

Paul has attempted to make the case for his innocence before the Jewish public (Acts 22:1-23), the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-10) and then before two Roman governors, Felix and Festus (Acts 24:1-22; 25:6-12). Paul now has the opportunity to make his case before Agrippa, king of the Roman province that included Judea.

Days after Paul's appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11-12), King Agrippa and his sister Bernice (who was also his consort) arrive in Caesarea to visit the governor Festus. Festus tells Agrippa about the unusual case of Paul and the king's curiosity is aroused, who stated that he would like to hear Paul for himself. The next day Festus brings Paul to speak before king Agrippa (Acts 25:13-27). Paul begins by acknowledging Agrippa's familiarity with Jewish laws, customs and beliefs and that it's concerning those Jewish beliefs that he is being accused. It is his hope in the promise that God made to his ancestors that had become the point of contention between himself and the Jews. He then begins giving his testimony of his past when he persecuted those that believed that Jesus was the Christ until his experience on the road to Damascus, during which Christ spoke to him and gave him the mission of being His witness so that people could be forgiven of their sins through faith (Acts 26:1-18).

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

Paul did not sit idle, but committed the rest of his life to preaching Jesus Christ. He began preaching Christ immediately after regaining his sight (Acts 9:20) and has been doing so ever since.

20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Paul began preaching there at Damascus, the city where he met Christ, and continued to do so when he returned to Jerusalem. He preached Christ to the Jews throughout the "coasts" (boundaries) of Judea, and then when they rejected his message, he turned to the Gentiles to preach Christ to them. These events span many years of Paul's ministry, including his three missionary journeys.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*.

Paul now brings his timeline up until when he was arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-31). Jews from Asia Minor who recognized him from when he was ministering there saw Paul in the temple and immediately stirred up the crowd against him. They dragged him out of the temple and begin to beat him with the intention of killing him. These Jews hated Paul for preaching Jesus Christ.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

"Having therefore obtained help of God" – Paul acknowledges that it was God's providence that brought the chief captain of the Roman garrison to his rescue that day (Acts 21:31-32), and that God has enabled him to continue to be a witness after his arrest.

"I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great" – With God's enablement and protection, Paul has still not stopped witnessing for Jesus Christ, whether it be to common men ("small") or men of great importance ("great").

"saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" – Everything that Paul has preached has been to show that the OT prophecies of the Messiah were being fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

23 That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

This verse seems to summarize Paul's preaching into three main points:

"That Christ should suffer" – Many OT prophecies predict that the Messiah would have to suffer and die. For instance, Isaiah 53 states that it was the Father's will that Christ would die for our sins (**Isa. 53:4-5** *"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed"*).

"and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead" – Many OT prophets also predicted Christ's resurrection, such as **Psa. 16:10** – *"For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."* Christ is the firstfruits of all who will be resurrected through faith in Him (**1 Cor. 15:20** *"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept"*).

"and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles" – The OT predicted that Christ would come to show the way of salvation to the whole world, to both the Jews ("the people") and the Gentiles.

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

"And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice" – While Paul was speaking to King Agrippa, Festus interrupts him with a skeptical comment.

"Paul, thou art beside thyself [to rave as if out of one's mind]; much learning doth make thee mad [insane]" – It seemed to Festus that Paul was speaking nonsense when talking about resurrection and decided that Paul had spent so much time studying the scriptures that they had caused him to lose his mind. The Greek word translated "thou art beside thyself" is based on the Greek word translated as "mad" (*manía* | man-ee'-ah) and is where we get our English words "mania" and "maniac."

"But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness [soundness of mind]" – Paul denies Festus' belief that he is insane and insists that what he is saying is based on truth and sound reasoning.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

“For the king knoweth [to understand or comprehend] of these things, before whom also I speak freely” – King Agrippa has been listening this whole time to Paul’s speech even though he had not responded to the things that have been said. Paul had already acknowledged that the king understood Jewish laws, customs and beliefs (v. 3), so Agrippa should understand why Paul would believe in the resurrection of the Messiah.

“for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him” – Paul believes that Agrippa’s familiarity with the Jews, their laws, customs and beliefs enabled him to understand the OT prophecies concerning the Christ (the Messiah). It should make sense to Agrippa that Paul’s beliefs in the OT scriptures would lead him and others to faith in Jesus Christ.

“for this thing was not done in a corner” – The ministry of Jesus was public, including his teachings and the miracles He performed. His crucifixion under the authority of Pilate was also public and well known. The Christian claim of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension was also well known throughout the Roman territories because of the early church’s obedience to Jesus’ command for them to be witnesses of Him throughout the world (Acts 1:8). Agrippa was well aware of these things that Paul was saying.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

“King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?” – Paul asks the king a pointed question, likely with the purpose of making Agrippa think about what he believed. If Agrippa believed what the OT prophets wrote then that belief would naturally lead him to also believe that the OT Messianic prophecies had been fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth. This question also put the king on the spot because admitting his belief in what the OT prophets taught about Christ’s suffering and resurrection would make him appear foolish to his Roman companions (Festus had just questioned Paul’s sanity for believing such things). However, to deny his belief in the OT prophecies would offend his Jewish subjects.

“I know that thou believest” – Why was Paul certain that Agrippa believed the prophets? Perhaps it was the king’s facial expressions while Paul was speaking or maybe Paul’s knowledge of Agrippa’s reputation and background. Perhaps the Holy Spirit revealed it to Paul.

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost [in a little; in a few] thou persuadest me to be a Christian” – In Greek, the word “almost” is two Greek words: *en oligos*. “En” means “in” and “oligos” refers to a small quantity: “little,” “small,” “few,” etc. Thus Agrippa’s response to Paul could be translated more literally as “In a little thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Commentators are divided on the interpretation. Some follow the KJV translators and say that what Agrippa meant was something like “It would take only a little more time/effort/words to persuade me to be a Christian.” Others turn Agrippa’s statement into a sarcastic question like “Do you think you can persuade me to be a Christian in such a short/little time?” Still others see *en oligos* stating how far Paul’s speech had gone in convincing Agrippa: “You are beginning to persuade me to be a Christian.” Paul’s response to Agrippa in the next verse seems to favor this last interpretation.

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

“And Paul said, I would to God” – Spoken like a true soul-winner, Paul expresses his heart-felt desire that his hearers would be saved.

“that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day” – Paul’s desire was not only for the salvation of king Agrippa, but also of all who were listening to him that day (v. 30).

“were both almost [a little], and altogether [abundant; much] such as I am” – The Greek word translated “altogether” has basically the opposite meaning of the one translated as “almost.” Where “almost” refers to a small quantity, “altogether” refers to a large quantity. Paul is saying that his desire is that his hearers would have faith in Christ like him, not just a little bit (as Agrippa stated), but abundantly so. He may even be going so far as to mean his status as an apostle with the mission of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul’s desire for all who were listening to him is that they would be as dedicated to following Christ as he is.

“except these bonds” – The only exception to Paul’s desire that his hearers would be like him is the fact that he was in bonds. Paul only wants the best for his hearers, desiring that they would be Christians without the bonds that Paul was experiencing on account of his faith.

Verses 30-32: Either Paul was finished speaking or Agrippa was finished listening, but the king gets up from his seat and leaves the room, followed by his sister Bernice, the governor Festus, and the other officials that had gathered with them to listen to Paul. After discussing what they had just heard among themselves, they arrive at the consensus that Paul had done nothing wrong and that he did not deserve to die or to be incarcerated. Agrippa tells Festus that Paul could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar. However, God is sending Paul to Rome and He is sovereignly guiding the circumstances to cause this to happen.