Me? We'll recall that this is occasion of the apostle Paul's encounter with a man by the name of Agrippa. Let me begin with just an introduction that may set our thoughts. Obviously we are all aware of the fact that a new year is upon us. A clean slate on which to write, fresh cement to leave our footprints in, days to live that no one has ever lived before. And I suppose there has to be something of the forgetting of those things that are behind and pressing toward the mark that is ahead that kind of mentality. Every new day is a day reborn and yet I think that we don't catch the impact of that as much as we do when we see a whole year facing us. This year you in your life will write history, not many people may read it, on the other hand a lot of people may read it, it just depends. And as the collective you, all of you write history so shall the history be written of Grace Church.

Churches have personalities. They are the corporate personality of all the parts. Whatever we are together this year is what Grace Church will be, nothing less, nothing more. As I was thinking about it what about John MacArthur, what will his life say for 1975? What would he like to write in the fresh cement that's so harden for all men to read in the future, all who are interested at least? What will Grace Church leave in the fresh cement of 1975, what will its impact be, and will the world care, and will it matter?

As I look back I could see some years that we wrote some things. I can remember back in 1969 when I think we wrote a lot of things about doctrine. We spent a whole year studying doctrine. I remember that Saturday after Saturday after Saturday I met with men and we studied doctrine. I remember that I preached through the book of Romans and laid the foundation, at least I believe that doctrine is the foundation upon which to build the building and we started there. And I can remember that it wasn't long after that that we began to talk a lot about the unity of the believers and fellowship and the ministry of spiritual gifts and there were years when that was our identity and history recorded that Grace Church was emphasizing those things. And then I think there were years when we began to emphasize training. We began to consider training people for certain things, making sure that our teachers were equipped, making sure that our elders and deacons were equipped. And then it seems as though last year we really got kind of involved in determining the direction of the church in terms of its structure and patterns and leadership from the New Testament, and we saw some marvelous things and we began to study that.

So what about 1975? What shall be written of us? What shall we write? The greatest thing that I think we could write, and I think we're ready for this is that 1975 for Grace Community Church was the year of evangelism. It was the year of winning people to Jesus Christ. We're there, you know, we're mature at this point, at least mature enough to know the gospel and to know the principles of the Christian life. And I think we have to recognize that with all that we know we are immensely responsible. Don't you believe that? We're responsible to God because let's face it we know here because of the quality of the teaching that you receive in all the various levels of this church you know far more than people in most churches know. And if the responsibility of evangelism in the world belongs to anybody it has to belong to us, even as it does to all Christians, but maybe in a greater measure because to whom much is given much is required. We have answers for people and we need to make them available.

I've heard it said frequently to me, "Well Grace Church all right, but it grows at the expense of all the other churches, because all Grace does is take away all the good people from the rest of the churches." That is true. Everybody, now wait a minute, I have to qualify that, everybody we've ever gotten from any place else is good people. We think you're all wonderful people. I mean we're not going to say we got all the bad people. And we've heard other churches who say that Grace just gets the bad people, we're glad they go, and that's been said a lot. But that isn't true. We love all of you. We praise God. You know that I know this that if a church grows as fast as our church has grown and we grow all by evangelism and all by new Christians we would have to have an influx of spiritual leadership just to take care of all those new Christians. So we're not against that.

Now we don't go around making problems and trying to pull people out of other places, but there are a lot of people in a lot of places they shouldn't be. There are people in apostate churches. Now we don't mind when God sends us leadership because we assume He has a reason for that. And we don't mind when people have a hunger for the word of God and they want to know the word of God and they come here to learn it. We think that's legitimate motivation. But let's be fair about it. There is a big difference between new members and new Christians isn't there? And with the addition of new members and people like many of you who know the word of God there ought to be a multiplying factor of new converts being won to Christ. And I don't think this is an issue of church emphasis, I think it's an issue of spirituality. You know what I think? I think a believer who walks in the Spirit is reproductive. I don't think it is something you need to promote from the pulpit. I don't think you need programs for evangelism. I just think you need the spillage of a Spirit-filled life.

So it isn't as if we need to put up big banners about winning people all the time because I'm not sure that's true motivation. I mean we don't want a bunch of people running out and doing a lot of things in the flesh so they can get a lot of fleshly recognition. What we really want is spiritual believers through the spillage of their spirituality is going to produce disciples.

Like the early church who had such love and such unity and such beautiful fellowship that the Lord had an easy time adding daily to the church such as should be saved. But I do think that in 1975 that we need to really be aware that all of the growth of Grace Church hasn't been new Christians and maybe it ought to be a lot more. Just thing that if every one of us only won five people to Jesus Christ in 1975 and began to disciple them what a fantastic impact we would have. I trust we're committed to that. I trust we're committed to sharing the gospel boldly. If I've learned anything at all in the study of the book of Acts, I've learned that you present Christ with boldness and fearlessness. I mean I just can't get around it because there it is all the time. You and I have both learned enough about the apostle Paul to know that the man was absolutely bold, wasn't he? And that he saw, as the directive in his life, to win somebody to Christ and mature them in the faith. A Christian who is not doing that is a contradiction.

A Christian is a reproducer by definition. He is someone who is to effect someone and so as we look at the book of Acts and particularly as we look at this passage I'm just reminded again here is the apostle Paul, he's under all kinds of pressure, he's a prisoner now, the Jews hate him so much they have him a prisoner, actually the Romans are holding him, but under the pressure of the Jews. He is having to give his testimony over and over again, but every time he gives his testimony, which he always declares his innocence, and even though he's innocent they won't let him go because of Jewish pressure, but every time he declares his testimony it winds up being a presentation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ of the gospel and invariably throws everything into chaos.

I mean the apostle Paul had such boldness he goes into a city like Athens that was full of idolatry, he went in there and it says when he saw the city wholly given over to idolatry his spirit was stirred within him and began to preach Christ in the marketplace and the synagogue and everywhere. Went up on the Areopagus in Chapter 17 and declared to them the unknown God. I mean he was bold.

In Corinth he did the same thing. He did the same thing in Philippi. He went into town presented Jesus Christ, a group of people got saved. He found an evil possessed girl and it didn't bother him that the two people who were making their fortune off this girl would be upset. He just cast the demons out of the girl, straightened her out, got thrown in jail, sang, had an earthquake, let the jailer to Christ, just absolutely consumed by the same goal all the time, to win people. He never got defensive.

Whenever it was time to give a defense it turned out to be an attack. He never defended his behavior; he only declared his behavior and then zeroed in on whoever he wanted to reach. They were trying to kill him in the courtyard, the Romans rescued him, hauled him up the stairs. He turned around at the top of the stairs and preached Jesus to the crowd. They hauled him into the Sanhedrin, he got in the Sanhedrin and talked about the resurrection and threw the Sanhedrin into such cast they would have ripped him to shreds if the Romans hadn't rescued him. Every time he was never on the

defense, he was always on the attack.

I think the Christian has to view his life as an aggression against the world. We are not going around saying, "Yes I'm a Christian, but." The Christian is a soldier and the Christian is a soldier who has a sword and a sword is for attacking and the sword is the word, and the world is the objective, and we go at it. We may have to wail away through the demons to get there, but that's the point. It's a war and we're on the aggression.

People, you know you can say, "Well I'll just sit around until somebody comes along and happens to get accidentally saved by my witness." It just won't happen. Not like it would if you get aggressive and confront the system.

Well you see Paul here and he faces this man by the name of Agrippa. And we've seen much detail in Chapter 25 already, so we'll just kind of skip by some of that and for our time today we really come to Chapter 26 where Paul begins his testimony. Now you remember that Festus was kind of stuck since Paul couldn't get any justice at all in Caesarea he appealed to Rome. A Roman citizen had the right to do that if his case wasn't getting fair trial he could appeal to Caesar and he would be transferred to Rome and they would hear his case in a Roman court.

So Festus was going to have to send Paul to Rome. The only problem was he had no accusation to write because Paul hadn't done anything. So he was trying to figure one out. Well when Agrippa arrived Agrippa came along with Bernice because Agrippa wanted to just welcome Festus. He was the new Roman governor and they wanted to have good relationship. Agrippa was a vassal king, he was a nothing king, he was a puppet king, but nevertheless he did order the temple worship and appoint the priests so he had some position of leadership. Well he wanted to kind of have a little meeting with Festus and welcome him and start off on the right foot.

So when Agrippa arrived Festus figured maybe this guy will pick something out of Paul's testimony that will help me to have something to write. So they put on this big hearing. Well the big show was described there at the end of Chapter 25, a whole lot of pomp and all of that when they came together, and here was this little Paul in the middle and all these big wheels around him and people of great importance. And he is to defend himself. He is to speak to the issue of his imprisonment and the crimes that he is supposedly to have committed. But instead of it being a defensive, it is an attack and he attacks Agrippa.

I mean he zeros in on Agrippa and when he's all done and Agrippa says, "Are you trying to convert me?" And he says, "Right, and not only you but everybody else in this place." In other words Paul never backed off the issue. He never became a defensive Christian. He never became somebody who had to be spoken to before he really took his opportunities. He never was a sneaky person. I know there are people who would have said, "Paul, you know you could save yourself a lot of trouble

if you had snuck around the back alleys and passed out tracts and then beat it out of town, and then you could have claimed the promise the word never returns void and you would have been all right." But that wasn't his way. His way was confrontation and boldness and fearlessness. So here he is defending himself before the Roman governor and the king and yet he doesn't become defensive at all. He attacks Agrippa and forces the issue.

Now last time we saw the commencement of Paul's testimony in verses 1 through 18. Let me just review that in content by reminding you that Agrippa said, "All right Paul. Speak. I want to hear what you have to say and we'll see if we can get some kind of accusation out of this whole mess." So Paul spoke. And what he did is this: without going into all the detail of the outline he did this: He said, "Agrippa and Bernice I was a Jew. I mean I was a zealous Jew and all the Jews know it. I was a super-zealous Jew. I was a Pharisee. I was so zealous that I went about doing all the things I could do contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And then," he says, "One day I was walking down the road to Damascus for the purpose of executing Christians and you know what happened a light brighter than the sun hit me," verse 13, "and everybody with me and we hit the ground," verse 14. "And I heard a voice saying to me, '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 he said, 'Jesus whom you persecute.' And you know what happened Agrippa? Jesus said to me, 'Get up, get on your feet for I have appointed you a minister and a witness and I want you to tell the things that you have seen. I have delivered you from the Jews and from the Gentiles to send you back to them and here's your message,'" verse 18. "To open their eyes, turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me." Now that's the commencement of his testimony.

He says, Agrippa, I'll tell you my story. I was literally transformed by Jesus. He is alive. I mean I wasn't out under a tree reading the Old Testament trying to discover the Messiah. I wasn't in a Bible study with a bunch of Christians who were reigning in on me, I wasn't seeking to do anything but persecute Jesus Christ and sovereignly out of heaven the living Christ who is not dead but alive from the dead zeroed in on me and spoke to me and blinded me and commissioned me to preach and told me what my message was. Little tough to argue with that.

Now he summarizes the transformation. What he wants Agrippa to know is he is not a rebel, he is not a traitor, he is not a studied antagonist of Judaism. He has been victimized by almighty God and a resurrected Messiah has transformed his life in an instant. Now that's sovereignty, sovereign act of God in conversion of the apostle Paul. I want you to notice something before we go any further in this. Notice in verse 18 you have a tremendous pattern for the approach of evangelism. One of the questions that somebody asks that we won't get time to answer tonight is where did the four spiritual laws come from? It's just a method of evangelism. Well there are a lot of different methods. Basically the right method of evangelism in its simple skeletal form could be taken right out of verse 18. First thing to do is conviction: open their eyes. The first thing you do when you lead somebody to

Jesus Christ is show them what they really are, right? I mean you can't show a guy he needs to be changed unless he sees what he mess he is to start with. You got to strip him bare. You've got to strip away his securities. You got to take whatever he's hanging onto and pull it away. And so there must be opening their eyes. This is conviction, a recognition of sin and judgment.

The second thing, after conviction, is illumination and turn them from darkness to light. The second thing you do after conviction is show them truth. Now having been convicted of sin and error let me show you the truth. So you have conviction then illumination. Then you have conversion. When the response comes they are turned from the power of Satan to the power of God. There's the conversion, from Satan to God. Taken out of the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of darkness and given to God.

So first there's conviction of sin, then there's the illumination by giving them instruction to what the gospel is all about, then there is conversion as they're transformed by the power of God from Satan to God, and with that comes sanctification that they may receive what, forgiveness of sins, they're made holy, the penalty is paid, the power of sin is broken, the life is purified positionally. And so you have sanctification. Then you have promise, the inheritance among them who are sanctified. You tell them what's in the future for them.

So the approach of evangelism is simply conviction, illumination, conversion, sanctification, and then promise for the future. And, of course, the key to all of it by what? Faith that is in Me. You're saved by faith, Ephesians 2:8-9. "For by grace you are saved through faith that not of yourselves, that is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Romans 10:9-10 says, "Thou shall confess with mouth Jesus as Lord, believe in thy heart God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the mouth confession is made unto salvation with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." So you see salvation is an act of faith. There's the gospel right there in verse 18.

He says, "Paul, you're to be my gospel presenter. You're to go out and tell men, proclaim." And so he tells Agrippa and everybody else what he was called to do and at the same time gives them the gospel. So we see Paul's testimony commencing. "Agrippa," he says, "I was just God did this to me. The living resurrected Christ did it."

Now notice his response. Here comes the culmination of his testimony beginning in verse 19. The culmination of Paul's testimony point 4 on the outline. Now notice in any act of the sovereignty of God there is also the necessity for human will to respond. God is not going around just dunning people with some kind of a sovereign hammer and you sort of blink and get up and say, "Oh that's what I am now." Whatever you say there must be an act of the will. And there is an act of the will here in the case of Paul. We see his commitment to this call of God in verse 19. "Whereupon O king Agrippa," I mean after I had heard from a living Messiah who wasn't dead, a Jesus of Nazareth that I know was crucified, and after He spoke to me living, 'I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.'

I submitted my will. This is necessarily a part of commitment. This is necessarily a part of response. There must be an act of the will. There must be obedience. Salvation is a sovereign act of God. It also involved an act of human response. The call to the ministry is a sovereign act of God. It also demands a human response.

In Galatians 1:16 Paul says, "When the Lord called me into the ministry I conferred not with flesh and blood, but I immediately entered into what God had called me to do." I didn't seek any human wisdom. I responded instantly to God in obedience. But obedience is the response that God asks. Now this is part of the paradox of sovereignty and responsibility. God acts sovereignly to bring about His will, but He demands within the framework of that sovereignty a human response. So that when you give your testimony you stand up you don't say, "Well one day I was walking along and I was zapped out of heaven and I was saved and I didn't even do anything. All of a sudden I didn't even know what a Christian was and now I am one." It isn't that simple. There had to be an act of your will. When you give your testimony you say, "One day I committed myself to the Lord Jesus Christ. You did it consciously didn't you as an act of the will and yet the Bible said it was a sovereign act of God designed before the world began.

You know somebody asked me at this conference I spoke at, at Salem, Oregon this week and he said, "I have a real problem." He says, "I don't know whether my Christian life is to be lived by the Lord or by me." He said, "I've been reading Galatians 2:20 and I think I'm supposed to let Him live it through me." "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me."

"So the idea is that Christ just lives His life through me." I said, "Yes, but have you ever read I Corinthians 9, which says in verse 27, I beat my body to bring it into subjection." You see there is the sovereign life of Christ lived through you, but there is a submission of your will that fits into that sovereignty. You might say this: That God sovereignly moves on your will, but your will has to be activated. In a sense you can hold your will off. That's true but you pay a high price.

You think about Moses in Exodus 4. God said, "Moses, I'm telling you to speak for me." Moses says, "I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." I stutter. It would be bad enough to stutter in English, but to stutter in Hebrew would be horrible. He stutters. And the Lord was very very wroth with him and he said, "Who made man's mouth. Who made the deaf and who made the dumb and who made the blind? Have not I the Lord?" Now just because of your unbelief, Moses, you're going to tell everything to Aaron and Aaron shall be as a mouth to you and you shall be as God to Aaron. That is you'll give Aaron the revelation and Aaron will do the talking. Exodus 4:10-17 gives the whole thing. So he paid a high price all his life having to whisper everything in Aaron's ear.

Then there was Ezekiel. God says, "Ezekiel, go do this." "No." So God just picked him up and moved him. Yeah. It says in Ezekiel 3, God just picked him up and he says, "My Spirit was kindled within me." God just went um humph and put him where he wanted him, but he's fighting it all the

way and it caused him a lot unnecessary grief. Now God may just overrule you. You may say, "I don't want to do that God, I will not submit my will to your calling," and God just may umph put you where he wants you anyway and you'll suffer for it. You'll pay a price. The worse thing can happen though is maybe God will say, "All right," and abandon it then you spend your whole life being what you shouldn't be. Right? I'm not talking about salvation. I'm talking about service calling.

You know I'm glad God did with me what He did because I was called to the ministry from way back. I mean I went through the routine as a little kid, you know the policeman, fireman, cowboy and all that, but by the time I got into high school I knew in my heart what I wanted to be in the flesh and that was a pro athlete. I knew that was, there was no question about it, or at least I wanted to get into athletics as a coach or something like that. But in the back of my mind I believed that I was called to the ministry but I didn't want it. I didn't want to be in the ministry, I wanted to be in some kind of athletics and I really fought it. I fought it hard and belligerently.

And then, as many of you know, the Lord had to deal with me very strongly. He had to deal with me in the way he dealt with Ezekiel. He just slammed me down on the highway and tore me up and almost killed me, almost took my life and then I said, "Lord listen, if it's that important to you listen I'm willing. I mean if you're going to make a big deal out of it whatever you say, right." You know I've got 64 square inches of my back full of scar tissue as a reminder of the fact that it's better to submit to the Lord when He calls you than it is to hassle Him.

Now you see in some cases God will force the issue to accomplish what He wants to accomplish and in other cases there are people, and I've have people say this to me time and time again in my life, once I was called to the ministry I rejected the call and now my life is in shambles. Even though God calls sovereignly there can be the place of the response of the will. Now God ultimately knows what will happen and God will accomplish His work. But Paul says, "I was obedient." I love it. When he said that he said what is the most important thing in the Christian life isn't it? It must be the submission of my will. What is obedience?

Let me give you some things about obedience. Give you some principles. These are so important. Number one: obedience is a mark of conversion. If you're saved obedience should mark you. I Peter 1:14 says, "You ought to walk as obedient children." Romans 6:16, says, "Don't you know that to whom you yield yourselves his servants you are whom you obey? If you've yielded yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ who should you obey? The Lord Jesus Christ. It's a mark of conversion. If you're my children you'll obey what I say.

Secondly, it is a recognition of authority. Obedience is a recognition of authority. When you obey you are saying you are in control and I am in submission. Watch this: when you do not obey God you are playing God. You have just usurped divine authority. Did you get that? If God says, "My desire for you is to do this," and you know this is clear in your heart and you say, "No, I'm going to do this," you

have replaced God as the controlling authority in your life. That is stupid. And that is what goes on most times. In Acts 5:29 Peter says, "you judge whether we ought to obey God or man." You have that choice. God lays down principles and maybe God's spoken to your heart many times about a ministry, a teaching ministry, a serving ministry. I don't know what it is. And you said no. When you said that you have replaced God as the sovereign ruler of your life. Foolish. You see obedience is no only a mark of conversion, it is the recognition of authority.

Thirdly, obedience is a characteristic of faith. Obedience is a characteristic of faith. In Hebrews 11:8 it says, "And Abraham obeyed God." And the next verse says, "By faith." When you really believe God you'll obey Him because you know He's got your interest at heart, right? When you disobey you know what you're actually saying? You don't know what's best for me, God. I don't trust you. When you disobey God you're not trusting Him.

Abraham was willing to go to the promised land not knowing anything because he trusted God. All right God you tell me to go, I'll go because I believe you. Obedience to God is characteristic of trusting God. Every time you disobey God you're saying God you're not worthy of my trust. That's blaspheme isn't it? So you see obedience is a mark of conversion, a recognition of authority, and a characteristic of faith.

Fourth, obedience is proof of love. Don't tell God you love Him unless you obey. Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep My commandments. Whosoever keeps My commandments he it is that loves Me." You see obedience is a mark of conversion, a recognition of authority, a characteristic of faith, and a proof of love. You add all that together, folks, and obedience is a condition of power and effectiveness. A disobedient Christian is useless, useless.

Now you see then Paul says, "look Agrippa, and I really got all over the place on that verse, but he says, "Look Agrippa, I was not disobedient. I had to submit. I mean here is the living Messiah talking to me out of heaven. I was not disobedient, but I showed first unto them at Damascus." You know that guy was converted in Damascus and you know where he started preaching? In Damascus right now, and then in Jerusalem, and throughout all the borders of Judea and here's a summary of his whole ministry and then to the Gentiles. You know he was first at Damascus, later on after years in the desert he went to Jerusalem and then he went all through the borders of Judea and then to the Gentiles and I showed that they should repent and turn to God and do works fit for repentance. That they should repent and turn to God that saved them and that their salvation become apparent by the works that they did. You see your salvation is made visible by those works. James said, "You tell me about your faith? Show me your works and I can look at your works and tell whether your faith is real." By their fruit you shall know them.

Paul says, "Hey Christianity Agrippa is the logical necessary sequel to the past." The central hope of the Jew was the resurrection. The central hope of the Jew was a living Messiah. There is a living

Messiah. There was a resurrection. The resurrected one spoke to me. I saw His glory. I heard His voice. I could do nothing but obey. He commissioned me into His ministry instantly I obeyed. I began at Damascus and then at Jerusalem and then the borders of Judea and then since then I have had three journeys into the Gentile world and always and at all times and at all cases and to all people I have preached repentance and turning to God and works that proved that that repentance was real. And you want to know something? That was the problem.

Verse 21, "For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple and went about to kill me." You know why they wanted him dead? Because he was offering equal salvation to whom? Gentiles. The Jews could not tolerate equality with Gentiles. And so Paul says, "They wanted me dead because I offered and equal salvation to Gentiles." They wanted to kill me in the temple, and you remember they tried to kill him in the temple. That's how this whole thing started. That's how he became a prisoner to begin with.

Now notice something, just a footnote. There can be no true gospel presented unless there's repentance. Remember I told you that back in verse 18 one of the keys to begin evangelism was to open their eyes that involves a conviction of sin and turning from it? There can be no legitimate salvation when there isn't turning from sin. There must be a turning from sin toward God, a transformation. There must be the setting aside of the sinful patterns when there's true salvation. So he preaches turning from sin, turning to God, and then doing the works that prove that such repentance was legitimate.

"Because of this equality to Gentiles and Jews and everybody they caught me in the temple and wanted to kill me." And they did. They were upset at him because of his equality. The salvation he offered was for all men. But following his capture the continuance. He says, in 22, "Having therefore obtained help from God," I love that. He always was getting that. I mean when he was in Lystra they killed him outside the city. The Lord raised him from the dead. When he got to Philippi and they put him in jail, the Lord brought along an earthquake and let him out. It's amazing the man had help from God all the time. And again here you have the tremendous dichotomy of human effort and divine sovereignty. We struggle and work and give and sweat and discipline ourselves to work as hard as we can to produce as much as we can for the glory of the Lord and at the same time it's all His under girding strength, isn't it? This is what Paul is acknowledging.

Chapter 18 tells about his help from God. Later on we'll see how the Lord delivered him from a shipwreck on the way to Rome. In II Corinthians Chapter 1 he said he went through some things that almost took his life, but the Lord helped him and the Lord delivered him. He wrote to Timothy in II Timothy 3:11, II Timothy 4:17-18, and again talked about how God delivered him. He was constantly being delivered of God, constantly being helped by God as he ministered. This is the promise the minister has. Listen, if God calls you to a ministry God will sustain and under gird you with His own strength to accomplish it. I believe it.

People often say to me, "John, I don't know you do too many things. How can you?" Well I have help from the Lord. I believe that. I believe the Lord strengthens me when I need strength. I believe He gives me wisdom when I need wisdom. Some of you are saying, "Well not all the time." Well that's maybe so. Maybe He gives it to me when I don't recognize it. Maybe I operate in the flesh and not in the Spirit sometimes. But I believe that God will put you in a position and then God will support you in that position. That's faith. You can step out and do anything that you feel God leading you to do in the confidence that if He's in it He'll support it.

And so he says, "I went out and the Lord helped me. And even though they wanted to kill me, the Lord helped me. And so he says, "I continue to this day." I'm still here. They tried to kill me two years ago. Here I am. What are you doing? I continue to this day witnessing. Undaunted guy, isn't he? What do you think I'm doing? I'm doing what I always do, what I'll do until they chop my head off. Witnessing to small and great, important and not so important ones, and I have been saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said should come.

Hey I'm just talking about the Old Testament prophecies that Christ should suffer, that He should be the first, that is the protus, not the first in chronological order but the first in preeminence. That's what the word is, that He should be the first of all those who have risen from the dead and show light to the people and the Gentiles. I'm still preaching equal salvation to Jew and Gentile, I'm sill here because I have help from God, and I'm still only preaching what the Old Testament taught that the Messiah would have to suffer. That's in the Old Testament, isn't it? Have you read Psalm 22? Have you read Isaiah 53? It's there. What about all the pictures of all the lambs of the Old Testament? What about the Passover Lamb? It's all there. And then that He should rise from the dead. That's there too in the Psalms. "Thou shalt not suffer Thine holy one to see corruption." It's all there. I'm just preaching what the Old Testament teaches. I haven't deviated a bit.

Oh what a masterpiece of a testimony. What he says to Agrippa is essentially this: I've been changed Agrippa. I've been turned into a minister of Jesus Christ by a sovereign act of a living Christ who is not dead but He's alive. I submitted to that and now I'm proclaiming Him and people have tried to shut my mouth by killing me but they can't. Here I am two years later saying the same thing I said then and just as boldly saying that it's an equal salvation to Jew and Gentile. Boy that took courage. I mean that really took courage to say that.

Let's see fourthly in our outline the consequence of Paul's testimony. What happened as a result of his testimony? Well first came the criticism. And you know Agrippa, he didn't say a thing. He just listened. But Festus blurted out. Verse 24, "And as he thus spoke for himself, Festus said with a loud voice," this means Festus yelled out in front of the whole assembly, "Paul, you are beside yourself, much learning doth make you mad." I think that's interesting. Today we think much learning makes people very intelligent. In that day they had a different view of education. He says, "You're

beside yourself." You're over educated and because you have too much learning you've gone made. And you say, "What made him say that?" What did he just say in the last verse, that Christ should rise from the dead. You see this guy Festus couldn't handle that resurrection idea. He thought there's only one kind of person who would babble on about visions and about revelations and about voices out of heaven and about resurrections and that's a mad man. Paul you've learned too much. You see he had to acknowledge the man was smart. It was obvious that Paul was brilliant but it was over done. No Roman with any reason could ever buy all that stuff. That isn't anything new is it? Jesus spoke what He spoke in John 8 and He said, "You've got a demon." In 52 they said it again, "You've got a demon."

In Chapter 10:20-21 of John's gospel they said, "You're mad. You're out of your mind talking like that." Yes and that's what Paul said in I Corinthians 1, he said, "The preaching of the gospel is to them that perish foolishness, foolishness, because the natural man understandeth not the things of God." It isn't even anything new. In Hosea 9:7 they said the prophets were mad. You see the human mind gets to the place where it says, "Well if I can't understand it, it just must be insane." That's the most supreme egoism. You know if you don't understand it, it isn't true.

Well so Paul in interrupted. I don't know what he was going to say after than, but he didn't say it because Festus stopped him. But he spoke again and this is so interesting. Festus' interruption just sets the stage. So now comes the invitation. He zeroes in on Agrippa. Now watch this: this is the call to Agrippa.

He said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness, *sophrosune*in the Greek, soberness. *Sophrosunesoph*from which derivative Sophia comes the word wisdom. What the word means is total control of senses. I speak with total control of my senses, Festus, I speak with a sound mind. Now watch how he shows, verse 26, "For the king knows 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. Now stop there. He says Festus, I'm not mad. I speak with a clear mind and the king knows it. Boy does he nail Agrippa. King you know that I speak the truth. These things were not done in a corner. What things? the death and resurrection of Christ. That was common knowledge. Everybody knew that Jesus had lived, that he had died, and that there was a claim to his resurrection. Oh the Jews had bought off the Roman soldiers to tell everybody that the disciples stole the body, but still it was common knowledge that the Christians had gone everywhere preaching Jesus was alive.

Here we are 25 years later and Agrippa is no dumbbell. He knows what the Christians taught. It was common knowledge. You know the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were common knowledge, you know that, Agrippa, don't you? You know that what I'm saying is not the babbling on of a madman. You know there are people who believe there's evidence for this.

Beloved, you know how Paul, he is so brilliant. He has presented to Agrippa the whole gospel and now he just nails him against the wall and forces him to a conclusion that he probably wouldn't have made on his own. And he forces Agrippa to be a silent witness to Festus. Agrippa hasn't said a word and yet Agrippa is standing there with his mouth shut attesting to what Paul has said as being true. You know this don't you, Agrippa? by the very fact that Agrippa didn't say anything he acquiesced. The case is clear. The king knows it. Anybody who believes the prophets, anybody who believes Moses, and anybody who believes historical fact must conclude that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. And you know it Agrippa; you know it. Boy that's going after it, that's attack folks. He really tackled Agrippa head on.

He goes even further, verse 27. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" Oh boy did he put him on the spot. "I know that you believe." Why you're a good Jew. You believe the prophets. Do you believe the prophets? I know you believe the prophets. What's he saying? He's saying, Agrippa, if you believe the prophets you're stuck. Jesus is Messiah. Has to be. I'm not mad Festus. He knows. He knows the truth. You see how he makes Agrippa responsible.

You know one time when I was sharing Christ with a guy, I'd done it more than once, but once I can recall saying to him, "Now that you've heard the gospel you're responsible because you know the truth. And you may reject this time, but you know the truth and God holds you responsible for the truth you know." That's direct aggression. That's attack.

So Paul really tries to capture Agrippa's will. He wants to do for Agrippa what he wants him to do for himself, make the only logical conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah. Well Agrippa's stuck. If Agrippa says, "Yes, I do believe the prophets," then he has admitted that he believes Jesus is the Messiah and he's in real trouble with his whole nation. If he says, "No, I don't believe the prophets," then he's still in trouble with his nation. So he can't say yes or no. You believe, don't you Agrippa?

I like his answer, verse 28. "Then Agrippa said to Paul," and it says in the King James, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." That isn't what he said. The Greek says, "In such a short time are you trying to convert me?" See he avoids the question. Hey, are you trying to convert me so easily? Clever wasn't it? He figured that out. Paul says, "Right."

Verse 29, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, and altogether such as I am except these bonds." Now that's a tangled up verse. Let me give you the best translation. Get thee almost out of the end and put it at the beginning and don't translate it almost but rather this way. "Whether in a short time or a long time I would to God that not only you but also all that have been with me this day might become such as I am except for these chains." Are you trying in such a short time to convert me? He says, "Hey, short time or long time I am trying to convert you and not only you but everybody I wish you were all like me except for these chains."

That's a gentle thing. That's real honest. What a gentle soul he was. You know he wasn't bitter. He didn't say augh you ought to have these chains and I ought to be sitting up on that throne. There wasn't any of that brash talk. He said, "I wish you had, I wish you all had what I have. I want to give you my soul liberty. Oh I don't mean I want to give you my physical chains. I want to give you the freedom of soul that I know. There's Agrippa in purple, Bernice decked out in all of her jewels. Festus is there in his Roman scarlet. All the dignitaries are there and Paul looks at all this fancy group and he says, "I wish you were all like I am." They're looking at each other and he says, "Except for these chains. I'm talking spiritual." They had everything in the world but they had nothing, right? "What does it profiteth a man if he gain the whole world and loses his own soul." What will a man give in exchange for his own soul, Jesus said. I will die to save Agrippa but I wouldn't wish my chains on him. Yeah you know because he could have died on the spot for what he said. He would die to save Agrippa. He was expendable. It didn't bother him. But he wouldn't wish his chains on Agrippa.

That's the heart of the Christian. That's sincere evangelism. That's evangelism with love. What was their response? How could you resist that kind of impact message and how could you resist that kind of concern and love? Verse 30, "When he had thus spoken the king rose up, the governor and Bernice," not to be left out, and they that sat with them. Of course, once the king stood up everybody had to stand up, right? "When they were gone aside," they had a little meeting. "They talked among themselves saying, 'This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.'" This guy is innocent. Don't you see, isn't this beautiful? The Holy Spirit just plops this little verse in here to show you that the king from Israel, a Roman governor from Rome both agree Paul was innocent.

What a tremendous historical note. Christianity is not an insurrection. Christianity is not a heresy. Christianity isn't anything that violates anything political. Christianity is a spiritual relationship to the living God and there's the testimony. Boy people have accused true Christianity of all kinds of atrocity. It isn't so. True Christianity is guilty of nothing worthy of death or bonds. You say, "Isn't that great. They had judged him to be innocent," but what about the personal spiritual response? Verse 32, "Then said Agrippa unto Festus. This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar."

Oh you dirty coward. You see what he did? They could have let him go. There wasn't any reason to appeal to Caesar now. There wasn't any case. Caesar hadn't heard a word about it. There hadn't even been a letter written, but they hide behind the appeal of Paul. Oh too bad. Boy we could have let him go if he hadn't appealed to Rome. Opportunitist, fool, coward! How stupid. You see how a man even though he has the gospel directed right at him unless he activates his will is lost? You say what hindered Agrippa? What hindered Festus? I mean he was innocent. Why would they push this case hiding behind this phony deal about he appealed to Rome. Because the most important thing to them was popularity, right? I'll tell you what hindered them. One: popularity, big egos. Two: immorality hindered Agrippa. He was absolutely vile, self-centeredness, unbelief, pride, ignorance,

indifference, all the same ol' things that hinder other people. But you know something? It didn't discourage Paul. He had some people who believed and some people who cursed him, but he didn't change did he?

When he got to Rome remember what he did the first thing he got there? He started preaching Jesus again. Listen friends, people say to me, "I've tried to share Christ here, there, and everywhere and there doesn't seem to be any response." That's all right. God didn't call you to save people. He called you to preach Christ. He'll do the saving. All he asks out of you is that you be faithful. You could not sublimate Paul's passion. You could not catch his dominate spirit and squelch it. He just continued to be faithful. Watch this now, because his orientation to service was toward God not based on the response of men. If I stood in this pulpit and preached and taught the word of God as I believe it was true and emptied this building and in my heart of hearts conscientiously before God I believed I was preaching the truth, I would need to stay right with God and believe that He was doing what He was doing, though no one even cared. Because there may be a time in this world when you don't know what's going to happen.

Maybe there will come a time when Christians have to really pay the price of being a Christian and the place will be empty just to the few who really care. And somebody will say, "Well you can get those people back if you quit talking about judgment or something." Maybe you'd be prone to compromise, but not the apostle Paul. It wasn't up to him to determine the results. He had a whole crowd there and nobody responded positively. It didn't change him.

Listen folks, let's write on 1975 that we spent ourselves proclaiming Christ. Let's pray. Father, we know what is right because the word tells us and we know that it is right for us to be faithful to the message you've committed to us. God help us to be satisfied with faithfulness and not to be oriented toward results. Lord, we know that thou doest desire that men come to you and women and children. We know that there should be a result in the sense that there should be lives affected by our testimony. But may the priority be that we are living to Your glory and that we are obedient to Your word. And may we have the joy of letting You bring about the results that You desire. God make us to be faithful and may it be said of Grace Community Church in this year that we left our imprint on the world because we led some to Jesus Christ. More were added to the hallelujah chorus to praise our blessed Lord now and for eternity. We pray in His wonderful name. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2016 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).